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Diversity in Cultural Representations:
Comedy and *Othello*

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Religious and Ethnic Diversity

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und multiethnischer Gesellschaften*

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Abstract

Comedy (professional, mediated or live, or amateur, demotic and everyday) offers a good starting-point for studying representations of diversity. Representations of diverse or complex ethnoscapes must use caricature and stereotype. Adopting Steven Vertovec's terms, comedic representations may reproduce or alter existing configurations of diversity, and can script new encounters of diversity. Examples from English theatre and Turkish German literature underline the importance of distinguishing between an abstract concept of diversity and the particular differences which are depicted in texts. A study of German translations of Shakespeare's *Othello* shows how cultural history illuminates the present. *Othello* is a much-travelled text which embodies "colour" and "race" difference. Translations of one couplet (a joke about colour difference) over the past 250 years are compared. This reveals translators under the influence of ideologies of Eurocentrism, imperialism, biological racism, fascism, humanism, and, most recently, competing (moral and political) ideologies of anti-racism. There are now increasing numbers of new *Othello* translations and adaptations (by no means only in German). They exhibit unprecedented cultural diversity in representations of ethnic diversity.

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Contents

1. Introduction

This paper is in two main parts. The first part discusses imagining and representing diversity in cultural texts, using British and German examples (literature, theatre, television and film). I argue that comedy is the best place to start researching this topic. Ethnic and religious diversity *as such* is an abstract idea which can only be depicted in caricatural ways. Metaphors of diversity (melting pot, salad bowl, mosaic, rainbow, etc.) have various conceptual implications, but all are abstract and caricatural. Non-caricatural representations are particular: they depict specific *differences*, not the general idea of *diversity*. In any given narrative, play, film, etc., for pragmatic reasons – reasons of space – only a limited range of differences can be depicted non-caricaturally. Complex ethnoscapes are difficult to represent, except by using stereotypes. In comedy – the work of professional humorists, as well as joking in everyday life (including YouTube, etc.) – caricature and stereotype can be used not only to reproduce but also to modify received ideas about differences.

Using examples from Turkish German literature, I go on to argue that diversity is conceptually not just a kind of "umbrella term" under which all kinds of difference shelter. Writers of Turkish German literature are committed to changing the ways in which "native" Germans and Turkish Germans perceive one another, as groups and as individuals. For these writers, concepts of diversity are opposed to concepts of difference. They represent "diversity" (along with related notions like "multiculturalism" or "cosmopolitanism") as an abstract, utopian concept, associated with illusory ideas of world citizenship and universal peace, and with wishful thinking about real conflicts being magically resolved. Diversity is associated with "thin", caricatural representations of group identities: enumerations or lists of ethnic types, and cliché symbols of "togetherness". Steven Vertovec's triad of "configurations", "representations", and "encounters" of diversity (in MMG WP 09-01) is useful here. For imaginative writers, who are specialists in representation, "configurations" and "encounters" are directly opposed. "Configurations" means sets of abstract, generalised distinctions, viewed from a theoretically fixed position of objective neutrality (e.g. the position of state power). "Encounters" means "thick" descriptions, detailed narratives, particularised differences, represented from highly subjective, plural, and changing perspectives. "Encounters", and therefore change, are what the writers want to bring about. "Configurations" are the resistance they encounter.

The second part of the paper offers a methodological suggestion. It looks at two lines from Shakespeare's *Othello, the Moor of Venice* (1603), in multiple German

translations dating from the 1760s to the 2000s. *Othello* is a tragedy, not a comedy, but the play is full of jokes, and the two lines selected make a joke about colour, or in modern terms, "race". This part of the paper reports on an experiment in comparative translation studies: an investigation into what Vertovec refers to as "traveling concepts" of diversity and difference. The original lines pun in a very complex way on ambiguous colour-related terms ("black", "fair", and "light") in relation to "virtue", "beauty", and "lack". The translations are astonishingly varied. Through the choices each translator makes, he (they are all male) reveals his implicit ideas about colour/race difference. These ideas are governed by the dominant concept or ideology of difference of the translator's time and place. The full sequence of different translations can be grouped into six successive periods, demarcated by political changes: the foundation of the German colonial empire in the 1870s; its end, in 1918; the foundation of the post-fascist German states; re-unification; and lastly, the end of the link, in law, between citizenship and ethnicity. In each period a different ideological concept of colour/race difference was successively dominant.

Or rather: five periods of conceptual dominance were followed by a sixth period, which began around the year 2000 (reform of citizenship law). This is a period of unprecedented conceptual diversity with regard to ethnic difference. More German translators that ever before are working on *Othello*. This in itself reflects the importance now attached to difference/diversity. Most of the translators are still translating in accordance with a concept of difference established in the 1990s: *moral anti-racism*. Other translators revert to a concept established in the 1950s, and dominant into the 1980s: *erotic-exoticism*. Just one recent translator finds a new way of translating the lines: Feridun Zaimoglu, Germany's most prominent writer of Turkish background. His translation of Shakespeare's lines represents a "new" and resistant ideological concept: *political anti-racism*.

This study in comparative translation combines the methods of historical literary sociology (corpus analysis and serial sampling) with techniques of close reading. The approach is strongly influenced by the work of Franco Moretti.[1] My example shows how cultural history can illuminate the present. It also shows mutations in "travelling concepts" at two levels. The first level is that of the travellings, in translations, of a Shakespeare text which embodies a highly complex, mutable and controversial

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1 Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005); see also 'The End of the Beginning: A Reply to Christopher Prendergast', in *New Left Review*, 41 (2006): 71-86.

"concept of difference": "Othello/Desdemona" – a key reference point in European, European-diasporic, and postcolonial imaginings about "other/self".[2] The second level is that of the travellings of the ideological concepts of difference which under-pin translators' choices: European and Eurocentric concepts with histories dating back variously to successive phases of nation-building, and to imperialism and colo-nialism; to the popularisation of biological racism, and the elaboration of fascist ideologies; to the elaboration of post-fascist humanism, decolonisation and the Civil Rights Movement; and most recently, to different modes of anti-racist activism.

My example from *Othello* is hardly an example of a representation of multi-ethnic diversity. It involves variations on the opposition "black/white", rather than multiple "shades" of difference. The black/white opposition is (in many places) the "degree zero" of ethnic difference, seen in superficial terms of physical difference.[3] But the first problem encountered by a cultural studies approach to diversity is precisely this: how can diversity be represented, except in terms of particular differences?

1.1. Diversity or differences in comedy

When Vertovec outlines the kinds of work he envisages under the heading "represen-tations of diversity" or "imagining diversity", he mentions two areas relevant to the work presented in this paper. One is the "cultural studies approach" to "things in the media, in the arts, TV, film, literature which depict different representations, or ways of looking at diversity" (MMG WP 09-01, p.20). The other is the investigation of "travelling diversity concepts", or "how concepts originating in one context are used to describe other contexts" (p.22). The second area is, broadly, the area of translation: literal translation of texts is essential to enable concepts to travel between contexts.

But is "diversity" a possible object of "representation" or "looking at", or even "imagining", in cultural texts? "Difference" (which Vertovec occasionally uses almost as a synonym for "diversity") is a more applicable concept in cultural studies. "Diver-sity" is an abstract and comparative concept, but cultural texts must depict particu-

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2　There is a vast critical literature. A recent starting-point might be: Joy Wang, 'Othello Revisited: Metropolitan Romance in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*', in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 45/1 (2009): 49-60.

3　Here's an example from a tragi-comical monologue by Alan Bennett, set in Leeds in the 1990s. Bennett is renowned for dialogue which catches the symptomatic absurdities of real speech. The narrator meets a young "white" woman with a "black" child who says (after a Mr Kumar has passed by): "I don't care for Asians. Neither one thing nor the other in my opinion." *Talking Heads 2* (London: BBC, 1998): 53.

lars. One of Vertovec's visual examples illustrates this: a caricature of the 1880s from the USA (WP 09-01, p.15). It shows the great "melting pot" labeled "Citizenship", inside which, as he puts it, "all sorts of ethnics" are being stirred by Mother America with her "Equal Rights" ladle, but an Irishman is refusing to jump in. The visualisation of the pot's contents is indistinct: a dozen or so different physiognomic types or dress-styles, vaguely sketched. Even within a caricature, "diversity" is blurred, compared to the particular Irish exception to which attention is drawn.

Space for differentiation is limited in the visual, textual or filmic field of view. Representations of a multiplicity of "ethnics" can show little more than caricatures. Still, texts can do a lot with that "little more". First, they depict a specific repertoire of differences, a configuration. This may derive from established, official, dominant, or popular and demotic configurations;[4] texts can deploy different (contradictory) configurations; and in various ways they can alter or complicate known configurations. Configurations as artificial ways of classifying human diversity lend themselves to comedy, and comedy depends on stereotyping, but can disturb stereotypical ways of looking. In societies which are increasingly diverse or increasingly aware of diversity, comedy registers change and can introduce new differentiations. An example is the way the British Asian TV comedy show *Goodness Gracious Me* (BBC, 1998-2001) broke up the concept of "Asian", not only highlighting differences of national origin and religion, but differences of caste, class, occupation, generation, gender, lifestyles, attitudes, etc.[5] Much contemporary "ethno-comedy" performs this kind of cultural work. Stereotyped, caricatured figures can be "humanized" with a few touches of a pen (drawing or writing); they can be shown to change; "others" as group categories can be differentiated; and "selves" can be revealed as "others" to "others", too. In this way "representations" of difference or diversity become what Vertovec calls "encounters of diversity": they both enact and enable experiences which can potentially change ways of thinking and feeling. But the significance of a joke always depends on how it is told (or re-told), by and to whom, in what context. Thus the short- and long-term effects of innovative comedy demand ethnographic study.

Professional comedy often achieves most social impact through becoming controversial. A recent UK example is Richard Bean's play *England People Very Nice*,

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4   See Gerhard Baumann's study of "dominant" and "demotic" discourses in Southall: *Contesting Culture: Discourses of Identity in Multi-ethnic London* (CUP, 1996).

5   Marie Gillespie, 'From Comic Asians to Asian Comics: *Goodness Gracious Me*, TV Comedy and Ethnicity' in *Group Identities on French and British Television*, eds M. Scriven. & E. Roberts (Oxford: Berghahn, 2003): 93-108.

which has been playing at the National Theatre in London since February 2009. It's a comic historical epic, set in London's East End. In the frame story, a multi-ethnic group of asylum-seekers are staging a play about the local history of immigration. The title is in their "broken English". This is how the National Theatre website describes the play,[6] with two ethnic jokes quoted from the script:

> A riotous journey through four waves of immigration from the 17th century to today. As the French Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews and the Bangladeshis in turn enter the chaotic world of Bethnal Green, each new influx provokes a surge of violent protest over housing, jobs, religion and culture. And the emerging pattern shows that white flight and anxiety over integration is anything but new.
>
> *Fucking Frogs! My grandfather didn't die in the English Civil War so's half the population of France could come over here and live off the soup!*
>
> Written with scurrilous bravura, Richard Bean's great sweep of a comedy follows a pair of star-crossed lovers amid silk-cutters' mobs, Papists, Jewish anarchists and radical Islamists across four tempestuous centuries.
>
> *Irish and Jewish, that's the worst mix. You end up with a family of pissed up burglars run by a clever accountant.*

Critics' opinions have been divided. The reviewer in the conservative *Daily Telegraph* saw the play as a successful comedy with an underlying "wise, brave and true" message about integration and the dangers of radical Islam:

> Bean shares Daniel Defoe's view that the English have always been a mongrel race, and that it is interbreeding that eventually helps violence and suspicion turn into sometimes grumpy acceptance of successive waves of immigrants. And his play suggests that it is the determination of radical Muslims to keep themselves separate from the rest of the community, regarding themselves as occupants of an enemy country rather than as citizens, that makes our present times so dangerous. This strikes me as wise, brave and true but there are bound to be some strident voices who condemn Bean as racist and the NT for putting on such a provocative play. (…) Sophie Stanton as an archetypal Cockney barmaid and Sacha Dhawan and Michelle Terry as a succession of lovers from different racial communities shine particularly brightly in the splendid rainbow coalition of a cast.[7]

But East End-based playwright and activist Hussain Ismail, writing in *Socialist Worker* and the *Guardian*, took particular offense at the idea that "interbreeding" is

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6   http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/42665/productions/england-people-very-nice.html.   See also: http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/englandpeople/. Accessed August 2009.

7   http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/charlesspencer/4600052/England-People-Very-Nice-at-the-National-Theatre-review.html (Charles Spencer. 12 Feb 2009).

the answer to inter-ethnic strife. He went on to organise a direct protest in the theatre, and the debate rumbled on in the press for several weeks.[8]

> This comedy goes from bad to worse as it presents a potted history of migration to Spital-fields in east London. (…) And finally the Somalis end up clashing with the Bangladeshis. Apart from the historical inaccuracies and banalities, the message is that migrant groups are always at loggerheads and can only really integrate if they have sex with the locals. Is this really the level of debate on immigration and multiculturalism that goes on at the National Theatre?[9]

A study of the reception of this play – reactions to it, private as well as public – would deliver rich data on contemporary understandings of diversity in London. Theatrical and media scandals in general offer good entry-points into contemporary debates on how diversity is experienced, configured, and represented.[10]

As well as depicting a specific configuration of differences, a representation of diversity must also *structure* relations between the individual "representatives" of categories, according to media- and genre-specific, textual, narrative and visual possibilities. In the case of *England People Very Nice*, the use of ethnic stereotypes provokes less anger in the protestors than the narrative structuring which gives centre stage to a sexy "Cockney girl", who represents the category "authentic native English". She remains the same throughout history (as the play depicts it), and is desired by a sequence of "ethnic other" lovers, who are each "different", but also structurally "the same" in relation to her. This structuring is typical of a society which is imagined as originally ethnically unitary, becoming increasingly diverse through successive "waves" of immigration.

The race-and-gender logic of this structuring can be traced back to Shakespeare's *Othello*, where there is only one "immigrant" – "the only black man among hundreds

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8 See under "More on this story" at http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/feb/14/national-thea-tre-racism-row (Esther Addley, 'Storm grows over National Theatre play dubbed racist and offensive by critics', 14 Feb 2009).

9 http://socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=17070 (10 Feb) and reprinted: http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2009/feb/13/national-theatre-play-racist (13 Feb 2009).

10 Still in the East End of London, there were protests in 2007 over the filming of Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane* (2003), as "community leaders" complained that the novel's depiction of Bangladeshis was insulting. See http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/jul/17/film.uk In Birmingham in 2004, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti's play *Behzhi* (Dishonour), was taken off following protests by Sikh community leaders. In Berlin in 2006, Hans Neuenfels's production of Mozart's opera *Idomeneo*, featuring the severed heads of Jesus, Mohammed and Buddha, was dropped by the Deutsche Oper, on police advice.

of white people"[11] – but the plot turns on him winning and then losing his "white" sexual prize, Desdemona. Similar structuring is found in all sorts of representations. The British situation comedy series *Mind Your Language* (LWT, 1977-79) stands out as an early, popular representation of what we might call "wide-spectrum diversity". A small group of natives collectively faces a larger group of individual "ethnics". The series is set in a London classroom for adults learning English, with four white English staff, and a dozen students: one each Italian, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, Hindu Indian, Sikh Indian, Pakistani, Spanish, French, Swedish and Hungarian. The show was cancelled after three series, reputedly because LWT bosses found its total reliance on ethnic stereotyping offensive. But that did not stop the show being sold to numerous Asian and African countries, and in 1984 an independent producer made a fourth series, for export only.[12] Foreigners apparently enjoy British jokes about foreigners more than some Britons do. In this show, the "white English" characters represent a norm (caricatural in itself) against which the "other" characters are depicted as linguistically and otherwise deficient. "Diversity" is depicted as the common property of laughable "others".

However, British ethnic comedy has moved on since then, at least in the media, and perhaps also in everyday life. As Marie Gillespie argues,[13] "comic Asians" (and other ethnic caricatures) have given way to "Asian comics": British Black, Asian and otherwise "diverse" comedians are increasingly prominent in mainstream entertainment. Their work undermines xenophobic imaginings based on an absolute distinction between "natives" and "others". Gillespie's recent research project on everyday joke-telling indicates that these forms of professional comedy may also be having some

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11 Trinidadian writer Murray Carlin, in *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* (Nairobi, 1969), quoted in Jyotsna Singh, 'Othello's Identity, Postcolonial Theory and Contemporary Rewritings of *Othello*' [1994], in *New Casebooks. Othello*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004): 171-189 (179).

12 Information based on: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_Your_Language at 7 August 2009 (conformation needed).

13 Marie Gillespie's papers on comedy include: 'Re-claiming the Punchline: British Asian Television Comedy'; delivered at University of Genoa conference, 2004, online at http://www.economiadellacultura.it/appuntamenti/pdf/Marie%20Gillespie.pdf; 'From Comic Asians to Asian Comics: *Goodness Gracious Me*, TV Comedy and Ethnicity' in *Group Identities on French and British Television*, eds M. Scriven. & E. Roberts (Oxford: Berghahn, 2003): 93-108; 'Television Comedy and Anti-Racism' in *The Television Book* (London: British Film Institute, 2002): 116-120; 'Combating Intolerance through TV Comedy', at the Stockholm International Forum Conference on Combating Intolerance, http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Affinity/SIF/DATA/2001/page1356.html (2001).

impact on vernacular, demotic humour.[14] Racist and xenophobic joking persists, but a more "diversity-friendly" sense of humour is also found: jokes which acknowledge a wider range of ethnic and religious differences, and in which the markers of difference are not always only markers of deficiency. This kind of research opens up interesting prospects for combining ethnographic and media-based inquiries into how diversity is lived, depicted, performed, and – potentially – conceptually transformed.

In Germany, a diversification of professional comedy is also underway. The best known example is Kaya Yanar, born in 1973 in Frankfurt am Main of Turkish and Arab parents. In his extremely popular, prize-winning sketch show *Was guckst du?!* (Sat1, 2001-5), Yanar plays the roles of all sorts of ethnics, and exploits mechanisms of affirmation, differentiation and reversal of stereotypes for comic effect and to make satirical points. Some sketches were translated directly from *Goodness Gracious Me*. Yanar's work marked the first "mainstreaming" of an ethnic non-German performer in German television. His use of ethnic stereotypes is regarded as critical and progressive.[15] But the configuration of differences in his work again sets the implicit "self" – the majority ethnicity, German – against the diverse "other". Yanar's chameleon assumption of multiple "other" identities in succession, each as the target of a joke or (through reversal) the joke's surprise subject, tends to reproduce the view of the "self" as enduring, stable, and immune from mockery. Researcher Karin Yeşilada places Yanar in the wider context of Turkish German comedy since the 1980s (in live cabaret and funny books), and she notes that his show enables viewers to laugh about stereotypes, confirming their own superiority to those who "believe" in stereotypes; but other Turkish German comedians confront their audiences with rather more uncomfortable truths.[16] Of course, that is the reason why they are less successful and famous than Yanar is. But if we want to know what effects (if any) the different kinds of shows have on ways of imagining and living with diversity, we need to use ethnographic research methods as well as techniques of textual analysis.

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14 See findings of the Open University / BBC project directed by Marie Gillespie, presented at http://www.open2.net/lennysbritain/jokesurvey_finding.html (2009).

15 E.g. Erol Boran, 'Faces of Contemporary Turkish-German Kabarett', in *Text & Presentation 2004*, ed. Stratos E. Constantinidis (McFarland, 2005): 172-186.

16 Karin *E. Yeşilada*, 'Turkish-German Screen Power – The Impact of Young Turkish Immigrants on German TV and Film', in *German as a Foreign Language*, 1 (2008): 72-99, at http://www.gfl-journal.de/1-2008/yesilada.pdf. See also (on German multi-ethnic cinema) Deniz Göktürk, 'Strangers in Disguise: Role-Play beyond Identity Politics in Anarchic Film Comedy', in *New German Critique*, 92 (2004): 100-122.

This is an important area for further research. Professional comedy, performed on stages, on TV or in films, as well as amateur or demotic comedy, performed in playgrounds, workplaces, social places, at home, or in home-made uploads to YouTube, both involve chains of exchanges of ideas about difference, perceived configurations of diversity, implicit rules governing the acceptability of representations, and experiences of encounters which representations both derive from and enable. In such chains of exchanges, ideas are compared, reinforced, or challenged. The precise intentions and effects involved in any particular exchange require detailed ethnographic study among recipients, transmitters, and inventors of comedic material.[17]

1.2. Diversity or difference in Turkish German literature

Not that comedy is the only place to look. In previous work I've studied the development since the 1970s of Turkish German literature, looking at various concepts of "cosmopolitanism" which are proposed or implied in novels and short stories.[18] I've looked at fiction published in German by writers of Turkish background,[19] as well as work by writers of German or Austrian background which focuses on Turkish fictional characters.[20] Thinking about how diversity is represented in this literary work, my first thought is how little diversity is apparent. The writers generally focus on difference, on the central opposition dividing two ethnically-marked social worlds: that of the Turkish diaspora (occasionally specified as Kurdish or Alevi) and that of the Germans (occasionally Austrians). Concepts of "diversity" come into play firstly where the intrinsic diversity of "Turkish" as a national category is highlighted: the "mosaic" of ethnicities subsumed under Turkish identity. Secondly, "third" ethnic and cultural worlds are mentioned or alluded to, usually in individual characters representing Greeks, Persians, Afro-Germans, etc.; or representing the opportunity

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17 British stand-up comics Shazia Mirza (Iranian, Muslim, female) and Paul Sinha (Indian, Muslim, male, gay), in a broadcast discussion about comedy and ethnicity, stated that most people in their "communities" were pleased to be joked about in mainstream UK comedy contexts, even when the jokes themselves are offensive, because this signals acknowledgment of their presence and (to a minimal extent) their cultural difference. 'Between Ourselves' 4/1, BBC Radio 4, 5 August 2009.

18 Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions* (Rochester NY and Woodbridge: Camden House, 2007).

19 My main examples: Güney Dal, Renan Demirkan, Osman Engin, Aras Ören, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Akif Pirinçci, Saliha Scheinhardt, Alev Tekinay, Zafer Şenocak, Feridun Zaimoglu, Dilek Zaptçioglu.

20 E.g. Jakob Arjouni, Thorsten Becker, Barbara Frischmuth, Sten Nadolny.

for Turks to pass as "other others" (e.g. Turks running Italian restaurants). Such ethnic mis-identifications often occur (e.g. Turkish characters are mis-recognized as Indians, Armenians, etc. [21]). These moments may be comical, but are often tinged with bitterness, and remain isolated, passing moments.

Sometimes, writers attempt to suggest a broader "diversity", e.g. while setting a scene, typically by using the "configurational" device of a *list of proper names* – an enumeration of names of ethnicities or religions, or of personal names with different ethnic connotations.[22] The most striking example of the "enumeration" or "list" device, in this case used to evoke global literary cosmopolitanism, is the novel *Ja, sagt Molly* (1998) by Kemal Kurt. The entire novel is constructed out of encyclopaedic borrowings from about 150 classics of 20th-century "world literature", texts originally written in about 40 different languages, which the author had read variously in Turkish, English, and German. Kurt's novel ends with a 6-page list of his sources: an index of an idiosyncratic global configuration which implicitly challenges other, official configurations of diversity.[23]

Enumerations of multiple differences in fictional texts are usually brief, and convey ambivalence regarding concepts of diversity. A novel by Renan Demirkan provides a good example. She is probably the most widely known German-language writer of Turkish background.[24] Her novel *Es wird Diamanten regnen vom Himmel* (1999) is basically a love story involving ethnically unmarked Germans, with a Greek German secondary character. The problem of achieving harmonious multiculturalism is dwelt on repeatedly by the book's female narrator, as a kind of intellectual theme which accompanies the romance plot. She mentions Paul Simon's "Graceland" album (1986) several times, and other examples of mainsteam "world music" as icons of inter-racial, multi-ethnic, trans-cultural "fusion". Near the middle of the book (pp.139-140), she visits an open-air market in Cologne, where the people behind each stall represent a different nationality or ethnicity: German, French, Turkish, Kurdish, and Greek. Proper names are enumerated to identify these differences. A local woman (speaking dialect) quotes Buddhist wisdom and plays a world music

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21 See Cheesman 2007: 141-3 for an interlinked chain of examples from novels by Sten Nadolny, Osman Engin, and Zafer Şenocak, and Husi Kutlucan's comedy film *Ich Chef Du Turnschuh* (1998).

22 For examples see Cheesman 2007: 120, 129-131, 176.

23 See Cheesman 2007: 53-59.

24 She was a famous television and film actress before she began writing fiction, published several best-selling books, and is nowadays best known for her charity work for children's homes.

CD, which fuses "Norwegian saxophone, Arabic oud and Indian tabla" (a further enumeration). For a moment, in the narrator's mind, the scene seems to represent a harmonious cosmopolitan community, a utopian ideal. She imagines them all voyaging together on a ship (a nomadic cosmopolitan metaphor) which is also an Oriental bazaar (a diversity metaphor). But then the music stops. She returns to reality. She comments: "Nothing had changed. The limited gazes were still sitting all around, stuck in their differences."

Demirkan stresses the discrepancy between "diversity" and "differences". People's "differences" – socially acquired limitations, barriers to consociability – ensure that the co-presence and common activity of people with different backgrounds does not amount to an experience of shared "diversity". The stallholders may present a *spectacle* of "diversity" to others, but only so long as the appropriate sound-track is playing, putting the viewer into a dream-like state. If the concept of "diversity" is understood ideologically and affirmatively (as in: "celebrate diversity!"), then it refers to a utopian ideal, represented either as some kind of magical fantasy or dream, or else more cynically as a market-place phenomenon, where "identities" (singular or composite) are reified as interchangeable products, like CDs.

This sort of cool, unimpressed view of invocations of "diversity" is implicit throughout Turkish German literature, mostly expressed in the *absence* of any attempt to depict "diversity" rather than "differences". When writers directly reflect on diversity, they are cautious and sceptical. Emine Sevgi Özdamar provides a good example.[25] In a much-quoted essayistic short story of 1992,[26] she describes rehearsing a production of one of her plays in Frankfurt am Main, with a large multi-eth-

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25 Özdamar was a famous actress, scriptwriter and director in Germany before she began publishing books: autofictional texts, based on her own life, but highly imaginative, and experimental in literary terms. Hers were the first Turkish German literary works to be acknowledged by the mainstream German-language literary establishment. They are still the primary point of reference in critical studies of German Turkish literature. There are countless studies. E.g.: Frauke Matthes, 'Beyond Boundaries? V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* and Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *MutterZunge* as Creative Processes of Arrival', in eSharp 5 (2004), at http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_41169_en.pdf; Kate Roy, 'Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Leïla Sebbar: Mapping Global Intertexts in 'Local' Texts', in The International Journal of the Humanities, 4/8 (2007): 73-82; Margaret Littler, 'Intimacy and Affect in Turkish-German Writing: Emine Sevgi Ozdamar's The Courtyard in the Mirror', in Journal of Intercultural Studies, 29/3 (2008): 331-345.

26 'Schwarzauge und sein Esel', in *Die Zeit* (26 Feb 1992; http://www.zeit.de/1993/09/Schwarzauge-und-sein-Esel); reprinted with English translation and commentary by David Horrocks and Frank Krause, as 'Black Eye and His Donkey', in *Turkish Culture in German Society* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1995): 55-70.

nic cast. She stresses the scope for conflict and injury through accidental and wilful mis-understandings and insults. Nobody in the cast can resist seeing others in terms of caricatural ethnic, religious and national ascriptions. Interpersonal relationships are often poisoned, as international and inter-ethnic politics are transferred into the semi-public arena of rehearsals. Still, in the end, the play does get staged. And afterwards, most members of the cast have become firm friends: a mini-utopia has been achieved, as differences have been worked through and resolved. But this is strictly limited to the sphere of inter-personal "encounters". Progress depends on a continuous process of intensive collective *work*, in which individuals cease to see one another through the grid of received configurations of diversity.

Most Turkish German writing is too fixated on the German-Turkish opposition to give much attention to "other" diversity. The novelist Yadé Kara is a partial exception. Her first book, *Selam Berlin* (2003), featured a bi-cultural young man on the make in Berlin. In the sequel, *Cyprus Café* (2008), her hero moves to London's Green Lanes area, gets involved in Turkish and Greek Cypriot diaspora politics, and admires the fascinating diversity of London street life. It would be interesting to compare this with a novel such as Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), as "outsider" and "insider" depictions of London's diversity. But Kara's cast of primary characters is ethnically and religiously much less diverse than Smith's.

The most inclusive literary depiction of German urban diversity is in the social-critical crime fiction of Jakob Arjouni.[27] Arjouni represents Frankfurt am Main as a US-style cosmopolis ("Mainhattan"), where the ancestors of the person you're about to encounter might come from any part of the world, and they might believe in any god, or none. Arjouni himself is a native German. His books feature a Turkish-born (but not Turkish-speaking) detective, Kemal Kayankaya. His associates and antagonists have a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. But this diversity is of a particular kind. In keeping with the crime genre, Arjouni's work focuses on conflict and illegality: the "black" economy, abuse of women, criminalisation and exclusion of "foreigners", stereotyping, prejudice, racist violence. Non-German ethnicities tend to be organised as gangs. The plots often involve "white"-skinned and "white-collar" German criminals, who exploit illegal underclass migrants. Gang leaders – acting against xenophobic stereotype – assist the detective-hero in unmasking the majority ethnic villains. So the ethnoscape is highly diverse, but the structuring resembles that

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27 *Happy Birthday, Türke* (1985) was followed by three more Kayankaya novels. See Arlene Teraoka, 'Detecting Ethnicity: Jakob Arjouni and the Case of the Missing German Detective Novel', in *The German Quarterly*, 72/3 (1999): 265-89; also Cheesman 2007: 90ff.

in *England People Very Nice*: privileged "natives" opposite the diversity of subordinated "others", who are in conflict with one another (or temporarily united against the common oppressor). At the same time, Arjouni's work suggests that ethnic and cultural identities are superficial and insignificant compared with individuals' moral natures. This is symbolised by Kayankaya: ethnically Turkish, but culturally German-cosmopolitan, and above all *ethically* heroic.

1.3. Zaimoglu on ethnic and religious difference

Arjouni's work is avowedly anti-xenophobic and anti-racist. Writers of German Turkish literature don't want to leave differences as they find them. But they don't posit "diversity" or related concepts ("multiculturalism", "cosmopolitanism") as potential solutions to conflicts, or even as adequate terms for describing situations. They share a pedagogical will to make readers criticise and free themselves from particular mental differences, what Demirkan calls the "limited gazes" they are "stuck in" – primarily with regard to German and Turkish mutual perceptions, and occasionally more broadly. One of the most interesting writers in this respect is Feridun Zaimoglu.[28] Firstly, his approach to anti-racism (in his early work) was unusually aggressive and, in fact, effective. Secondly, in more recent work, he is unusually positive about religiosity. Other writers of Turkish German literature give religion little prominence, or depict it only negatively (in terms of the "backwardness" of traditional belief, Islam as oppressive of women, etc). The authors of this literature are secularists, except for Zaimoglu.

   In his first published work (in the mid and late 1990s) Zaimoglu proclaimed the emergence of a new, aggressive counter-culture among Turks who had grown up in Germany, *and* their multi-ethnic associates, under the name "Kanak Attak". He deployed the language of racist abuse ("Kanake" as hate-speech) against racist perceptions, and used an array of cultural forms (books, film, video, live performances, TV appearances) as vehicles of social protest, representing young Turkish Germans as rebels against their symbolic and social subordination. The "Kanak" banner or brand-name stressed "difference" as an effect of racialization, an ascription, rather than an essential, immanent, ethnic property. Zaimoglu's interventions highlighted social, legal and political exclusion (from citizenship, from better schools and higher education, from the labour market) and grass-roots cultural strategies to *claim* inclu-

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28 Cheesman 2007: 1-11 and passim.

sion, the prime example being his own work. "Diversity" ("Vielfalt") had not yet become a policy watchword. He attacked "multiculturalism", as constructed by the German state in projects such as urban festivals, using the satirical term "Multikulti-Zoo": a spectacle of exoticized, objectified, trivialized foreign-minority cultures, displayed for the pleasure of the majority, "where the Kebab Enclosure is located next to the Andean Music Pavilion".[29]

In another satirical representation of ethnic diversity, Zaimoglu depicts a demotic configuration derived from dominant transnational media (especially MTV), structured as a hierarchy of sexual desirability, as perceived by angry young Turkish German men, with regard to the exotic-erotic preferences they attribute to young native German women:

> And anyway, a kanake as a boyfriend is right down at the bottom of the multiculti-list, better is a jamaica-nigger with a dreadlock-wig, better still a smooth latino, and the totally hot top crown is a yankee-nigger, that's what the native pussy-monopoly goes wild for.[30]

"Others" – "non-whites" – in order of prestige: African-American, Latino, Jamaican, and "Kanake". Policy may encourage everyone in plural societies to get along together as equals, while the culture industry marketizes "ethnic identities" using pseudo-egalitarian concepts ("world", "global", "diversity"). But in Zaimoglu's text, just as in *England People Very Nice*, sexual relations are the acid test of "community relations", and they directly reflect power relations.

Using Vertovec's terms, this riff on MTV-style diversity is an example of a representation which depicts how travelling representations become demotic configurations which structure (enable and disable) encounters. Fictions and social realities readily inter-breed. Zaimoglu's early work – tirelessly promoted by the writer on tour throughout Germany – also had direct effects on reality. Despite his seemingly narrow focus on Turkish and sometimes Kurdish subjects, he effectively mobilised *multi-ethnic* anti-racist activism against "identity politics" (i.e. both state policies and "community" mobilisations which are based on ethnic categories). "Turks" in Germany are often taken to represent "non-Germans" in general (or at least, racialised non-Germans). Zaimoglu's uses of demotic, youth-culture concepts of diversity

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29 Feridun Zaimoglu, 'Preface to *Kanaki Speak* [*Kanak Sprak*]', trans. Tom Cheesman, in *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955-2005*, edited by Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling and Anton Kaes (California UP, 2006): 405-8.

30 Feridun Zaimoglu, *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1995): 22 (trans. Tom Cheesman). No capitalisation in the original.

encouraged many others to seize cultural opportunities to "represent" their "differences". But because demotic terms like "Kanake" are transparently caricatural and emotive, his work also encouraged critical attitudes to concepts of essential difference. He helped to organize a broad, multi-ethnic constituency, represented by a nationwide anti-racist cultural activist network: "Kanak Attak". This association is still active, uniting people of all sorts of ethnicity in various campaigns and actions – often using comedic devices[31] – against identity politics.[32]

In one more link in this chain of configurations-representations-encounters, the genesis of a multi-ethnic anti-racist network was fictionalised in a novel by Dilek Zaptcioglu (*Der Mond isst die Sterne auf*, 2001). She describes an informal association founded by a group of Berlin schoolboys, with various family backgrounds, led by a Turkish German. She places their project in the historical tradition of internationalist communist organisations, suggesting affinities between secular Jewish German socialists of the nineteenth century (Heinrich Heine, Karl Marx, et al.), and "hyphenated" Germans today, when they engage in leftist cultural activism. The Berliners' association welcomes people of any ethnicity, provided that they demonstrate the appropriate political mentality. *Political-ideological* rather than ethnic difference is the key boundary here.[33]

In his recent work, Zaimoglu lays little stress on ethnic difference, or even on politics, and much more on religiosity. His early anti-racist anger has been overshadowed by anti-secularist anger. He is the only prominent imaginative writer in the western world who describes himself as a Moslem, though of a very heterodox kind (many believing Moslems, considering his life-style, would dispute his right to that description). In public polemics, he defends deistic religiosity (*not* religions, religious authorities, or religious movements) against contemporary secularists.[34] The religiosity which he advocates and depicts in his fictions is ecumenical in a "New Age", individualistic way. He draws mainly on Christian and Islamic, or pre-Christian and pre-Islamic, heterodox, demotic traditions of belief and ritual practice.[35]

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31 See for example the satirical documentary video clips at www.kanak-tv.de/.

32 See www.kanak-attak.de and the Kanak Attak manifesto in English (1998) at www.kanak-attak.de/ka/about/manif_eng.html.

33 Cheesman 2007: 27, 173-82.

34 Cheesman 2007: 74-81.

35 In the novel *Liebesbrand* (2008) the Turkish German hero pursues an erotic quest while his native German object of desire pursues a spiritual quest leading to a highly idiosyncratic Catholicism.

Of course Zaimoglu's "conversion" from anti-racism to anti-secularism is politically motivated. It coincides with the shift in the west after 9/11 from xenophobic discourses anchored in "race" and ethnicity, to xenophobic discourses anchored in religion – above all Islamophobia. At the same time he has also moved his cultural struggle into the (in Germany) highly prestigious domain of the theatre. Writing in partnership with Günter Senkel, since 2003 Zaimoglu has had numerous scripts produced in leading theatres. Several plays involve three-way battles between secularism, organised religion, and personal religiosity. Their *Nathan Messias* (2008) is loosely based on G.E.Lessing's classic of Enlightenment drama, *Nathan der Weise* (1779), but their Nathan dismisses as hypocrisy and weakness the "tolerance" which Lessing advocated, and attacks both organised religions and secularism.[36] Their drama-documentary *Schwarze Jungfrauen* (2006) gives the stage to assorted Islamic (mostly Islamist) German women of varied ethnicity, who in some cases reveal their stultifying assent to religious authority and political indoctrination.[37] Both these plays, as well as a modernized *Romeo und Julia* (2004) (with Muslim Montagues) were devised in collaboration with the director Neco Çelik, who broadly shares Zaimoglu's religious and political views.[38] However, Zaimoglu and Senkel's most successful play by far is *Othello*: premiered in 2003, directed by Luk Perceval, the production has become part of the repertoire at the Munich Kammerspiele, with the status of a cult classic, and has been widely toured. Their script makes the hero a spiritual seeker, who submits to Desdemona as to a goddess.

About 90% of their *Othello* script is translated from Shakespeare; the rest is invention. It is an adaptation or "tradaptation": a genre which is typical of contemporary theatre work. I discuss it in detail elsewhere.[39] In order to make sense of their *Othello*, I had to read not only Shakespeare's *Othello*, but also other German *Othello*s. This was the genesis of the comparative project reported in the second part of this paper.

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36 I began a study of this play while in Göttingen at the MPI-MMG in summer 2008, but the authors told me they were withdrawing it, pending major revision of the text. In it, they appear to have independently (unknowingly) rediscovered the medieval pantheistic heresy of the "three impostors", which was revived in the Enlightenment and underlies Lessing's fable of inter-religious tolerance; cf. Friedrich Niewöhner: *Veritas sive Varietas. Lessings Toleranzparabel und das Buch von den drei Betrügern* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1988).

37 For an assessment in English, see: http://www.goethe.de/kue/the/nds/nds/aut/zai/stu/enindex.htm.

38 Interview with Çelik and Zaimoglu: http://www.islamische-zeitung.de/?id=7106 (2006). Interview with Çelik: http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-757/_nr-10/_p-1/i.html (2008).

39 TC, 'Shakespeare and Othello in Filthy Hell: Zaimoglu and Senkel's Politico-Religious Tradaptation', forthcoming in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*.

2. A comparative translation experiment

The main finding of this experimental study is this: German literary and theatre culture since the 18th century has conceived of the black tragic hero in six different successive ways, in six periods demarcated by political events. The most recent period – my starting-point – begins in 2000. In that year, the redefinition of German citizenship on a non-ethnic basis came into legal force. This was a profoundly symbolic political event for some. It has made no difference to the work of most translators – only to the one translator whose ethnic background is non-German: Feridun Zaimoglu.

2.1. The Shakespeare archive and travelling concepts

Many of Shakespeare's plays involve ethnic and religious conflict, in Britain, the Mediterranean, and other settings. Some have become key points of reference in western culture's engagement with difference. Two concern key "others" in Europe. Both are set in Venice – in Shakespeare's time, the cosmopolitan capital of a Mediterranean empire, and the key frontier city of Christian Europe against the Ottoman Empire. *The Merchant of Venice* is (amongst other things) about anti-Semitism, and *Othello, the Moor of Venice* is (amongst other things) about what might be called "anti-Moorism" or "anti-non-white-Christian-European-ism".[40]

These plays are canonical in western culture. *Othello* is unavoidable if we want to talk about how "a black man" has been and still is depicted in "white society", as *The Merchant of Venice* is unavoidable if we want to talk about how "a Jew" is represented in "Christian society". The very term "Othello" (as well as being the trade name for a board game with white and black counters) is a much-travelled, limit-case "concept of difference". Any production of *Othello* (for the stage, or for cinema or television screens) – and also every published edition (for general readers, or for students) – involves and stirs a debate about how to represent a "racially different" individual, and that individual as a "representative" of "others" or "strangers" or "outsiders". Every *Othello* confronts and explores its producers' contemporary ideologies of difference.

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40 Anouar Majid attempts to revive "Moor" as a polysemic term of (ethnic, religious, racial) difference in: *We Are All Moors: Ending Centuries of Crusades Against Muslims and Other Minorities* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota, 2009); esp. pp. 63-64 on the "indiscriminate" historical uses of the term.

When we talk about these plays, we are talking about three hundred years of re-interpretation and re-appropriation, on stage, in print, in other media, and not least in classrooms and seminars. Much scholarship tries to reconstruct just what Shakespeare meant to say about black people and Jews in these plays, or what his contemporaries might have taken him to be saying. Yet more scholarship investigates how these plays have been played, or otherwise used (commentated, taught, filmed, alluded to in other texts, etc) in various times and places, and what meanings have been intended and/or conveyed on those occasions. The sheer wealth of the total "Shakespeare archive"[41] – not least the huge numbers of translations into many different languages – makes it a fascinating resource for the study of representations of ethnic difference as they travel in space and time. But how is one to chart a passage through such a vast sea of sources?

I'm dealing in this paper with *theatre scripts*: with texts, rather than performances. That means omitting a lot of what makes theatre theatre, of course. But when we're interested in representations and translations, scripted words take us a long way. When you study translated theatre texts, they turn out to be "representative representations". The language which translators use tends to represent widely shared, rather than idiosyncratic "ways of looking" (Vertovec) of the script's place and time of production. Comparing translations across space and time raises interesting questions about how general "ways of looking" as well as specific "concepts" travel, and are modified, in translation processes.

2.2. Shakespeare re-translations

In many cultures – such as German-language culture – many of Shakespeare's plays and poems have practically been (in sociological terms) "assimilated" or "integrated" or (in Translation Studies terms) "naturalized" or "domesticated" into the "host culture". They are not regarded as foreign imports, but as integral to the culture. Shakespeare as "world literature" is "at home" in many different cultural contexts. In this process, Shakespearean ways of looking at diversity or concepts of difference have been translated and re-translated, over and over again. This provides a fascinating

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41 This term is used by Poonam Trevidi in 'Othello's Travels in New Zealand: Shakespeare, Race and National Identity', in *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance across Media, Genres, and Cultures*, eds Pascale Aebischer, Edward J. Esche, and Nigel Wheale (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 74-92 (74).

resource for study: multiple historical series of different translations of the same original.

Re-translations are made because translations age. A translation which is good for one period often seems inadequate in a later period: it seems dated with respect to newer usage in the translation (target) language, or inaccurate in the light of newer interpretations of the original, or inadequate in relation to changed poetic or other cultural norms. One translation may be granted "classic" status (as in Germany with the Schlegel/Tieck edition), and dominate the market, but this does not stop new translations being written. This is also true in English, although here, no writer now dares to "compete" with the original. For much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, what people read or acted as "Shakespeare's plays" in English was repeatedly being rewritten for the sake of clarity and to conform with current norms of decency – avoiding sexual, religious, and political offense. But since the late nineteenth century, the notion of the "original", "authentic" Shakespearean text has been dominant, mandatory both in the classroom and in theatres in the English-speaking world. Much of Shakespeare is incomprehensible to ordinary English readers or audiences today, and has been for generations. Students consult annotated editions of the earliest printed texts, with modernized spellings and footnotes which "gloss" or explicate what the words mean. Scholars' successive re-interpretations are loaded with their ideological assumptions regarding issues such as gender and sexuality, "race" and ethnicity. More recently, students can also obtain parallel text editions with a "modernized English" translation facing the original text. These translations are designed to avoid offense, just like the "family editions" of earlier centuries. Yet, despite the evident problems of comprehension, English-language theatres use the original text of Shakespeare, because anything else would be "inauthentic".

In the rest of the world, "their" Shakespeare is a translation anyway. If theatre people or publishers are dissatisfied with an existing translation for any reason, they can revise it, or start afresh. Most of the plays and poems, in most languages, have been translated several times. German writers in particular have been re-translating Shakespeare since the 1760s, on a very impressive scale. The standard bibliography details over 300 published editions of the complete or selected works: more than one a year on average.[42] That includes reprints of the same translations, but one scholar recently published an anthology of re-translations of one of Shakespeare's Sonnets,

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42 Hansjürgen Blinn and Wolf Gerhard Schmidt, *Shakespeare – deutsch. Bibiliographie der Übersetzungen und Bearbeitungen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2003): 25-82 (section C 1).

with over 150 different German versions of that one poem.[43] Without searching all too hard, in six months I have collected about 40 re-translations of *Othello*, including seven adaptations, or plays based on Shakespeare's (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows a significant upsurge in German *Othello*-work in the 1970s, but three of the seven translations are study editions, rather than for the stage and ordinary readers. There is a far bigger upsurge in the 21st century, and also a diversification of kinds of work: adaptations, rather than translations, are suddenly commoner; for the first time, there are adaptations for children; and also for the first time, adaptations are being translated into German from third languages (Dutch and Portuguese,

Table 1. German *Othello* translators, redactors, adaptors

By period/decade (based on date of publication, or of translation activity, if documented as significantly earlier than publication).

SOURCES: Blinn/Schmidt, *Shakespeare – deutsch. Bibliographie* (2003) and the catalogue of the Association of German Theatrre and Media Publishers (VDB: theatertexte.de), last consulted in July 2009.

KEY: **Bold type = adaptation ('based on').**   * = not in *Shakespeare – deutsch* (includes all post-2000 texts).   + = script I've not yet seen.   S = study edition.   T = re-translation from a third language.   Y = for young people.

1760-1860	1860-1920	1920-	1930-	1940-	1950-	1960-	1970-	1980-	1990-	*2000-
Baudissin	Bodenstedt	Wolff	*Engel	*^{S}Brunner				*Rüdiger		**Bärfuss**
Schiller	Gildemeister			Schröder			^{S}Bolte/Hamblock			Buhss
Voss	Gundolf			*von Zeynek			^{S}Engler			Karbus
Wieland	Jordan						Fried			^{Y}**von Düffel**
Kringsteiner	Ortlepp				Flatter		^{S}Klose			Wachsmann
	Schmidt				Rothe		Laube			**Zaimoglu/Senkel**
	Schücking				Schaller		*Lauterbach			**Zimmer**
	Vischer						Swaczynna			+^{T}**von Verschuer**
										+^{TY}**Dethier**
									Günther	
									*Motschach	

in the two instances referred to). This increase and diversification follows general trends in European theatre work: lessening respect for tradition, increasing pedagogical work, and increasing international exchange. These factors all favour adaptations of cross-culturally familiar classics. But I tested the frequency of new *Othello*s against *Macbeth*s, and the results confirm that there really is a new intensity to *Othello*-work in German, relative to other Shakespeare plays.[44] The increase is world-wide,

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43 Ulrich Erckenbrecht's *Shakespeare Sechsundsechzig* (Kassel: Muriverlag, 1996) reprints 88 German versions of Sonnet 66. The revised edition (2001) contains 44 more, and a further 22 were added in a supplement to the 2004 edition. That makes 154. At this rate of exponential increase, by 2016 there will be over 250 versions.

44 I compared brute numbers of German *Othello* and *Macbeth* texts: single editions (up to the 1990s) in Blinn and Schmidt's bibliography (2003, sections C 3.20 and C 3.26), and post-2000 texts in the stage publishers' script catalogue at theatertexte.de. The bibliogra-

according to Shakespeare scholars, and it relates to the increased political and cultural pre-occupation with ethnic diversity and the "genealogy" of "racial conflicts".[45] In Germany in particular, the pre-occupation with difference has in some ways changed since the revision of citizenship law in 2000, which broke down the absolute distinction between "Germans" (as an ethnic-cum-national category) and "others".

2.3. The re-translation sample

Rather than attempt to compare entire plays, I selected two sample lines from Shakespeare's text: lines chosen because they represent the play's hero, using ideologically loaded terms, in a way which poses particular challenges to translators. The lines form a rhyming couplet which describes Othello in a subtly joking way.[46] The overall sense of this couplet is far from plain and simple. Of its fourteen words, at least six can be understood in more than one way, including the two most important key words: "fair" and "black". Faced with such an ambiguous text, if you want to write a usable translation (for people to speak on stage, or read for pleasure), you have to be selective. You must choose an interpretation. (Translations are always selective interpretations.) All the German translations are relatively unambiguous, but they convey a very wide range of chosen meanings. The key words are translated in a wide range of different ways. Most translators omit some of the key words entirely.

For example, the canonical "Schlegel-Tieck" edition of Shakespeare's complete works (first published in the 1830s, *Othello* translation by Baudissin) is the standard, best-known, most widely read and most often performed, even today. Its language is antiquated, in much the same way as the language of Goethe and Schiller is antiquated. This "classic" translation of the couplet omits the key word "fair", and translates the key word "black" as "häßlich": "ugly". These choices were not idiosyncratic. They were partly legitimated by scholarship in historical semantics at the time,

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phy has 52 entries for *Othello*, 114 for *Macbeth*. The catalogue has 10 post-2000 *Othello*s, and 13 *Macbeth*s. Before 2000, *Macbeth* was twice as frequently re-translated or adapted. Since 2000, *Othello* has almost caught up.

45 Michael Neill, 'Introduction', *The Oxford Shakespeare: Othello* (Oxford: OUP, 2006): 1.

46 Several other joking "colour couplets" occur in *Othello*. The Duke's couplet is later echoed by Iago, prompted by Desdemona, making obscene, racist and misogynistic puns involving "fairness [beauty] and wit", "black and witty", "white" or "wight" [a person], "her blackness" [her vagina], "fair and foolish", and "foul [ugly, wicked] and foolish" (2.1.121-142). These couplets add the topics of intelligence and sex to those of the Duke's couplet: morality, gender, beauty, rank, and colour.

but more importantly, they were ideologically determined. Other translators of the same period made very similar choices. Comparison of the whole set of translations shows that translators' choices are always bound by implicit ideological rules regarding the representation of the black hero.

Here is the couplet:

> If virtue no delighted beauty lack
> Your son-in-law is far more fair than black. (*Othello* 1.3.291-2)

This needs some explanation. The dramatic context is near the end of the first act, or exposition of the play. The speaker is the highest-ranking figure in the play, the Duke of Venice. He is addressing the senator Brabantio, and talking about Othello, the Duke's trusted military general. Othello has just married Desdemona, Brabantio's daughter, without seeking Brabantio's permission. Brabantio – horrified at his daughter marrying "such a thing" (*Othello* 1.2.71) – has protested to the Duke. The Duke has dismissed his protest. The Duke exits with these words, spoken in the hearing of Othello, Desdemona, and most of the cast of the play. The Duke's convoluted phrasing (hypothetical question, double negative) and his complex punning convey his aristocratic style. As the political sovereign, he combines moral, soldierly, physical/aesthetic, and predictive authority, and he plays with corresponding multiple meanings. It's a very refined kind of joke.

Many of us now, in the year 2009, will assume that the Duke is talking about skin-colour: "fair" = "white", "black" = "black". But this is only part of what he means, and perhaps not the primary meaning. Shakespeare and his contemporaries used "fair" much more often as a term of aesthetic and moral judgment than as a visually descriptive term. "Black" was also very frequently used as a moral-aesthetic term, and when used as a visual term, "black" commonly referred to (in modern racial terms) "white" European people, with dark complexions or colouring: "black" meant dark-eyed, dark-haired, often connoting lower-class (with skin exposed to the elements, unlike the aristocracy, and without the benefit of skin-lightening cosmetics).

What the Duke says is – with possible modern synonyms in approximate order of contemporary relevance –:

> If virtue *[manliness; strength and courage; moral goodness]* (can be said to) not lack delightful *[pleasing; bright-shining; non-fearsome]* beauty, then your son-in-law is far more fair *[beautiful; morally good; light-skinned; auspicious; elevated]* than black *[dark-skinned; morally wicked; sinister; inauspicious; lowly]*.

Translators have lots of scope for making choices here, especially if they have access to information about historical semantics (which usually is the case with German translators). The array of ambiguities means that a translation in terms of "schwarz" and "weiß" ("black" and "white") is far from being an inevitable choice. And in fact, of thirty German translators, from the 1760s to the present, only five have chosen to use that pair of terms.[47]

2.4. Summary of findings

The story revealed by comparing all the translations I have found is summarized in Table 2, which sets out period-specific, implicit rules which translators obeyed. What follows is a simplified narrative, with selected examples.

Period 1: 1760s-1860s

Through most of the 19th century, Othello was represented as *not black*. A "black tragic hero" was inconceivable: a paradox. Black Africans were represented in German culture as generically savage and sub-human. *Othello* was regarded as a drama about jealousy, and Shakespeare's choice of a black man as hero was regarded as inexplicably tasteless. Theatre productions presented an "Oriental" or "Arabic" or "Berber" hero, rather than a "Negro" (this was not only in Germany, and the tendency persists widely even today). In this couplet, German translators completely avoid the term "black" and any other colour terms which might suggest ethnic difference.

> Schiller (1800s)
> Wenn je die Tugend einen Mann verklärt, / Ist Euer Eidam schön und liebenswert.
> If ever virtue transfigured a man, / your son-in-law is beautiful and lovable.

As mentioned, the canonical Schlegel/Tieck edition gives "ugly" for "black". This interpretation of "black" as metaphorical usage (the contrary of "fair" = "beautiful") was supported by the historical semantics of the nineteenth century, although it is not supported by more recent scholarship on Renaissance English. This version (written by Wolf Graf Baudissin) has been continually present in German culture ever since, in print, on stage, in classrooms, etc.:

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47 A fuller analysis with documentation of all the translations, sources, and contextual data, is in preparation for *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

Table 2: Period-specific rules for translating an *Othello* colour couplet

Period 1. 1760s to 1860s: pre-national 'colour blindness'.
Rule 1: Avoid all colour terms.
Before the foundation of the German nation-state, and its acquisition of extra-European colonies, Othello's 'blackness' has no ideological significance. Translators either omit black' or translate it as 'ugly'. A 'black hero' is inconceivable, an oxymoron. 'Blackness' is incompatible with 'virtue'. This 'colour blindness' corresponds to a primitive or non-ideological racism.

Period 2. 1870s to 1910s: national-imperial 'black to light'.
Rule 2: Translate 'black' and 'fair' metaphorically in terms of '(lack of) light'; avoid 'black' as a physical descriptor.
The metaphor of light and darkness derives (?) from imperial ideology: civilizing ('bringing light to') regions of darkness. 'Black' is now ideologically significant, but colour blindness (the impossibility of 'black hero') persists with regard to Othello's physical and ethnic blackness. His otherness is symbolic; not an actual, physical, ethnic 'blackness'.

Period 3. 1920s to 1950s, national-fascist, biological racist 'black to dark'.
Rule 3: Translate 'black' as 'dark' or as 'black man'; translate 'fair' as 'white', or omit.
The categories of modern racism are used. Otherness as blackness is physical, ethnic, and (anti-)civilizational. Gender is emphasised. The problem of the 'black hero' as oxymoron is confronted. He is a potential threat. In some cases, the implicit dramaturgy excludes Othello as interlocutor: the Duke talks to Brabantio without acknowledging Othello's presence.

Period 4: 1950s-1980s, post-fascist exoticising 'beautiful black'.
Rule 4: Translate 'black' and 'fair' as 'black' and 'beautiful'.
Ethnic blackness is positively aestheticized, exoticized and eroticized. This translation rule was established in the 1950s, well before the US 'Black is Beautiful' campaign slogan. The rule applied equally in West and East Germany and in Austria. Egalitarian humanism was official ideology in all these states, but entirely compatible with exoticizing representations. The 'black hero' is no longer a problem. Othello's exotic otherness presents a pleasing spec-tacle. The translations implicitly rebuke fascist ideology; racism is associated with fascism.

Period 5: 1990s, moral anti-racist 'black as white'.
Rule 5: Translate 'black' and 'fair' as 'black' and 'white', and describe a black-to-white metamorphosis.
'Black' and 'white' are imagined switching places, in miniature anti-racist parables. The Duke implicitly addresses the audience over the heads of characters on stage. He suggests that the concept 'black hero' is a problem for some, and should not be. Racism is addressed as a current social phenomenon, not as belonging to the fascist past. The ideology of anti-racism goes beyond conventional universal humanism to demand active solidarity with the 'other' and active opposition to prejudice.

Period 6: 2000s, political anti-racist 'fair as noble'.
Rule 6: Emphasise class over race; exceptions use rules 4 or 5.
Most translators of the 2000s (so far) follow rules 4 or 5.
The one innovative translation stresses Othello's class status, translating 'fair' as 'noble'. This corresponds to a resistant (minority) anti-racist ideology which rejects moral anti-racism, and presents a class-political analysis of racism. Many proponents of this ideology identify as 'migrant' or 'minority' Germans (though perhaps not in these words).

Baudissin (1830s)
Wenn man die Tugend muß als schön erkennen, / Dürft Ihr nicht häßlich Euren Eidam
nennen.
If one must recognise virtue as beautiful, / you may not call your son-in-law ugly.

More recent translations can all be understood as "ripostes" or "corrections" to
Baudissin's "colour-blindness" or suppression of ethnic difference.

Period 2: 1870s-1910s

Late in the 19th century – around the 1870s, when the imperial German nation-state
was founded, and began to seek and acquire colonies in Africa and elsewhere – Othel-
lo began to be depicted as "black" in this couplet. However, the term was disassoci-
ated from physical appearance, instead associated with *lack of light*. The metaphor
of darkness and light which translators use in this period is related to the concept
of the imperial "civilizing mission", bringing enlightenment to the benighted "lesser
breeds".

Gundolf (1900s)
Entbehrt die Tugend Reiz und Schönheit nicht, / Ist euer Eidam minder schwarz als
licht.
If virtue not lack charm and beauty, / your son-in-law is less black than light-filled.

Period 3: 1920s-1950s

From about the end of the First World War, until the 1950s, categories of biological
racism are used. Ethnic difference is now very strongly marked, in physical terms;
Othello appears strongly gendered, and often the couplets suggest that he is fear-
some; the then modish term "dunkel" is often used ("dark", of Africans). This is
the period of political racism and fascism. Fascistic concepts are used even by trans-
lators who oppose the Nazification of culture. The Schlegel/Tieck translation was
officially mandatory in the Third Reich. Translators who privately worked on new
Shakespeare translations (Schröder, Zeynek) were engaged in an act of civil disobe-
dience.

Wolff (1920s)
Leiht Tugend ihre Farbe dem Gesicht, / Ist Euer Eidam weiß, ein Schwarzer nicht.
If virtue lends its colour to the face, / your son-in-law is white, not a black man.

Engel (1930s)
Spricht man von Tugend, als von einem Licht, / Scheint Euer Eidam mir so dunkel nicht.
If one speaks of virtue as of a light, / your son-in-law seems not so dark to me.

Schröder (1940s)
Wo so viel Mut bei so viel Eifer wohnt, / Dünkt Euer Eidam minder schwarz denn blond.
Where so much courage resides with so much zeal, / your son-in-law appears less black than blond.

Zeynek (1940s)
wenn Mannesmut nicht Reiz und Glanz entbehrt, / so ist er, wenn auch schwarz, höchst schätzenswert.
If manly courage is not without charm and radiance, / then he is, even if black, highly estimable.

Period 4: 1950s-1980s

In the post-fascist period, without distinction between capitalist and communist German-speaking countries, Othello is depicted as *beautiful and (or: but) black*. The primary meaning of "fair" is "beautiful", but until this period, that choice was usually avoided, and never paired with "black". This conceptual pairing pre-dates the Civil Rights slogan "Black is Beautiful", but the slogan became well known in Germany and reinforced this translation choice from the late 1960s onwards. Blackness is *exoticized* and *eroticized*. The underlying ideology is humanistic but Eurocentric.

Schaller (1950s)
Wenn Tugend sich mit Schönheit messen kann, / Mehr schön als schwarz ist Euer Tochtermann.
If virtue can be measured with beauty, / your daughter's husband is more beautiful than black.

Laube (1970s)
Wenn Tugend schön ist, hast du jetzt zum Lohn / Nen schwarzen, aber schönen Schwiegersohn.
If virtue is beautiful, you now have as your reward / a black but beautiful son-in-law.

Lauterbach (1970s)
Gilt Tugend als der Schönheit höchste Kron, / Mehr schön als schwarz ist Euer Schwiegersohn.
If virtue is considered beauty's highest crown, / your son-in-law is more beautiful than black.

Period 5: 1990s

Following German unification, and the ensuing upsurge in racist and xenophobic violence, translators of *Othello* assume a social responsibility to create representations of the hero which challenge prejudices. *Morally anti-racist* translations turn the couplet into a miniature anti-racist parable:

Günther (1990s)
Gäbs helle Haut für Edelmut als Preis, / Dann wär Ihr Schwiegersohn statt schwarz reinweiß.

If light skin were a prize for noble-mindedness, / then your son-in-law would be pure white instead of black.

Motschach (1990s)
Wär äußrer Schein stets innrer Werte Preis, / schien mancher Weiße schwarz, manch Schwarzer weiß.

If outward appearance were always the price of [prize for] inner values / many a white man would appear black, many a black man white.

Period 6: 2000s

Othello translations are now more numerous than ever, and they exhibit unprecedented *diversity* in translation choices. Some translators continue to take the *morally anti-racist* approach (Period 5). Many of them revert to the *exotic-eroticism* of the pre-unification period (Period 4). Just one version of the couplet is conceptually innovative. Zaimoglu and Senkel re-configure "race" difference in terms of class antagonism: "fair" is translated as "edel" ("noble"), stressing the centrality of rank in moral and aesthetic differentiation. This represents their resistant ideology, opposed to identity politics: *political anti-racism*:

Zaimoglu/Senkel (2000s)
Solange männliche Tugend mehr zählt als Schönheitsfehler, kann man sagen, Ihr Schwiegersohn ist eher edel als schwarz.

So long as male virtue counts more than minor blemishes, one can say [that] your son-in-law is more noble than black.

In translating Shakespeare's "virtue", they correctly stress gender. In translating "beauty lack", they use a humorous term, "Schönheitsfehler" ("minor blemishes"; more literally, "beauty-flaws"; most literally, "beauty-mistakes"). This choice exploits the common root of the noun "Fehler" ("mistake") and the verb "fehlen" (to lack, to be missing), in order to create a witty interlingual pun. They match the Duke's wit with more wit than most other translators display. And their ideological choice to translate "fair" as a term of difference in rank highlights an aspect of Shakespeare's meaning which all other translators have overlooked.

3. Conclusion

The preceding summary is necessarily truncated and lacking in nuance. But I hope it indicates the potential of comparative translation analysis as a tool in the study of representations of both difference and diversity. The experiment offers proof of concept for a comparative translation studies approach to *literal diversity* (different uses of words) as an index of *diverse concepts* of diversity. In these re-translations, travelling texts encounter travelling ideological concepts of difference: imperial ideologies, biological racism, fascism, Eurocentric humanism, Civil Rights slogans, and different (dominant and resistant) contemporary concepts of anti-racism. These ideological constructs all derive ultimately from travelling discourses, which took (or are taking) historial shape through wider processes of translation: imported to and re-exported from German-language culture, they are disseminated through multiple channels. Among such channels, Shakespeare translations have never been the most socially and politically significant. But they certainly were and are highly symptomatic, and analytically productive. They offer great scope for further comparative, historical and contemporary studies.

My historical periodisation emerged deductively from comparing the translations, but it raises a question: does this approach offer new understandings, if the comparative-analytical procedure simply confirms a conventional view of cultural history as a superstructure resting upon a base of political history? Two answers can be offered. First, the survey of a minute sample of *Othello* is not the end-point of the project, but helps to identify texts of particular interest, which will repay further investigation, using a much wider range of sources and interpretative methods, including far fuller contextualisation. Second, the project emerges from my initial interest in recent and contemporary *Othello*-work. I hoped that knowledge of the past would illuminate the present, and this study in miniature shows that it does, while the findings regarding the diversity of contemporary work are perhaps the most surprising.

This leads me to a final suggestion. Shakespeare's *Othello* has increasing global currency nowadays as "the first play about color that was ever written."[48] My further research will deepen the understanding of how changing German texts relate to changing configurations, representations and encounters of diversity. There is an

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48 Murray Carlin, in *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* (Nairobi, 1969), quoted in Jyotsna Singh, 'Othello's Identity, Postcolonial Theory and Contemporary Rewritings of *Othello*' [1994], in *New Casebooks. Othello*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004): 171-189 (179).

obvious next step, which requires an international, multilingual network of colla-borators. The work needs to be extended comparatively, to all the other languages which play host to Othello. Just this question: how does the Duke's joke about colour play in the rest of the world?