While the 'Schlegel-Tieck' edition of Shakespeare is a familiar concept to many German readers, and to some English ones too, there can be few people nowadays who would ever bother to consider the twelve-odd pages of prolegomena which preface volumes I and III and close volumes VII and IX of the first edition. These modest little pieces by Ludwig Tieck offer no startling revelations, and make no claim to stylistic distinction. And yet, read in the right way, they provide fascinating insights into the history of the Schlegel-Tieck translation during a period for which little other documentation is available. At a time when Schlegel had washed his hands of the whole project, and Tieck's enthusiasm was at best sporadic, these forewords and postscripts afford a rare glimpse into the tensions and rivalries, both internal and external, which beset the translation.

The Schlegel-Tieck edition has gone into history as the German Shakespeare, and nowadays, if it is consulted at all, this is very properly for the interest of the translations themselves. Most readers are probably quite unaware that the quality of those translations is distinctly uneven, and that in fact the famous Shakespeare edition was at best a compromise, at worst a botched job. August Wilhelm Schlegel, whose inspiration the project originally was, produced brilliant translations of seventeen plays between 1797 and 1810, and then lost interest; for the best part of a decade the work languished, until Ludwig Tieck undertook to complete it, in order to protect Shakespeare, and his friend's achievement, against a rival edition by Johann Heinrich Voss and his sons. The Vosses had taken advantage of the hiatus in production to publish their own version of Shakespeare, which was hostile to Schlegel's work, and so to reassert the primacy of Schlegel's achievement, against a rival edition by Johann Heinrich Voss and his sons. The Vosses had taken advantage of the hiatus in production to publish their own version of Shakespeare, which was hostile to Schlegel's work, and so to reassert the primacy of Schlegel's work, Tieck agreed to

1 Shakespeare's dramatische Werke, übersetzt von A. W. von Schlegel, ergänzt und erläutert von Ludwig Tieck (9 vols., Berlin: Reimer, 1825–33). References to the prolegomena are given in square brackets in the text. There is no comprehensive study of the 'Schlegel-Tieck' translation. For details of secondary literature with more or less bearing on the topic, see notes 4, 15, 17, 22.

supervise a new edition of the extant plays, and to arrange for the translation of the remaining nineteen. It was intended that the translations should be his own, but in the end they were all done either by his daughter Dorothea, or his friend Count Baudissin, both accomplished translators, but hardly in Schlegel's league.

As a result, Tieck found himself answering criticism on three fronts simultaneously: against those (including Schlegel himself) who regarded any attempt to tamper with Schlegel's work as impropriety; against admirers of his own who disapproved of his delegating the work of translation to others less gifted; and against the Voss family, delighted by any sign of discord within the enemy camp. The prolegomena to the Schlegel-Tieck edition are thus in the nature of a speech for the defence - the very circumspection of Tieck's phrasing is eloquent testimony to the trickiness of the situation. Tieck's concern throughout is to demonstrate the new edition's right to associate itself with Schlegel, above all by indicating his own appreciation of Schlegel's principles, and his firm resolve that they should remain central to the present work. Initially he underlines his solidarity with Schlegel further by denigration of the Voss translation; later the focus shifts to his own collaborators, as he draws attention to those of their skills most congruent with Schlegel's approach to translation. My intention in this article is to untangle the various strands of the prolegomena, and to show the coherence of purpose behind what appear to be amiable ramblings.

By 1825, when the first volume of the new edition appeared in print, Schlegel's hard-won pre-eminence as a translator was no longer beyond question, although the theory of translation he had put forward in the essay *Etwas über William Shakespeare bei Gelegenheit Wilhelm Meisters* (1796),³ a radical critique of contemporary practice, had been vindicated by the translation of *Romeo and Juliet* he produced a year later, and by all his subsequent work.⁴ Schlegel was the first critic in Germany to suggest that a translation should faithfully reflect its original in every respect: he argued that the translator should


aspire not only to equivalence of register and idiom, but also to a formal equivalence of metre, line-length, etc. Nothing should be added, and nothing left out; it was the translator's task to exercise a kind of 'negative capability' which would allow him to disappear behind his material. The translation, when complete, should stand as a work of art in its own right, without anything to suggest that it was in the nature of a copy.

The fact that Schlegel's ideas form the basis of modern translation practice tends to obscure their controversial status in his own day; up until then it had been common practice for the translator to take liberties with his text, to elaborate or suppress at will. Particularly challenging was the idea that verse should be rendered with verse — even the most distinguished translators took it as read that prose was the customary medium of translation — while metrical equivalence must initially have been regarded as a preposterous notion. The recognition which Schlegel won for his views undoubtedly reflects their essential soundness; nevertheless, given that his theoretical position coincides remarkably closely with his practice as a translator, it seems probable that he persuaded as much by example as by precept. He possessed an admirable linguistic facility and an instinctual sense of rhythm which made the manipulation of language within formal constraints a congenial task; his curiously colourless personality could be readily subsumed within that of his original; at the same time he found it agreeable, given his sense of his own importance, that his work should be considered a work of art in its own right.

It was perhaps that self-importance which was the cause of his undoing, since he quickly became complacent about his achievements. Confident that the public would approve his work whatever he did, he chose to indulge his predilection for historical drama, and after translating a handful of the best-known of Shakespeare's works (Hamlet, The Tempest and Julius Caesar, for example) he settled down to work on a version of the complete cycle of the Histories, from King John to Richard III. By the time he had finished, Schlegel's devotion to Shakespeare had given way to a preference for Calderón (shared, incidentally, by his brother Friedrich), and the rest of the Shakespeare edition was postponed indefinitely, leaving the public with what can only be regarded as a fairly idiosyncratic selection of plays. Reception of Schlegel's work must inevitably have been coloured by his failure to translate some of Shakespeare's most popular pieces, whilst confronting his readers with all three parts of Henry VI; moreover, his unwillingness to renounce his formal claim to the translation for several years left the field open for a rival to win easy popularity by doing versions of the better-known plays.

This was indeed what happened: the Voss translation of Shakespeare was initially conceived as a complementary undertaking, starting with a rendering of Othello commissioned by Schiller in the
absence of a version of the play by Schlegel.\(^5\) When the play was published in 1805, J.H. Voss the younger was careful to express his admiration for Schlegel’s work and to emphasize that he was not poaching on the other man’s territory. Nevertheless, he continued to produce translations of plays for which there was a demand, and between 1810 and 1815 he and his brother Abraham published versions of another seven. The real hostility towards Schlegel came not from the younger Vosses, though, but from their father, the motive force behind the complete translation of Shakespeare published between 1818 and 1829. Of the thirteen plays contributed to this edition by J.H. Voss the elder, eleven were works already translated by Schlegel (compare this with three by J.H. Voss the younger and three by his brother Abraham).

The challenge to Schlegel took a theoretical form as well, for the Vosses explicitly rejected Schlegel’s euphony and grace in favour of a more robust, uncomfortable approach.\(^6\) J.H. Voss the younger, their spokesman, argued in an article written for the periodical *Hermes* in 1818 that Schlegel had emasculated Shakespeare, whose language called for earthy, potent equivalents, not insubstantial incantations. Voss also accused Schlegel of a lack of precision, claiming that he did not go far enough in his pursuit of equivalence; in Voss’s opinion, not only should one line of original text *invariably* be rendered with one line in the target language (a principle proclaimed by Schlegel but not always strictly adhered to), the order of elements within that line should also be retained. This principle of ‘Begrifstellung’ \([sic]\),\(^7\) a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of equivalence, gives rise to most of the eccentricities of the Voss translation, accounting for its awkward density and its breathlessness (a superabundance of elision and apocope is the only way of fitting in all the words). Unfamiliarity of diction accounts for the rest: unlike Schlegel, who believes in making the foreign accessible, Voss insists that translation should retain its alien qualities, and attempts to convey these through rare, invented, and dialect words.

However true it may be that the radicals of one generation become the conservatives of the next, it may nevertheless surprise us that Schlegel’s ideas were so rapidly superseded, and that a considerable innovator should be accused of not having gone far enough. The fact that they were so quickly taken for granted may be, of course, a tribute to the incontrovertibility of his ideas, but this must have been cold comfort in the face of such intemperate attack. Whereas in 1805

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\(^{5}\) See Oberlehrer Dr Egbring, *Johann Heinrich Voss der Jüngere als Übersetzer des Macbeth von W. Shakespeare* (Münster: Druck der westfälischen Vereinsdruckerei, 1911).


\(^{7}\) ‘Aus einem Brief an den Recensenten . . . ’, 223; Voss Shakespeare translation, I. liv.
Schlegel had been described by Voss the younger in the preface to *Othello* as an ‘incomparable’ and ‘consummate’ translator, the *Hermes* article accuses him of producing a nerveless, merely ‘grammatical’ translation, whose faults include

ein pedantisches Süßthun gegen die weimarische Sofa- und die jenaische Philister-sprache, und Streben nach der flachsten Verständlichkeit; Unklarheit der Begriffe durch falschgewählte Redensarten; zierliche Überfärnung des Mangelhaften, und eine für das blöde Auge blendende Glätte.

[a pedantic dalliance with the language of the Weimar salon and that of Jena philistinism, a striving for the flatly comprehensible, a lack of conceptual clarity as a result of ill-chosen turns of phrase, a decorative varnish to cover up inadequacies, and a polish which dazzles the naked eye].

That the Vosses’ hostility played its part in the history of the Schlegel-Tieck edition can be seen from Schlegel’s correspondence with his publisher, Reimer. On 14 April 1817, in response to what were evidently increasingly urgent requests, Schlegel wrote to Reimer from France, where he was now living as the companion of Madame de Stael, explaining his reluctance to complete the Shakespeare translation. Practical considerations apart, Schlegel’s excuses again point to that egotism which is so unsympathetic an aspect of his character: he ‘no longer feels that Shakespeare has anything to offer him, in terms of either career or intellectual development’. He is depressed at the inability of the Germans to pay him due respect: whereas his *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (a substantial section of which had been devoted to Shakespeare) were popular throughout Europe, in Germany they were only just going into their second edition. On the other hand, Schlegel records his concern at rumours that the Vosses are about to bring out a rival Shakespeare translation. He does not disguise the contempt he feels for Voss and his family, referring to them as ‘die ganze Uebersetzungs-Schmiede-Sippschaft’ [that whole tribe of translation-smiths], and deriding their intention to publish their own Shakespeare as ‘eine grosse Imper-tinenz’ [a great impertinence]. But he is canny enough to recognize the financial threat they pose to his own edition of Shakespeare, and recommends delaying tactics to Reimer: a request for public subscriptions and a promise of great things to come.

Two and a half years later, however, Schlegel finally conceded that he saw no prospect of making progress with Shakespeare, and agreed with apparent willingness to the completion of the edition by

8 ‘Aus einem Brief an den Recensenten’, 222.
Tieck, whom he described as ‘mein vortrefflicher Freund . . . der genialische seit vielen Jahren mit Shakspeare vertraute Dichter’ [my excellent friend . . . the brilliant poet whose familiarity with Shakespeare goes back many years]. A contract was duly signed with Tieck, but by this time the damage had been done: the first volume of the Voss translation had appeared in 1818, while the revised Schlegel-Tieck edition only began to appear in 1825. Moreover, that encouraging cordiality on Schlegel’s part was short-lived, for he quickly took offence at the liberties he felt Tieck had taken with his work, and his vanity was wounded by public association with a man he considered his intellectual inferior.

Whatever his private response to Schlegel’s disparaging attitude, Tieck’s public statements express unreserved loyalty to his old friend. Indeed from the first preface (1825) onwards, he records only the utmost admiration for Schlegel’s achievement, which is characterized for him by creative ease, the inimitable balance Schlegel strikes between accuracy and inventiveness, his ability to produce a translation which is also a work of art. The emphasis on artistic creation recalls Romantic aesthetic theory, and one wonders to what extent Tieck is attempting to conjure up a past now lost, when a passion for Shakespeare and a shared belief in the sanctity of art allowed him to make common cause with the Schlegel brothers, both now geographically and spiritually remote. Seen in this light, Tieck’s loyalty to Schlegel amounts to loyalty to a whole literary approach, his defence of Schlegel against Voss the defence of Romantic principles against the contempt of Weimar.

It is certainly true, however, that in practice Tieck is less deferential towards Schlegel. He makes no secret of the fact that he has amended Schlegel’s text in places, attributing this principally to the incompetence of the compositors who had allowed mistakes and omissions to creep into previous editions [I. v–vi]. That this was indeed the case is attested by Bernays,10 but it nevertheless furnished Tieck with an ideal pretext for introducing a considerable number of minor alterations into the translation. His predilection for idiosyncratic readings of Shakespeare is notorious; in the 1825 foreword he implies that amendment on semantic grounds has been minimal, but the cumulative effect of his ‘corrections’ was substantial, and infuriated Schlegel, who was later to demand complete restoration of his original text.11

Indeed, the matter was even grounds for a rare exchange of private letters: in March 1825, Tieck wrote to Schlegel at some length, defending himself against the accusation that he had played the schoolmaster with his friend’s work.12 ‘Es ist ja nur die Rede von Lesearten, von kleinen Vergehn, zuweilen 3 Verse in 2 zusammen zu ziehn’ [we are only talking about the odd turn of phrase and minor error, of the occasional reduction of three lines into two], he pleads, and goes on to point out that both he and Reimer would vastly have preferred Schlegel to undertake these corrections himself; Schlegel, however, had for years shown nothing but contempt for the Shakespeare translation, and had seemed willing for responsibility to pass into Tieck’s hands. Tieck’s loyal admiration for Schlegel’s work is as evident here as it was in his foreword: he describes it as ‘das Musterbild unsrer deutschen Kunstwerke dieser Art’ [the finest example of our German works of art of this kind], and emphasizes that ‘gerade Deine Arbeit des Shakspeare immer das gewesen ist, was ich fast unbedingt bewundert habe’ [it was precisely your work on Shakespeare which I have always admired almost without reservation]. The almost naively enthusiastic tone of the letter confirms the genuineness of Tieck’s sentiments, but, at the same time, he points out the unfairness of Schlegel’s attitude: since Schlegel has concerned himself neither with the translation nor with Shakespeare for many years, whereas Tieck has continued to devote himself to both, to cavil at minor amendments is both ungentlemanly and unjust.

There is a trace in this letter of that nostalgia for the past which I suggested might constitute an important element in Tieck’s motivation, when he reminds Schlegel of the encouragement the older man once gave to his younger friend’s endeavours: ‘Schon im Jahre 1800 wünschtest Du, ich sollte Love’s Labors Lost [sic] übersetzen, schon damals hörtest Du meine Einwendungen und Vorschläge über Shakspeare gern, meine Meinung galt Dir’ [by 1800 you already wanted me to translate Love’s Labour’s Lost, by that time you used already to enjoy listening to my comments and suggestions about Shakespeare, you thought highly of my opinion]; yet now, Schlegel regards any small intervention on Tieck’s part as ‘eine Beeinträchtigung Deiner Verdienste’ [an undermining of your achievement]. The letter had little effect. Schlegel clearly remained unmoved by Tieck’s invocation of their earlier collaboration; indeed, his exasperation seems merely to have intensified, so much so that in 1839, when a second edition of the translation was proposed, he was to write a savage attack on Tieck’s efforts as editor, demanding the suppression of Tieck’s notes and prolegomena, as well as strict delineation of his own work and Tieck’s.13

13 ibid., 221 (9 March 1839).
Tieck’s riposte to the Vosses is the natural consequence of his admiration for Schlegel; he is defending both Schlegel’s translation, and the theoretical principles on which it is based. His most outspoken criticism of the rival work occurs in the first preface, where he does not mention Voss by name, but by introducing telling details makes it easy to identify the object of his criticism [I. vi–vii]. Ever scrupulous in giving praise where praise was due, Tieck refers to the services Voss senior has performed for classical literature (he was the translator of the *Odyssey*), but his comments make it plain that this does not necessarily qualify him as a translator of Shakespeare. Tieck takes issue with the principle of literalness enshrined in the Voss translation, referring dismissively to ‘Virtuosität in wörtlicher und buchstäblicher Übersetzung’ [a dazzling example of utterly literal translation]. In his opinion, a literal translation can be more readily achieved by attending to the spirit of the original than the letter; rigid consequentiality is likely to end up as parody. The Vosses’ Shakespeare proves his point, Tieck feels, in its anxious attention to irrelevant details, and the weighty obscurity of its language.

His objection that ‘von der Grazie und Leichtigkeit des Britten [ist] jede Spur verschüttet’ [every trace of the English poet’s grace and delicacy has been lost] encapsulates his opposition to Voss, whose heavy-handedness destroys the lightness of touch which the Romantic Tieck cherished as the very essence of Shakespeare. Hence his repeated characterization of Schlegel’s translation in terms of its grace, harmony, richness, inventiveness, playfulness; his setting-off of Schlegel’s intuitive understanding against the pedestrian plodding of Voss. The word-for-word literalness which is all that Voss’s concept of ‘Begriftellung’ means to Tieck is presented as a rationalistic device which reduces art to the level of craft, and he decries the sorry state of affairs which will come about if any industrious scholar can set himself his ‘Pensum’, his ‘daily quota’ to translate and not let up until he has finished it [I. viii].

In his preface to volume III (1830) Tieck returns to the attack, this time referring to Voss by name [III. v]. The passage is worth quoting in full, since the point Tieck is making is conveyed through his terminology: for anyone familiar with his critical writings the terms he uses are loaded ones. Those referring to Schlegel are redolent of the specific virtues of Romanticism, while Voss’s attitude is described in a way which recalls the soulless pedantry of rationalism (not much has changed since the young Tieck was excoriating Nicolai and his like in the 1790s!). ‘Es ist nichts leichter’, Tieck begins,

> als durch Abkürzung, undeutliche Kürze, Härte des Verses und dergl. irgend ein Wort, eine Bezeichnung, die Schlegel ausließ, noch anzuklemmen: wer aber Poesie, Drama, und den Originaltext wahrhaft kennt, wird einsehen, wie fast in allen Stellen Schlegel mit großer Weisheit und achtem Geschmack irgend eine Kleinigkeit, eine Nebensache aufopferte, um das Größere zu retten, und den Geist, die Geschmeidigkeit, den Wohllaut der Sprache im Charakteristischen beizubehalten.
[Nothing is easier than to wedge in some word or title which Schlegel left out, by means of abbreviation, obscure brevity, an infelicitous line or the like; but anyone who truly understands poetry, drama, and the original text will recognize how in practically every instance Schlegel demonstrated his great wisdom and genuine taste by sacrificing some tiny or superfluous detail in order to save the sense of the greater whole, and to retain the work’s characteristic spirit, its flexibility and euphony.]

He goes on to say that, whereas at the time Schlegel’s translation was criticized as ‘zu schwerfällig und dunkel’ [too difficult and obscure], it is now rejected as ‘zu leicht und unbedeutend’ [too lightweight and trivial], that is, responses to the Shakespeare translation reflect the change in attitude towards the Romantic movement generally. Fortunately, he continues, the ‘barbarism’ which the Vosses had attempted to make popular has found imitators, but no critical acclaim; the implication is that if the reading public is reminded of the grace and beauty of Schlegel’s work, the philistine annexation of poetry will be checked.

So much for the Vosses. Tieck is equally disturbed, however, by a fashion in translation diametrically opposed to that of his Leipzig rivals (although he lays the blame for this, too, at the Vosses’ door, since in his opinion it is a reaction against their literal-mindedness). In the preface to volume I, he discusses the perils of too much intuition, which, coupled with inadequate scholarship, is producing translations which are mere approximations to the original [I. vi–vii]. The new fashion cannot be regarded as intelligent ‘Nachdichtung’, being merely the product of laziness, ignorance, and the desire for quick profit; its perpetrators have no feel for language, but debase their originals ‘in matter, alltäglicher und ungebildeter Sprache’ [in flat, mundane and undistinguished language]. Between these extremes of linguistic tactlessness, the juste milieu is of course inhabited by Schlegel, and those who attempt to emulate him. In describing the translation of which he is editor, Tieck consistently emphasizes the conscious artistry with which a balance has been struck between fidelity and creativity, between scholarly attention to detail, and sensitivity towards the work as a whole.

This goes without saying for Schlegel; gradually Tieck begins to acknowledge the same qualities in the work of his collaborators as well. The first mention of them is in the preface to the third volume, where he refers somewhat grudgingly to their ‘Sorgfalt, Fleiß und Studium’ [care, industry and research]; his understanding of Shakespeare, he intimates, will provide the leaven in the cake [III. v]. An attack of bad conscience may account in some measure for this, since he is clearly aware that by calling in outside assistance for the translation he is reneging on his responsibilities; the effect of doing so is mitigated if he implies that his assistants are merely doing the donkey-work while he contributes the strokes of genius.

The same intention presumably also underlies his observation, at
the end of that same preface [III. vi], that Baudissin’s versions of *Henry VIII* and *Much Ado About Nothing* had required considerable re-working (this despite the fact that Baudissin’s *Henry VIII* had already found a publisher some years previously!). In particular, the scenes with the Watch in *Much Ado* had needed re-writing along the lines of the creative adaptation practised by Schlegel, and on occasion by Wieland too. Shakespeare’s comic scenes make no sense, Tieck suggests, if they are rendered too literally, thus ‘die Scenen der Wache und des Constabel haben freier und willkührlicher übertragen werden müssen, wenn sie einigermaßen dem Kauderwelsch des Originals entsprechen sollten, als es ein ängstlicher, bloß gewissenhafter Übersetzer billigen würde’ [the scenes with the Watch and the Constable, if they are to correspond in some measure with the gibberish of the original, need to be rendered with greater freedom and high spirits than a nervous, merely conscientious translator could approve of].

In the afterword to volume VII (1832), however, Tieck concedes greater skill certainly to Baudissin, and to a lesser extent to Dorothea as well [VII. 378]. He still emphasizes their dedication and industry, but now also acknowledges their sensitivity to linguistic register – this indeed is his main compliment to Dorothea. In his description of Baudissin’s work he goes further, using terms which for Tieck connote high praise: he is ‘ein Kenner des Dichters und der Sprache’ (i.e. one whose understanding is intuitive and not merely mechanical), who responds ‘con amore’ to Shakespeare’s lightness of touch, his charm, delicacy, and humour.

In the afterword to volume IX (1833) Tieck discusses the contributions of both collaborators at greater length [IX. 416–17], again drawing attention to Dorothea’s confidence in handling a variety of registers, from ‘die leichte Flüchtigkeit, der schöne artige Witz’ [the daintiness and finely-turned wit] of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to the energetic style of *Timon of Athens*, with its ‘lyrischer Zorn und die kecken Übersprüinge’ [lyrical rage and bold transitions]. Baudissin is praised on this occasion primarily for his comic skills: in a remarkable reversal of his previous judgement, Tieck describes the effortlessness with which Baudissin was able to find German substitutes for knotty English puns and witticisms. The emphasis upon his ‘Laune und geistreiche Willkürr’ [humour and witty high spirits] again draws upon the loaded vocabulary of Romantic criticism, and it is not surprising to find Tieck suggesting, in the same paragraph, that his friend belongs in distinguished company, enjoying the same imaginative facility in such matters as Wieland, or even Schlegel. Indeed, both

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14 Tieck states that Baudissin’s translation of *Henry VIII* was published in 1818 [VII. 378]; it can be found, rather confusingly, in volume IX of Schlegel’s Shakespeare translation. The first part of that volume is dated 1810 (as publishing details in BL catalogue), the second part, containing Baudissin’s *Henry VIII*, is dated 1830.
Baudissin and Dorothea are not unworthy, in Tieck’s opinion, to stand beside ‘jener Auserwählte’ [the chosen one] himself.

Thus Tieck is able to claim for his edition the distinction of reflected glory, having remained true to the principles enshrined in Schlegel’s work. The afterword to this final volume contains a final meditation on the art of translation, which naturally vindicates Schlegel, and the Romantic approach to art in general [IX. 416]. Tieck contends that in Germany practice has only made imperfect, with the result that ‘vor genauer Wörtlichkeit Original und Copie sich nicht mehr ähnlich sehen’ [due to sheer literalness, original and copy bear no resemblance to one another]. German translators have failed to recognize that languages are not interchangeable, but that each has its own individual qualities and idiosyncrasies. The translator must therefore exercise tact, subtlety, and taste in deciding what to leave out, in order to preserve that individuality as far as possible; in this way he becomes a creative artist himself. Schlegel, of course, is the supreme exponent of the approach, ‘a classic model, whose translations read like originals’. Once again Tieck’s remarks have an encoded meaning, the high value set on concepts such as individuality, taste, and creativity reflecting Romanticism’s glorification of the intuitive and subjective.

This is not to say, of course, that the true translator must not also be a scholar: Tieck draws attention to the hours of collaborative work which have been dedicated to the most exact rendering possible of every shade of meaning. It is far easier to find fault with something already in existence than to call it into existence yourself, Tieck suggests; thus critics of the translation will clamour for improvement without recognizing the magnitude of what has been achieved. This is precisely the paradox of translation: a good translation must needs appear effortless, while one which bespeaks its hours of labour will inevitably be laboured. We are back with the Vosses, of course, those authors of a translation where, for sheer literalness, original and copy fail to coincide; Tieck goes on to show how the translation for which he is responsible eschews firstly the ineffectually literal (using the example of the jokes) and secondly the anxiously parallel.

He questions the validity of the Vosses’ concept of ‘Begriffsstel­lung’ by implying that they have established it as a rule in order to avoid the more difficult task of deciding each case on its own merits. He acknowledges the need to retain line-for-line equivalence as far as possible in the early plays, where ‘Harmonie, Melodie, oder jener tragische Parallelismus vorherrschen, welchen letzttern Shakespear in seiner Jugend sehr begünstigte’ [harmony, melody, or that tragic parallelism predominate, which Shakespeare particularly favoured in his youth], but suggests that it is less necessary in the late plays. Unfortunately, Tieck obscures the genuine merits of his plea for flexibility by placing an inappropriate stress, as he so often does, on his own exclusive understanding of Shakespeare: he blames English...
scholars (specifically Steevens!) for slovenly editing, and claims that he alone understands Shakespeare's use of blank verse. Indeed, had space allowed, he would have included a short essay on the topic in his notes; but that, he concludes, will not now be possible [IX. 417].

This is the less admirable side of Tieck, the rider of hobby-horses, the intemperate blower of his own trumpet, the miracle-worker who is never able to deliver on time. It is, unfairly, the aspect of his work which critics have tended to seize upon, thus, notwithstanding Tieck's undeniable achievements, perpetuating the image of an amiable bungler. The process began immediately after the Shakespeare edition was published, when a young scholar called Nicolaus Delius delivered a crushing attack on the notes to the translation, entitled Die Tieck'sche Shakspere-Kritik beleuchtet. Delius pours scorn on Tieck's idiosyncratic readings of Shakespeare, and backs up his criticism with chapter and verse from the English critics. It is an easy victory, since this is the least defensible element of Tieck's work, the preference for obscure variants undoubtedly marring both text and notes. Let it be said, however, firstly that in the preface to volume I Tieck acknowledges the dialectical process of scholarship, even if he can scarcely have expected it to overtake him so soon ('Ein späterer Forscher, der noch mehr als ich gelesen hat, wird mir wahrscheinlich auch Überleihungen und kleine Fehler nachweisen können' [some scholar coming after me, who has read even more than I have, will probably be able to pick up over-hasty readings and minor mistakes in my work too] [I. vi]); and secondly that Delius has picked on what is arguably the least significant aspect of the Shakespeare edition, since Tieck is obviously saving his real critical insights for that long-cherished project, the Buch über Shakespeare. Nevertheless, Delius set a fashion: critic after critic...
critic has labelled Tieck a lightweight, a fellow-traveller, an incompetent, and a number of those who have focused on the Schlegel-Tieck translation clearly doubt whether he played any constructive part in its publication at all. 18

Tieck plays into the hands of the sceptics in his prolegomena by so cheerfully exhibiting his inability to meet deadlines. In the opening paragraph of the first preface he promises at least one volume every six months, and probably two; yet only six pages later, he has already to acknowledge that the notes to volumes I and II (which were published as a pair) are to be published in volume III, ‘da die Eile des Drucks es unmöglich machte, sie jetzt zu liefern’ [since pressure from the printers made it impossible to have them ready for this volume] [I. viii]. In the preface to volume III (which appeared after volume IV, so that the history plays would appear in sequence, the numbering of the volumes having been staggered accordingly), Tieck again draws attention in his opening paragraph to the practical difficulties he has experienced in preparing the translation for publication. Quite simply, he misjudged the amount of time he would need to commit to the project, and he says as much: ‘Vorgearbeitet hatte ich, aber die Uebertragung, wenn sie mir genügen sollte, forderte mehr Zeit und Entfernung von jedem Geschäft und Studium, die mich immer wieder zerstreuten.’ [Despite considerable preparatory work, the translation demanded more time, if it were to satisfy me, as well as freedom from all the other work and business which was constantly distracting me] [III. iii].

Hence the collaboration with Baudissin and Dorothea; but at this stage, Tieck is still adamant that a number of the translations will be his own, specifying at least three plays, Macbeth, Love’s Labour’s Lost and The Merry Wives of Windsor, which he will keep for himself, and claiming that his versions of them are virtually complete [III. iv]. There is no reason to doubt the substance of this statement, since we know that Tieck was working on a translation of Love’s Labour’s Lost, for example, in 1808; 19 yet by the time Tieck writes the afterword to volume VII, Baudissin has already translated The Merry Wives, and is about to do Love’s Labour’s Lost as well. Macbeth Tieck still intended to work on himself, but evidently this too had been conceded, this time to Dorothea, before Tieck wrote the afterword to volume IX. Even with such substantial delegation, however, Tieck was unable to...
keep to the ambitious deadline for publication he had outlined in his first preface, and the nine volumes of the Shakespeare edition took the same number of years to appear.

This is not uncharacteristic – Tieck’s correspondence contains as many excuses and shame-faced apologies as it does plans and projects – but we are guilty of undifferentiated judgement if we take it as a reason to dismiss Tieck out of hand. Just as he was straightforward about his failures, so he was honest about his achievements, and his own account of the role he played in the production of the Shakespeare translation is a reliable one. This much has been proved by a number of critics who set out, it seems, to discredit Tieck in favour of Baudissin and Dorothea, and yet have been able to prove only that Tieck did what he said he did. There is nothing new in the discovery that Tieck delegated much of the work of translation to his daughter and his friend, since he makes this abundantly clear himself in his prolegomena, admittedly without mentioning Dorothea by name. On the other hand, there is nothing new either in the fact that Tieck’s supervision of the translation involved his active and energetic participation, since this is exactly what he says himself.

He observes more than once in the prolegomena that delegation has saved him no time at all, since a portion of each day is dedicated to the discussion of work in progress; all he has gained, in fact, is a modicum of routine, which ensures that the work progresses more quickly than it might otherwise have done [VII. 378]. A retrospective description of the discussion sessions (in the afterword to volume IX) brings home vividly the exhaustive care with which the translation was brought into being: ‘Oft brachten wir eine Stunde damit zu, drei oder vier Verse einer schwierigen oder dunklen Stelle in Ordnung zu richten, schufen und verwirfen unendlich viele Ausdrücke und Versuche, wenn der Uebersetzer schon auf seinem Zimmer längst vorher die Aufgabe von allen Seiten bedacht zu haben glaubte.’

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22 In referring to his daughter as ‘ein anderer Uebersetzer, der sich nicht nennen will’ [VII. 378], Tieck is only following normal practice: in the nineteenth century, virtually all women published anonymously or else under male pseudonyms.
would often spend an hour sorting out three or four lines of a difficult or obscure passage, dreaming up and then rejecting phrases and versions without number, when the translator in his study had long ago felt that he had considered the problem from every angle] [IX. 415].

Of course Tieck may exaggerate a little, though it is evident that every German translator of Shakespeare from Wieland onward found the task an unacceptably demanding one at times; of course he is anxious to suggest that his was an indispensable role, since fairness demanded that the lion's share of the credit should go to Baudissin and Dorothea. Yet one of the most endearing qualities of Tieck's forewords and postscripts is their straightforwardness: there is no vanity or 'side' about them. His major fault was an enduring tendency to bite off more than he could chew, entirely understandable in this case since he was being asked to bring to fruition a long-cherished project involving the poet he admired above all others; and in his favour one must add that he achieved his intention, if somewhat haphazardly. His enthusiasm for the undertaking, his devotion to Shakespeare, his fierce loyalty to the friend of his youth and his wish to uphold aesthetic principles which he saw no reason to doubt; his dislike of the Vosses and the desiccated rationalism which they seemed to him to represent; and finally, his appreciation of the achievement of Baudissin and Dorothea, despite his evident conviction that the translation was a task he could and should be doing himself – all this can be read between the lines of Tieck's prolegomena, giving us glimpses of the turbulent undercurrents which run beneath the smooth surface of every masterpiece.