CHAPTER 2

Faust I Outlined and the Original Retzsch Effect

In mid-twentieth-century German evaluations, the merits of Retzsch's *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust* were typically gauged as text-dependent artwork in "thin and dry" style (*dünn und vertrocknet*) and "pale lifeless abstractions" of scenes and figures, using detailed explanatory analysis plate by plate;[1] or as "too cool, too deprived of genuine feeling" (*zu kühl, zu stimmungsarm*).[2] In 1990 it was even deemed that "the clarity, even flatness, of these simple line drawings, their lack of any shading—literal or metaphorical—emptied the depicted events of all internal and external connotations."[3] As noted, new approaches are recent and limited in number, based on an engraved set considered unvarying, on middle-class sensibility, and text-image relations.[4]

This chapter sheds new light on Retzsch's outlines by scrutinizing originals and considering how they were made and how they work. The process adopts a number of complementary angles. It first considers the agency and efficacy of the original set issued by Cotta, an artefact hitherto unheeded through shape and format, including Goethe's own evolving appreciation and gifts. Second, it retraces the history of the outlines' making, using new data and cross-referencing correspondence, including Goethe's with Cotta. Third, re-evaluation signals their potency: relative independence from text and revelatory interpretation. The artist's fanciful and playful disposition, his latent or open suggestiveness, veiled eroticism, even special sensitivity, I argue, should be measured against an established characteristic of the set, identified as sentimental.

2.1 A Modern Fourfold Device

What did Retzsch's *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust* originally look like? Comparison between available items that carry the same content (yet appear not identical) helps us better understand the set, and probe its purpose and function. In over two hundred years, it often changed hands privately and underwent various treatments in public repositories. The primary aim was obscured, nearly lost. In many ways, the initial object has become unrecognizable. Digitization has further remediated it, transformed it, and entailed a kind of treacherous blindness regarding its modernity.

The 1816 set may for instance come to us as an overview display of letterpress and outline prints in a brown half-binding as visible on the Heidelberg website.[5] Or as a uniform landscape album with twenty-six images, headed by an unsigned introduction and twenty-six *Faust* quotes in German. Or even, as a combined *Faust I* and *II* on HathiTrust, in a Google-scanned scroll-down pdf of dubious quality, dated 1836 on the label, 1837 on the title-page. It totals a longer run of introductory letterpress and 40 successive plates.[6] Such regimented and homogenized e-objects are light years apart from the handy fourfold contrivance that the *Umrisse* originally were.

The user of the initial 1816 edition first encountered a yellow or buff wrapper (*c.*17 × 21.5 cm), indeed a portfolio with green flaps, fastened by a tongue-shaped strip inserted to a slit. This disclosed two *loose* parts: 26 etchings, engraved by Retzsch himself, simply strung together on the left-hand side, and a slender, smaller letterpress brochure with green back echoing the flaps (Fig. 2.1a–b). The 26 small etchings were artist's proofs (no captions) with narrow margins close-cropped to the image frames. The letterpress brochure comprised all textual elements: a title-page, an anonymous introduction (by Therese Huber), and 26 excerpts referring not to the original 1808 but a 1816 *Faust* pocket edition by Cotta. A label in Gothic print, pasted to the wrapper, ran: *Umrisse | zu | Goethe's Faust. | Gezeichnet | von | Retsch* (*Outlines after Goethe's Faust. Designed by Retsch*). All in all, wrapper, prints, letterpress brochure and label brought together distinctly significant functions.

Rarely preserved intact, the full artefact was hybrid. Neither illustrated booklet, nor artist's portfolio with stand-alone images as for Cornelius's grand format, it involved opening and handling, reviewing the images, perusing the letterpress, and reading from one to the other. Users might open to check the contents in diverse ways:

1 Elisabeth Clösges, "Die Illustration von Goethes Dichtung in seiner Zeit" (PhD diss., Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1942), 179ff.

2 Neubert, 241a.

3 Forster-Hahn, "A Hero for All Seasons?" 515b.

4 See "Air View and Ant Perspective," p. 3 and Chap. 1, p. 49 & 50.

5 Heidelberg Historic Literature—Digitized, last accessed 28 Feb 2023, https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/retzsch1816/0012/thumbs.

6 HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015005464311&view=1up&seq=1. Original from the University of Michigan. Last accessed 28 Feb 2023.

FIGURES 2.1A–B *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816). Original yellow portfolio with green flaps, shut and open with contents
COURTESY HAAB, F 3487, WEIMAR

prints in succession composed a story like a silent strip cartoon; the prints-cum-quotes worked as *Faust* excerpts with potential illustration; the prints with extracts and a do-and-don't introduction posed *Faust* as a guide for life and spirited conversation; and the excerpts alone helped memorize noteworthy passages. Further uses are open to conjecture. Loosely associated with the text, the images had special agency thanks to the outline aesthetic, as we shall see. The decorative importance of packaging was an asset publisher Johann Friedrich Cotta was developing,[7] and evidence from the production and release context shows that he used this prompt to attract buyers to the 1816 pocket and subsequent *Faust* editions at hardly any cost.[8] The pocket *Faust*, a cute little volume, almost square in shape (12.7 × 10.5), proffered 309 pages of fine dense print in the same Gothic type as the brochure letterpress.[9] Along with the affordable little portfolio, it intended to allure new readers. Bibliophile Thomas Frognall Dibdin would be seduced by it in Cotta's very Stuttgart bookshop (see Chapter 4).

We may assume then that the enticing item successfully promoted sales. Its colourful formula was again used in the 1820s and 1830s with slight differences. In 1823, Retzsch's eight outlines after Schiller's *Fridolin* or *The Road to the Iron-Foundry* materialized in a pale yellow portfolio with petrol green flaps (20.6 × 25.3 cm). In 1836, *Faust II* sat in an analogous blue portfolio with bright fuchsia flaps and a blushing pink label (cf. Fig. 3.6). The template obviously caught on, even though Retzsch, first artist to ever interpret the second part of *Faust*, had to markedly reduce the number of plates to only 11. Cotta father's trademark portfolios branded Retzsch's outlines after Goethe and Schiller, freely accompanying the visual narrative with a selection of excerpts. Then son Georg von Cotta launched both Retzsch's enlarged *Faust I* (1834, 29 pl.) and combined *Faust I* and *II* (1836, 40 pl.) in cloth-bound albums, in which homogeneous letterpress-cum-prints endorsed linear reading and image-text dependence. The last of these corresponds to the 1836–37 Google file on the HathiTrust cyber-library.

Retzsch's first publicized artwork coupled his name with a text of great consequence in German and European literature. It made him widely famed outside the German States, while he had to compete for recognition at home. The set worked very differently from the oil paintings of literary inspiration he had exhibited at Dresden: as a multiple graphic work, it spread further than single canvases sparsely exhibited; it could enter collectors' and noblemen's galleries or *Sammlungen*, and a variety of abodes; as a serial work on the print market, it chaperoned the tragedy with a picture story from beginning to end, the visual account substituting its own message for the verse. Occasionally altered, easily moving across states and from country to country, it promoted Goethe's *Faust* thanks to image circulation and transfers.

In single-line frames, free of captions, simply numbered above right 1 to 26, the outlines would be named differently according to destination and context: the 1851 *Magasin pittoresque* called them "a series of sketches" (*une suite d'esquisses*). In contrast, their first English recipient, Henry Crabb Robinson, noted "Outlines à la Flaxman a very interesting little work," recognizing an aesthetic class via its pioneer, his own personal friend, to whom he would present them. In modern art historians' discourse,[10] they have been labelled "German neoclassical prints," although Retzsch had by then freed himself from Grassi's model paradigm in favour of romanticism.

Compared to other visual renderings of *Faust*, Retzsch's set was the broadest, cheapest, and easiest to reproduce or copy outright. These merits also make it the more influential, albeit this quality struggled to impose itself in the German States. As Mrs Hall diplomatically stated "those wonderful 'Outlines' which have been the admiration of the world for half a century, [...] are scarcely better known in Germany than they are in England."[11]

Except for Christian Friedrich Osiander's clumsy prints that could be sparsely added to individual copies,[12] Cotta's 1808 *Faust* had been issued with no images, to Goethe's explicit wish. In a well-known and often quoted, albeit rarely commented, 1805 letter to his publisher, the poet had expressed this in colourful language:

7 Helmuth Mojem and Barbara Potthast, eds., *Johann Friedrich Cotta: Verleger—Unternehmer—Technikpionier* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2017), 11. On Cotta and cultural prestige, see Daniel Moran, *Toward the Century of Words: Johann Cotta and the Politics of the Public Realm in Germany, 1795–1832* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

8 Dorothea Kuhn, "Verleger und Illustrator. Am Beispiel der J. G. Cotta'schen Verlagsbuchhandlung," in *Buchillustration im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. R. Timm (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988), 225.

9 HAAB: F 705.

10 Katharine Lochnan, "Les lithographies de Delacroix pour *Faust* et le théâtre anglais des années 1820," *Nouvelles de l'estampe*, no. 87 (July 1986): 6.

11 Hall, "A Morning with Retzsch," 21a.

12 Hirschberg, "Über vier wenig bekannte Kupfer der 1808-Ausgabe von Goethes Faust," *Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde* 11, no. 4 (July 1907): 174–76. Hirschberg refers to a single exemplar that I have not been able to trace. Schumacher relates a similar experience, *Kupfer und Poesie*, 184–85.

> Den Faust, dächt' ich, gäben wir ohne Holzschnitte und Bildwerk. Es ist so schwer, daß etwas geleistet werde, was dem Sinne und dem Tone nach zu einem Gedicht paßt. Kupfer und Poesie parodieren sich gewöhnlich wechselweise. Der Hexenmeister soll sich allein durchhelfen.[13]
>
> I'm rather minded we give Faust without woodcuts or pictures. It is so difficult to achieve something fitting to the spirit and tone of a poem. Copper and poetry generally parody each other. The chief sorcerer will have to fend for himself.

The entire letter addresses matters of proofing, printing, and choosing the right typeset for the best possible reading effect of his forthcoming *Works*. Print technologies mattered to Goethe to the highest degree. Yet for *Faust*, he uses modal verbs (in caution or hesitation) and vocabulary oddly mixed: specialized (*Holzschnitte*), inclusive (*Bildwerk*), and informally technical (*Kupfer* for *Kupferstiche*, copper plates). He was at ease with graphic techniques he had either himself practised or used, and had previously commissioned from Johann Heinrich Lips a frontispiece after Rembrandt for *Faust: Ein Fragment* (1790). Strikingly, his paragraph ends with a fanciful portrait of protagonist merged with printed object, of magician Faust being one with the to be-published text. Implied is the innate force of the sole word, yet both Goethe's phrasing and tropes hint at artworks' special enchantment and agency. Cotta's promotional use of Retzsch's outlines implies that the "chief sorcerer" struggled somewhat on his own, particularly without images. Retzsch's *Umrisse* paved the way to recognition for a work deemed unfathomable, and influentially branded by Germaine de Staël an "intellectual chaos."[14]

2.2 Goethe's Gifts

The conniving ways in which the author himself used the *Umrisse* as gifts make, to my knowledge, for a new turn in Goethe (and Retzsch) studies. Collectible data are not always as complete as one might desire, subsequent to library dispersals, undetected correspondence, untraceable or vanished items. Yet postures are significant: Goethe's is no private economy of intimate gifting but a public persona's conspicuous transmission of an interpretative artistic rendering of his lifetime's major work. His gracious gestures extend into the public sphere. Handing over Cotta's clever portfolio highlights another singularizing feature of its function. A nifty, transportable offering, the set acts as a flexible envoy. By changing hands, it is a go-between with a message, and Goethe was not the only one to use it so. German publisher Perthes followed suit (Chapter 4). Gifting and sending are integral to circulation, a key mechanism critical to Retzsch's reception within and beyond Germany.

The earliest transmission I have been able to trace is exceptional in more ways than one. The *Umrisse* were addressed to Jakob and Marianne von Willemer in Frankfurt on 8 November 1816, twelve days after a dozen exemplars had reached Weimar on 28 October.[15] Goethe only perused them on 7 November, forwarding one to the Willemers directly on the morrow.[16] In response to a present from Jakob (a case of an incomparable wine) and as a gift to Marianne (Goethe's Suleika in the *West-östlicher Divan*), the dispatch carries complex values as a token of special friendship, a souvenir of happier times, and a pledge of love. It is also part of the trio's relationship and correspondence, prompting recipients' reactions from both. In Chapter 11, "Two Gifted Women," I compare it with yet another special item given by a poet to a lady, an English offshoot of Retzsch given by Lord Byron to an American diplomat's spouse. In both cases, the boundary between private protocol and public gesture was elastic.

Another remarkable specimen donned social, gendered, charitable, and political garb. Well aware of the value his signature carried, Goethe lent weight to Retzsch's *Umrisse* by leveraging for them, to philanthropic ends, a hefty price. On 7 December 1818, shortly before Christmas, he employed the apposite stuck-on label to autograph a dedication running "To the most honourable Women's Association" (*Dem verehrtesten Frauenverein*) with the date, and presented it to the Jena Patriotic Women's Association for their bazaar. Ladies were no less attuned than famous authors to social ritual and active charity work. Goethe's carefully penned dedication boosted auctionability (Fig. 2.2). Below his, a scribbled line in a tiny hand pursued the undertaking: it was purchased by Tsarina Maria Feodorovna,[17] née Sophia Dorothea of Württemberg, second wife to Tsar Paul I, herself mother of ten siblings, including two future tsars (Alexander I and Nicholas I) and a princess, herself an accomplished patron of the arts and letters.[18] Her daughter, Maria

13 GCB 1:133.

14 Staël, "Faustus," 2:181.

15 RA 7:no. 533; *Tg* 5:425, 14.

16 *Tg* 5:429, 3, 23.

17 Carl F. Schreiber, "Coleridge to Boosey—Boosey to Coleridge," *Yale University Library Gazette* 22, no. 1 (July 1947): 6–7.

18 Kazimierz Waliszewski, *Paul the First of Russia, the Son of Catherine the Great*, 1911; repr. ed. (Miami, Fla.: Hardpress, [2013]), 17f.

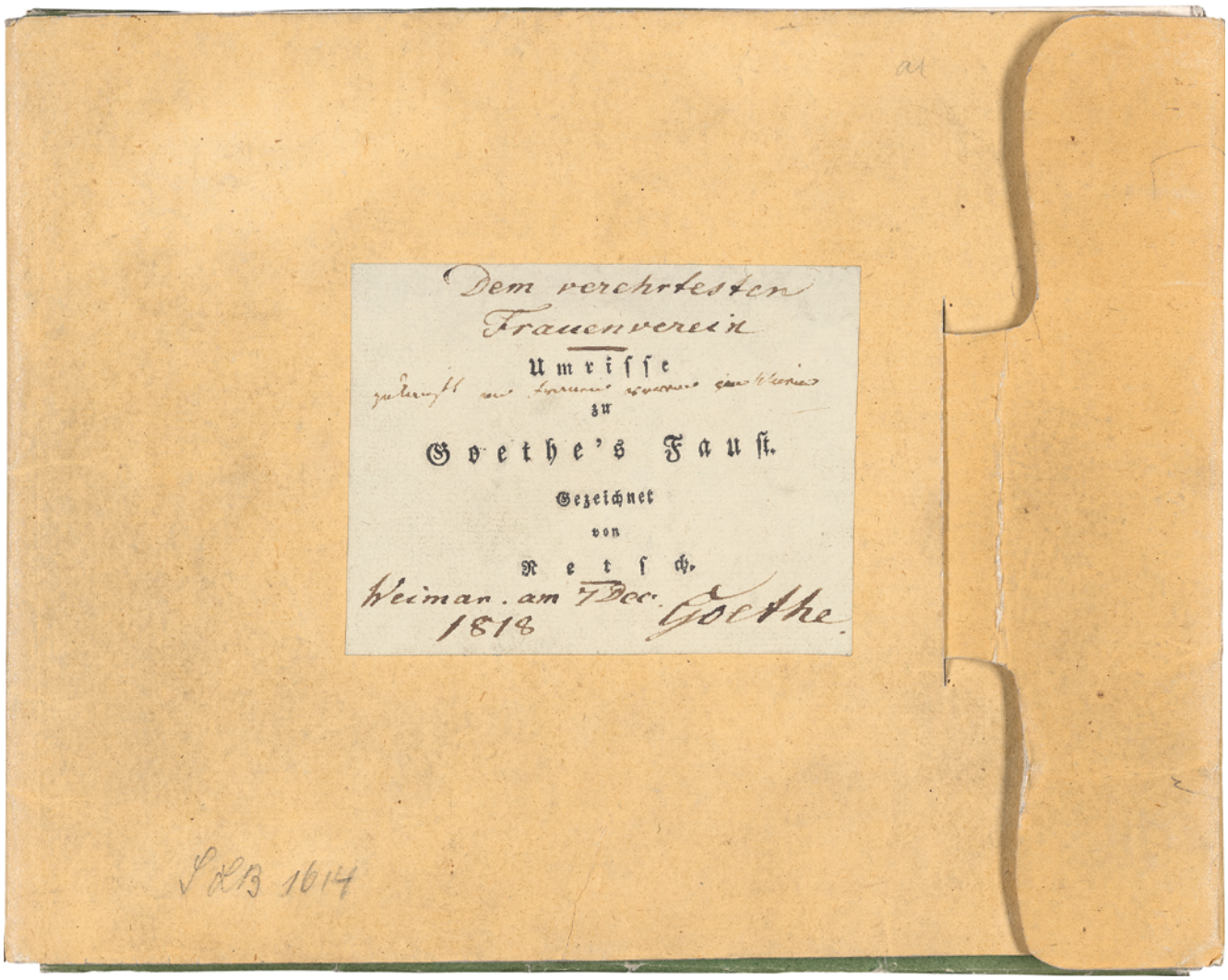

FIGURE 2.2 *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816). Label with Goethe's autograph, 7 December 1818, and Tsarina Maria Feodorovna's inscription
COURTESY BEINECKE, YALE UNIVERSITY, SPECK CK99 R3 +816 COPY 2

Pavlovna, as Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, had launched in 1814–17 the Patriotic Women's Association in the homonymous Grand Duchy to help the population cope with damage caused by the Napoleonic wars. The welfare concern she brought to Weimar's state affairs, in her mother's footsteps, is a spirit she would pass on to her own daughter-in-law Sophia, her daughter Augusta (future Queen of Prussia and German Empress), and her granddaughter Luise von Baden.[19] The Retzsch portfolio, adorned with Goethe's and the tsarina's prestigious signatures, stands at the crossroads of multiple connections, transmissions, and public achievements as a charitable godsend.

Unique, due to its social and public status, to its early date and political circumstances, the Retzsch set shows Goethe endorsing practices that bridged social rifts between aristocracy, middle-classes and the poor. Such promotional fundraising parallels Cotta's marketing tool. Trading and publicizing were in the air along with a growing conscience of symbolic object value.

The *Umrisse* also testified to cultural, artistic and literary practices. Goethe discussed them within his circle and presented them to friends, acquaintances and visitors, frequently linked with the arts, as his diary and correspondence show.

Among others, two folders of the 1820 edition were used as tokens "to remember" shared moments. In one, infringing the confines of the label, the poet's writing covers the wrapper's lower part. The warm inscription irregularly scrolled, perhaps under the effect of emotion, suggests a parting moment: "To the dear Bracebridge spouses in

19 Ramona Burkhardt, *Der Frauenverein in Jena im Spannungsfeld zwischen höfischen Impulsen durch Maria Pawlowna und der städtischen Gesellschaft* (Munich: GRIN, 2009).

FIGURE 2.3 *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1820). With Goethe's dedication to L. John Vigoureux, 3 July 1827
COURTESY MARTIN BODMER FOUNDATION, GENEVA

fond souvenir Weimar 1 March 1826 Goethe" (*Den theuren Gatten | Bracebridge | zu geneigtem Andencken*).[20] In another, a more formal dedication is neatly traced beneath the label, a balanced spatial effect akin to its demure wording: "to Mr L. John Vigoureux in cordial souvenir Weimar 3 July 1827 Goethe" (*Herren L. John Vigoureux | zu freundlichem Andenken*) (Fig. 2.3). The said individual had visited Goethe thanks to the Weimar merchant and forwarding agent Johann Gabriel Wilhelm Münderloh on the very day he must have departed with the autograph.[21] In his case, further construal is hardly possible for lack of evidence.[22] Not so for the Bracebridges.

Selina, née Mills, and her husband, the English writer and traveller Charles Holte (Holt) Bracebridge, are better known for taking up residence in Athens in the 1830s and their later connexion to Florence Nightingale. Widely travelled, the couple had also wintered in Weimar 1825–26. Goethe admired their "ardent, collected life," likened to Carlyle's in opposition to Weimar's "dispersion." He saw in them "people who amid the ocean are united on a narrow barge, unperturbed by the din and the turmoil around them,"[23] and his dedication reflects high regard. Selina was close to Ottilie, Goethe's daughter-in-law, with whom she corresponded, but her relation to Goethe is of aesthetic

20 Christie's, live auction 6521, 28 Nov 2001, lot 97. <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-3822764>. Last accessed 28 Feb 2023.

21 GLTT 7:757.

22 In 1826, the Hon. Percy Jocelyn, a former Anglican Bishop, caught in homosexual practices in London and forced from his position in 1822, used the name L. John Vigoureux to sign a hotel register in Leukerbad, Switzerland (see Kevin Laheen, "Further Letters of Robert Haly, S. J., 1810-29, in Irish Jesuit Archives," *Collectanea Hibernica*, no. 44–45 (2002–3): 197). To be sure that Jocelyn was indeed Goethe's visitor would require further investigation.

23 GG 3:447.

importance. Painter, draughtswoman, and talented former student of Samuel Prout, she authored several works now in the V&A Collection, and Goethe mentions her drawings on 1 November 1825.[24] Seven months later, on 14 June 1826, he discussed her portrait of Countess Julie von Egloffstein with the sitter, a beautiful member of the Weimar Court, herself a talented artist, whom he had greatly encouraged in her artistic undertakings. The discussion must have reflected his criticism of Selina's manner in portraying Julie, as expressed to Friedrich von Müller four days later: it had been an error to follow "the infamous manner of the Nazarenes."[25] Beyond the link to his *Faust*, Goethe's choice was certainly designed to appeal to Selina's artistic talents, perhaps as an invitation to move away from the coldness, dryness and flatness that Nazarene style represented to his eyes.

The outlines toured well beyond Weimar with the Bracebridges. Thus dispatched by Goethe the diplomat, they would journey to other lands. End February-beginning of March 1819, they were part of a small parcel handed over by Goethe to Heinrich Karl Ernst von Köhler (Egor Egorovič Köhler) in Weimar and subsequently opened by him in Saint Petersburg. Writer, renowned specialist of cameos and engraved stones, Köhler, a member of several Academies of science, was the keeper of the tsar's cabinet of stones and medals at the Hermitage.[26] His long 1817–19 trip to Germany, France and Italy, visiting museums and studying art collections, had taken him to Weimar, whence his leave-taking present. In expressing his thanks for "the beautiful outlines after Faust" and an exemplar of *Hermann and Dorothea*, he called the latter, in a verbal lapse indicative of his genuine passion, a "master stone" (*Meisterstein*) instead of masterpiece (*Meisterstück*).[27] The gifts may also have been advance compensation for the pains he would take to provide Goethe with sulphur casts and reproductions of cameos from Saint Petersburg collections. If he had taken away a small parcel, Goethe would expect a chest of samples, indeed delivered to Weimar by his son in August 1820.[28] Polished manners rhymed with donating art treasures between royal and personal collections. In this exchange diplomacy, Retzsch's outlines were also for Privy Councillor von Goethe a precious asset.

A thank-you gift to any artist may carry aesthetic prize (so with Selina Bracebridge) but also provokes a benchmark effect. In Mary Margaret Dawe's case, Retzsch's *Umrisse* became a touchstone by which to judge English copied prints against German originals. She and her brother, George Dawe, had been taught the trade by their father, the mezzotint engraver Philip Dawe. Yet, regardless of the quality of his engravings, George had turned to more profitable tasks. He moved to Saint Petersburg (spring 1819–May 1828) to portray more than 300 Russian army leaders who had beaten Napoleon, while Mary continued business in London. He would be named first painter to the Russian court in 1826. The portraits of Goethe and Prince Bernhard II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, were to be engraved by Thomas Wright, George Dawe's associate in his "portrait factory." In order to thank Miss Dawe for preparing them for engraving, Goethe asked Johann Christian Hüttner, a London-based German writer, journalist and translator, literary agent to Grand Duke Karl August, to present her with Retzsch's *Umrisse* in November 1820. By then, he well knew English copies by Henry Moses, sent to him by the publishers Boosey and Sons, and today still part of his preserved library (Chapter 5). Yet, he valued the German originals as "more striking" (*merkwürdiger*) than Moses's ersatz.[29] Subtle competition engaged between original and copy. Hüttner endorsed his choice with a nuance. To him, the *Umrisse* also had value by virtue of promoting and transiting between countries. In Miss Dawe's circle, they "would be seen by many connoisseurs" (*kämen* […] *unter die Augen vieler Kenner*).[30] Yet, instead of answering the call, Miss Dawe's thanks for "the handsome present from Mr de Goëtha" [*sic*] disclose her veritable condition. Overcome by duties and in imperfect spelling, yet impeccable third-person formal style, she responded to Hüttner on Boxing Day, a Sunday:

> It is a present, that she most highly values, as illustrating with so much feeling, and talent, the very interesting tragedy intitled [*sic*] Faust, but which she shall always esteem much more, as a mark of attention from Mr de Goëtha, whom she has ever been taught to think of with admiration, and to whom she is indebted for some of the greatest delights, that the power of Genius, and humain emagination [*sic*], can to afford [*sic*].
>
> Miss Dawe would have had the pleasure of answering Mr Hutners [*sic*] polite note sooner, but till now she has not had one moment's leisure. Nor has she yet had the opportunity, of comparing the original Etchings, with the copies by Mr Moses; it is

24 GLTT 7:550.

25 GLTT 3:275.

26 See Karl Morgenstern, *Heinrich Karl Ernst Köhler* (St Petersburg: Buchdruckerei der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1839).

27 GSA 28/88, 375–80.

28 GLTT 6:760; GLTT 7:179.

29 WA 4, 33:247.

30 WA 4, 34:312.

> however easy to discouver [*sic*] the superiority ~~as to~~ as to the sentiment and spirit, with which the work is both conceived & executed in those impressions which Mr de Goëtha has honored [*sic*] Miss Dawe with.[31]

Sketchily drawn, her comparison favoured the German artist, more on behalf of Goethe's fame than *per se*. Mary Margaret Dawe would fortunately marry Thomas Wright, her brother's associate, in Saint Petersburg in 1825 and better her condition. Her case proves a crucial point, namely that the *Umrisse* transcended social rank and educational grade.

It would have of course been gratifying to close this investigation on Goethe managing the *Umrisse* in diverse ways by a last exceptional sending, a so-called *Umrisse* copy given by Goethe to Sir Walter Scott, the early translator of *Götz von Berlichingen* into English (1799). The claim—reported unquestioningly by Lillian Atkins in her Yale thesis[32]—was originally made by Hermann Kindt in 1869. In a 15 May *Notes & Queries* memorandum, Kindt chronicled the following passage from a letter by painter William Bewick (1795–1866):

> I am reminded of an extremely interesting evening at Sir Walter Scott's at Abbotsford, when he was good enough to show me and the company present a copy of the original illustrations to Faust, that had been sent to him by the poet Goethe, and which had just arrived. And I still remember with what delight, as an artist, I examined for the first time those beautiful works, and that too in the house of a mutual friend and brother poet, as well as a correspondent of Goethe—for Sir Walter was an excellent German scholar.[33]

The passage is not included in *Life and Letters of William Bewick* (1871), which repeatedly records memories of Walter Scott at Abbotsford. In the 1874 German version of his study, Kindt affirms quoting from a letter "under [his] eyes," which could be possible since he seems to have been an autograph fan, but deliberately substitutes Cornelius for Retzsch.[34] He mentions no date for the Bewick letter. The Abbotsford library catalogue, compiled by John Lockhart, records under Retzsch the still extant "*Umrisse* zu Goethe's Faust. *oblong 4to*," with the curious mention "Leipzig" and no date.[35] Upon inspection, the object, a bound version of only the prints, with neither title-page nor publisher's imprint, is possibly part of the 1820 Cotta edition and no English ersatz. In any case, it shows no trace of Goethe, whose correspondence with Scott dates from 1828. It must have come to Abbotsford through some other channel, perhaps Scott's protégé, the actor Daniel Terry, who was to interpret Mephistopheles in a costume after Retzsch in 1825 (cf. Fig. 9.13). If Bewick's letter is genuine, the narrated scene might readily bear on easy confusion, superimposing Scott's interest for Goethe and circulation of the *Umrisse* in Britain. Until further elucidated, the scene described testifies mainly to the appeal of Retzsch's work for a gathering of art lovers around the Scottish author.

The inconclusive episode does not mar the fact that procedures developed by Goethe in genuine presentations of Retzsch's *Umrisse* vest them with a particular aura. A vehicle of ideas and credos, the easily transportable item is not only a palpable symbol of give-and-take in cultural relationships, but also a medium, a material object in cultural practices, which plays even into such hands as those of *Faust*'s own author.

2.3 In Goethe's Orb

Yet, when fathoming the Goethe-Retzsch relationship in the spangled firmament of European fame, author and artist seem worlds apart: a bright sun orbited by a stray planet, a mere satellite.

There is no known letter from Goethe to Retzsch although they met in Weimar (see *infra*). Author-artist communication on the making of the *Umrisse* was mostly indirect. After his Dresden visit, Goethe was informed of the etchings' progress by Heinrich Ludwig Verlohren, a managing agent of the Dresden Court, whom he used as middleman for sundry commissions and purchases. His own letters to Verlohren, though recorded, have not been saved. Abiding in turn by Retzsch's preference for "a local commissioner," publisher Cotta used a go-between in their transactions, the Leipzig bookseller Paul Gotthelf Kummer,[36] who seemed neither keen nor prompt to answer Retzsch's eager requests. Exchange of letters, sheet-proofs and metal plates mostly adopted a roundabout fashion. Contrariwise, art collector and archaeologist Sulpiz Boisserée directly introduced Cornelius to

31 GSA 28/92, 110.

32 Atkins, "Fragmentary English Translations of Goethe's Faust" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1937), 16, n. 2.

33 Kindt, "English Versions of Goethe's *Faust*, Part 1," *Notes & Queries*, 4th ser., 3 (15 May 1869): 453–54.

34 Kindt, "Goethes Faust in England," *Die Gegenwart*, no. 24 (13 June 1874): 376b.

35 *Catalogue of the Library of Abbotsford* (Edinburgh: [T. Constable], 1838), 232. All Cotta editions I know bear either the imprint "Stuttgart" or "Stuttgart & Tübingen."

36 Identified as Paul Georg Kummer by Hellwig, "Studien zu Moritz Retzsch," 89, n. 408. I have followed the Cotta archive indication (DLA).

Goethe. His pert diary descriptions of the poet's reactions, and Goethe's 1811 letter to Cornelius, full of approval and advice, set from the beginning Retzsch's relation to the author of *Faust* in a very different light.

Given the above, the concision of Goethe's remarks on Retzsch's *Faust* hardly comes as a surprise. Initially encouraging, in Goethe's oral or written exchanges with others, in unpublished third parties' accounts, or by way of comparative evaluation (with Cornelius or Delacroix), they prove mostly incidental but for August Retzsch's diary inscription. A cool view, presumed to reflect Goethe's, is in the 1817 issue of *Über Kunst und Altertum*, authored by Johann Heinrich Meyer, Cornelius being set above Retzsch. Goethe is more direct in his letters to Hüttner, who regularly apprised Weimar of English literary life via reports to the Grand Duke, frequently transmitted to his Privy Counsellor, keen to follow UK literary affairs.[37] Arguably, that *Faust* drew benefit from the *Outlines* in Britain, still at hostile grips with Goethe's writings (due to the suicide craze after *Werther*) and where Retzsch's own fame was speedily rising, fostered the politically savvy poet's enthusiasm. Moreover, alterations to the prints as copied by Moses, must have attracted his mind to some of their exact merits, hardly conspicuous at first glance. Their cross-border circulation within Europe will additionally have helped win his definitive support. While in Goethe's 1816 yearly notes Retzsch is on a level with Cornelius, praise for the former rises in the 1820s to the latter's detriment. Unreserved admiration for Retzsch's *Hamlet* outlines, noted for their intrinsic qualities, follows on 24 March 1828. Interestingly, Goethe's oft-quoted predilection for Retzsch over Cornelius, expressed to Joseph Karl Stieler, dates from only a few months later (May–July 1828). Contemporary comparison with Delacroix's *Faust* also advantages Retzsch, to the young romantic Victor Pavie's astonishment on his 1829 Weimar visit.[38] Goethe's blessing of Retzsch had developed over the years in accordance with a shift in his aesthetic preferences.

The statesman-poet first saw Retzsch's drawings in the course of his Dresden stay, 16–25 September 1810. His diary mentions "Portraits of Gen. Thielmann and wife by Retsch [*sic*]" on 20 September.[39] Although nothing on the artist himself appears, August Retzsch's unpublished diary fills in the blanks on Goethe's two meetings with Moritz, providing unpublished information on the drawings' reception.[40] Having been informed by Thielmann (upon viewing the double portrait) of the artist's *Faust* drawings, Goethe expressed the desire to see them. Retzsch visited him early morning on 22 September. In the course of an amiable reception, Goethe praised his work ("which is something extraordinarily rare," notes August within brackets), expressed his desire to see the drawings etched, and invited Moritz to visit him in Weimar. The welcome seems to have been out of the ordinary, as shows Thielmann's reaction, also recorded by August: "the fact of being treated so extraordinarily by this otherwise haughty man, was proof of how much this great art connoisseur must have liked Moritz's work" (*er sey von dießem sonst stolzen Mann, auf eine außerordentliche Art von ihm behandelt worden, ein Beweiß wie sehr dießem großen Kunstkenner Moritz*[*ens*] *Arbeiten gefallen haben müßten*). No Retzsch visit to Weimar seems to have been recorded. Further, Moritz was invited to Thielmann's (who received Goethe on 24 September *en soirée* as noted in Goethe's diary)—August adding that Hartmann was also present. This corroborates (and explains) Hartmann's mention in Retzsch's first letter to Cotta as well as the devised medium: a set of etchings was certainly discussed by the parties as in Goethe's first interview with Retzsch. The preface in Retzsch's *Outlines to Bürger's Ballads*, later published in Boston and obviously translated from L. Hermann's introduction to the homonymous 1872 German album, gives the story in the following terms: "Retzsch made the personal acquaintance of Goethe through General Thielemann, whose portrait he had painted. To them and to Professor Hartmann of Dresden, he owed a commission from Cotta, the publisher, to design a series of outlines for Faust."[41] Beyond its overall laudatory appreciation and minor inaccuracies, it proves exact.

Indeed, it was not the publisher who commissioned Retzsch but the artist who contacted Cotta. In an 1810 introductory contract-like letter, Retzsch twice mentioned Hartmann, a freemason advocate of classicism, recently appointed Professor of History Painting at the Dresden Academy.[42] *Das Hartmannsche Haus*, his father's influential salon in Stuttgart, Cotta's new Württemberg seat, received major literary personalities, hence a more than fortuitous connexion for the Dresden artist residing in easterly Saxony. Goethe himself had known Hartmann

37 See Walter Wadepuhl, "Hüttner, a New Source for Anglo-German Relations," *Germanic Review* 14 (1939): 23–27; Catherine W. Proescholdt, "Johann Christian Hüttner (1766–1847): a Link between Weimar and London," in *Goethe and the English-Speaking World*, ed. N. Boyle and J. Guthrie (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 99–110.

38 Pavie, *Voyages et promenades romantiques*, ed. G. Trigalot (Rennes: PUR, 2015), 81–82.

39 *Tg* 4, 1:183–85.

40 St D, Hs Biogr. II 4925, notebook 25 (1810), 70–73.

41 "Moritz Retzsch and Bürger," in *Outlines to Bürger's Ballads* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1873), 2; L. Hermann, "Moritz Retzsch und Bürger," in *Umrisse zu Bürgers Balladen* (Leipzig: Ernst Fleischer, 1872), 2.

42 DLA Co: Retzsch.

since the latter's 1801 Weimar visit and his three submissions to the local "Friends of the Arts" competition between 1799 and 1801. In Dresden, Christian Gottfried Körner noted down their amiable intercourse at the Thielmanns' 24 September *soirée*, although Hartmann had recently criticized a Weimar exhibition.[43] Retzsch's letter to Cotta mentions his fee, again agreed upon via Hartmann. As Art director, Hartmann is also the very man who would later advocate Retzsch's Academy membership and professorship along with Count Vitzthum von Eckstädt. Yet, nothing indicates that Goethe visited the artist. Dorothea Kuhn's assertion that "according to the diary" Goethe "paid Retzsch a visit in his studio" has created a conviction that no record substantiates.[44] Presumably an oversight, it has been repeated in later scholarship,[45] and has even given rise to fictional conjecture, for instance, Goethe reporting to Cotta from Retzsch's studio.[46] Whether or not the poet saw "twelve plates" at Dresden, as Ernst Sigismund has it,[47] is discussed later.

Following the Dresden visit, Goethe first mentioned Retzsch in a 6 November 1810 letter to Cotta brimming with news on artistic undertakings often related to his writings (Riepenhausen, Boisserée, Nauwerk, etc.): "I have seen really interesting and ingenious outlines by Retzsch in Dresden. If he sets them just like that on the [metal] plates, they will make quite a delightful booklet." (*Recht interessante und geistreiche Umrisse zu Faust von Retzsch habe ich in Dresden gesehen. Wenn er sie ebenso auf die Platten bringt, so wird es ein gar erfreuliches Heft geben.*)[48] Both medium and format had been resolved. Desired by Goethe (perhaps with Flaxman's designs in mind), outline etchings also corresponded to Retzsch's endeavours. In 1810, his very first set of thirteen mythology-inspired prints were precisely etched outlines, simply numbered above right as the *Faust* ones would be. He was apt to adopt but also adapt Flaxman's manner.

When synthetically examined, his acclaimed features or alleged failings pertain to three major issues. First and foremost, a key aesthetic preoccupation of the time, the substantiation of a proper visual art to render German culture. Faust being a genuinely German figure, Goethe's tragedy provided a paragon against which artistic endeavours would be gauged. Meyer's "Neu-deutsche religios-patriotische Kunst" ("Neo-German Religious and Patriotic Art") in *Über Kunst und Altertum* (1817) is in this sense typical. It mentions numerous artists inspired by *Faust* but names only three, with Retzsch second after Naeke and before Cornelius.[49] Order of appearance and progressively expanding comments set a grading scale. For Meyer (and Goethe?), Retzsch deserves attention by virtue of a sequence extending over the whole text, etched by his own hand. However, although Cornelius's *Faust* amounted to only 8 of the final 12 plates at the time, his dexterity and art, inspired by Dürer, received maximum praise. Both his *Faust* and much-acclaimed graphic sequence on the Nibelungen saga, another prototype for German art, fitted the article's title. By contrast, Retzsch remained obscure. The "Remarks and Evidence" added that the author had "no further information on his activities."[50] Much later, in conversation with Stieler, the ageing Goethe would sceptically criticize Cornelius's renderings as too "*alt-deutsch*," and prefer Retzsch as having captured "what was really depictable" (*das wirklich Darzustellende*) in *Faust*. In point of fact, Meyer's 1817 discrimination between the two had already been revised by Goethe in his 1816 *Tag- und Jahres-Hefte als Ergänzung meiner sonstigen Bekenntnisse* (*Daily and Yearly Booklets Supplementing my Other Confessions*):

> Zeichnungen zum Faust von Cornelius und Retzsch wirkten in ihrer Art das Aehnliche: denn ob man gleich eine vergangene Vorstellungsweise weder zurückrufen kann noch soll, so ist es doch löblich sich historisch praktisch an ihr zu üben und durch neuere Kunst das Andenken einer älteren aufzufrischen, damit man, ihre Verdienste erkennend, sich alsdann um so lieber zu freieren Regionen erhebe.[51]
>
> Drawings for Faust by Cornelius and Retzsch had a similar effect in their diverse way: for although one neither can nor should call back a past way of depicting, it is however praiseworthy to train historically and practically in it, refreshing a more recent art through the memory of an older art, so that, recognizing its merits, one would then rise all the better to freer regions.

43 *Tg* 4, 2:1086, 1091.

44 GCB 3, 1:294.

45 Doris Schumacher, *Kupfer und Poesie*, 187; Giesen, "Goethes *Faust* in der europäischen Kunst," 61–62; Peter-Christian Wegner, *Literatur auf Porzellan und Steingut* (Lönneker, Stadtoldendorf: Jörg Mitzkat Holzminden, 2012), 212.

46 Alexander Rosenbaum, "Bildende Kunst," in *Faust-Handbuch*, ed. C. Rohde, Th. Valk and M. Mayer (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2018), 178.

47 Sigismund, "Retzsch, Moritz," 193b.

48 GCB 1:216.

49 FA 1, 20:119–20.

50 FA 1, 20:169.

51 WA 1, 36:104.

In 1816, Goethe still saw Retzsch's work as historical style and encouraged artistic liberty. As the endeavour towards a freer art would grow, Retzsch's complex yet simple-looking depictions would loom higher in the poet's eyes. From the outset, his particular merits were mainly two: his 26 plates converted *Faust* into a continuous and detailed visual story, investing each protagonist with an identifiable personality. The latter's recognizable features and particular character had been cast: they would accompany *Faust* through incomprehension or perplexity as much as they would gradually become *visibly personified*, yet *fictional* characters cherished by readers. Retzsch had thrown the basis for typifying, a priceless passport to *Faust*'s European reception. The play's fortune and poet's recognition in Britain pointed that way, and, as mentioned, Goethe followed English literary matters through Hüttner's reports. When Meyer compared German artists' merits to Delacroix's plates in an 1828 issue of *Über Kunst und Altertum*, he retained only two: Cornelius excelled in drawing "the figures with great care and more scientifically," but Retzsch "paid more attention to the cyclical sequence of the images," and had succeeded "in bearing the characters with more continuity through the whole series" (*mehr auf cyklische Folge der Bilder geachtet, mag es gelungen seyn die Charaktere mit mehrerer Stetigkeit durch die ganze Reiche durchzuführen*).[52] German artists, Meyer concluded, could defend themselves against the Frenchman.

Competition bred comparison. That, I believe, also triggered initiation of the eye and finer perception of graphic art, leading to greater discernment of two features in Retzsch's style: subtlety of line and veiled imaginative brio. Goethe's trained taste may have already detected both, yet comparison with the Moses copy brought them dramatically to the fore. Receiving both English initial instalments by Thomas Boosey and Sons as they came out in June and July 1820, he noted three critical changes that I will come back to: the non-representation of God in pl. 1, the expunging of explicit male forms in several plates, and *a contrario* overtly elaborated female charms in pl. 6. He noted laconically but eloquently in his response to Hüttner: "These originals become all the more striking since certain changes appreciated in the copy give food for thought." (*Diese Originale werden dadurch merkwürdiger, weil man gewisse Veränderungen bey der Copie beliebte, welche zu denken geben.*)[53] Bowdlerization had sparked his fathoming of Retzsch's understatement, hardly noticeable when compared to Cornelius's grandiloquence and Delacroix's brio. Retzsch was merely *noteworthy* or simply *significant* (*merkwürdig*), yet instructive for eye and imagination alike. Moreover, his minimalism was commercially viable and reflected upon the play as Boosey was quick to point out: "Perhaps it would be gratifying to Mr de Goethe to know, that in consequence of the extensive Sale of the Outlines in this Country, great curiosity has been excited respecting the tragedy, and of course has had a great Sale lately." What had actually benefitted from a great sale was *not* Goethe's *Faust* in English translation (which did not yet exist) but an extensive prose summary, "merely a literal translation of a portion of the Tragedy to explain the Outlines" (Boosey again).[54] What drove the sales was Retzsch's copied outlines. Goethe instantly knew that his repute in Britain was rapidly improving thanks to Retzsch.

For similar reasons, I argue, also intrinsic to Goethe's insight and imagination, Retzsch had one quality hitherto neglected in criticism. It is summed up in a single adjective, *geistreich*, a term easily translated and yet richer than any equivalent. An alternative to *geistvoll*, it literally means *full of spirit*, and is translatable by *ingenious*, *witty*, *clever*, *gifted*, *brilliant* or even *sophisticated*. It would return now and again under Goethe's pen as an appropriate term, both critically indisputable and wilfully persistent, just as emotional reflexion works. In Goethe's first letter to Cotta, it is already there: "I have seen really interesting and ingenious outlines (*geistreiche Umrisse*) by Retzsch in Dresden." It sneaks into the sparse praise of Meyer's 1817 article: "Many pieces in this sequence are to be praised as brilliant compositions (*geistreiche Compositionen*)." It finds its way again into Goethe's 6 March 1820 letter to Hüttner: "Retzsch's small plates are witty (*geistreich*); in bookseller Bohte's hands, they will make *Faust* known in England."[55] Captivatingly, it reappears in Caspar David Friedrich's notes, highlighting one of the three facets of Retzsch's personality: "this otherwise so excellent, so sophisticated, ingenious artist" (*diesem sonst so ausgezeichneten, so geistreichen, jenialen Künstler*).[56] Mrs Jameson's remark comes to mind: "he is peculiar, fantastic, even extravagant—but never false in sentiment of expression."[57]All concur that the reader's intellectual and emotional stimulation was rooted in the artist's gifted treatment. Retzsch's outlines call for our distinct attention, perhaps even an initiation. But before that, a factual chronicle of the work's development and completion is necessary, as consistent as evidence allows.

52 FA 1, 22:488.

53 WA 4, 33:247.

54 GSA 28/89, 415.

55 WA 4, 32:181.

56 Friedrich, *Die Briefe*, 73.

57 Jameson, *Visits and Sketches*, 1:224.

2.4 Retzsch at Work: Early Correspondence

Goethe's *Faust* had come out in April 1808 and Retzsch was quick to act. He translated the play into pictures early enough for Goethe to see several in Dresden thirty months later. Closely following on Goethe's September visit, he wrote on 10 October 1810 to Cotta in clearly contractual terms:

> Wohlgebohrner Herr
> Hochgeehrtester Herr
> Mit Ew: Wohlgebh: in eine schriftliche Unterhandlung zu treten, verdanke ich der Güte meines Freundes, dem Hr: Profeßor Hartman, auf deßen Veranlaßung ich wünschte mit Ew: Wohlgeb: wegen der von mir zu radirenden 26 Blatt Umrißе zum Gedichte Faust von Göthe, ein näheres zu bestim[m]en. Zur baldigen Publicirung dieser Sam[m]lung nicht allein schon mehreremals vor verschiedenen Seiten ersucht und gebeten; als vorzüglich ermuntert durch den ungetheilten Beifall des Hr: GeheimRath v Göthe selbst, während seines Hierseyns, und auch von ihm zum radiren verschiedendlich aufgefordert, wäre ich geson[n]en, da mir es meine Zeit jetzt einigermaßen erlaubt diese Arbeit vorzunehmen. Der Versicherung des Hr. Profeßor Hartman zu Folge, ist Ew: Wohlgeboh: der Preiß jeder Platte, 20 Thlr:, schon bekan[n]t. Ich über laße es übrigens Ew: Wohlgebh: in wiefern Dieselben die Zahlung gefälligst einzurichten gedenken, und machen denselben nur bemerklich, daß es mir lieb seyn würde, wen[n] ich die Zahlung auf drey, fünf oder sechs Platten durch Anweisung hier beziehen, u dagegen die Platten an einen hiesigen Com[m]ißionair abliefern kön[n]te. Oder wollen Dieselben allemal, der manigfachen Auslagen wegen die Hälfte auf sechs, acht oder zehn Platten voraus gegeben, das stehet bey Ew. Wohlgeb. In jedem Falle erwarte ich von Ew: Wohlgeb: über die zu treffende Einrichtung gefälligst einige Nachricht. Ich empfehle mich übrigens Deroselbe Wohlwollen und bin mit vollkom[m]ener Hochachtung
> ergebener Diener M Retzsch[58]
>
> Most gracious Sir,
> Very honourable Sir,
> I owe the kindness of entering into written negotiation with your excellent self to my friend, Professor Hartmann, at whose instigation I would like to define more closely with your excellent self what relates to the 26 sheets of outlines to be etched by me after the poem *Faust* by Gœthe. Not only often requested and asked by various parties to speedily publish this collection, but also excellently encouraged by the full praise of Mr Privy Councillor v Gœthe himself, during his presence here, and also repeatedly asked by him to engrave them, I would be disposed to do so, since my time now allows me to undertake this work to some extent. According to Professor Hartmann's assurance, the price for each plate, 20 Thalers, is already known to you. Incidentally, I leave it to your excellent self [to decide] to what extent you may intend to kindly arrange the payment, and only wish to point out that it would be agreeable to me if I were to receive it here by money-order per three, five or six plates, and could in return deliver the plates to a local commissioner. Or else if you prefer to always advance, because of the multiple expenses, half [of the sum] per six, eight or ten plates, that rests with your excellent self. Incidentally, I recommend myself to your benevolence and remain very respectfully at your service, M. Retzsch.

Behind the customary well-mannered formulas of respect, Retzsch's matter-of-fact and business-like tone shows himself sure, determined to publicize an assignment he highly valued, and to require due payment of his inexpensive fee (it would later rise substantially). Several turns of phrase merit comment or explication: "often requested and asked by various parties to speedily publish this collection" implies his *Faust* sequence was well advanced and already had its devotees. Was it complete? The assertion would be rash: it seems gainsaid by drawings for the "Witch's Kitchen" and "Outside the City Walls" that reached Weimar only late December 1810. Pauline Gotter, Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling's second wife, recorded Goethe's "high satisfaction" with them at the time of her visit.[59] Yet, in her phrasing, Goethe's approval lay with a series of compositions, not just individual drawings. It is possible that Retzsch had extended, even completed the set between meeting Goethe and writing to Cotta. At least fleshed out in general conception, perhaps not finalized in every detail, as we shall see. The proposed contract already stipulates 26 plates, and exactly 26 plates would be published. His zeal is obvious, not least in his contractual epistle, which *precedes* by nearly a month Goethe's own 6 November missive to the publisher, mentioning the outlines for the first time (amongst others' endeavours to visually interpret *Faust*). Once Cotta's agreement confirmed,

58 DLA Co: Retzsch. Transcriptions follow original manuscripts as faithfully as possible. I have restored current spellings in my translations.

59 GG 2:103.

Retzsch must have set to work on the metal plates without further delay. On the 2 December, Verlohren informed Goethe that Retzsch was in the process of etching "the drawings he had made." He added: "as soon as he will have finished this work, he will send the [metal] plates (*die Blatten*) over to bookseller Cotta for the sale of prints (*zum Verkauf der Abdrücke*); should Sir however wish to see the drawings (*die Zeichnungen*), he would gladly send them over for a few days for you, Sir, to see and I therefore expect your orders."[60] It could also well be that the drawings received late December corresponded to such a desire on Goethe's part.

The choice of number of plates per batch and corresponding payment had been left with Cotta who must have settled on four since none of Retzsch's extant convoying notes to Kummer gives another figure. Retzsch will have been hard at work as the New Year set in. For his part, Goethe will have expressed concern about the faithfulness of the etchings to the drawings seen, as may be inferred from Verlohren's 20 January 1811 response:

> Sir, Mr Retsch [*sic*] recommends himself to you, he would very gladly send over proof-sheets of his drawings (*Proba Abdrücke seiner Zeichnungen*) or, once the whole thing is completed, a copy of it, but, since Mr Cotta has taken over the whole work, he would prefer it, if Sir had the goodness to turn to the aforesaid Mr Cotta for a copy. I saw some sample prints of his drawings (*einige Abdrücke seiner Zeichnungen*), they seemed very perfect to me.[61]

Crucially, the letter no longer offered *drawings* but *sample sheets* pulled from the plates. By then, Retzsch, fully engaged in the etching process of a likely settled series, was developing an object for issue in large numbers. As such, it no longer belonged to him but the publisher. The artist clearly decided to keep the exchange on a professional basis, and, aware of treading new ground, to keep Cotta actively involved. He may also have intended to lever Goethe's influence and use his request for trial proofs to accelerate publication.

On the very morrow of Verlohren's letter to Goethe, Retzsch dispatched the first four metal plates to Leipzig, but Kummer did not know what to do with them. He wrote to Cotta on Retzsch's own note asking: "Should I keep these plates here? or send them to you by *post* or *carrier*?"[62] Proper arrangements had not yet been made on Cotta's side, let alone a production line, which had not been decided. Kummer remained in the dark. On 9 March 1811, the second batch ready, Kummer having informed the artist that the first still lay in his hands, Retzsch turned to Cotta. His anxiety is revealed in his long zigzagging sentence of knotty syntax:

> Ew. Wohlgebohr.
> Habe ich die Ehre zu melden, dass zur Zeit abermals vier Platten zu Göthens Faust vollendet parat liegen; und bitte zugleich, dass da ich von Hr: [Herrn] Kummer in Leipzig an welchen Dieselben mich gewiesen, auf meine kürzliche Anfrage wegen der an selbigen schon bereits vor 10 Wochen abgeschikten vier ersten Platten, wobei sich auch zu jeder ein Abdruck befindet, zur Antwort erhalten habe, dass zwar die Platten sich seit dieser Zeit in seinen Händen befänden, er aber noch bis jetzt keines weges wisse, was damit werden solle, ihm gefälligst von unserm Contrakt zu unterrichten und anzuweisen, damit ich nicht allein in der Arbeit ununterbrochen fortfahren und sonach in Stand gesetzt werde Herrn Göthe, welcher desshalb schon einigemale an mich geschikt, und der übrigen Interessenten eine ohngefähre Zeit der Vollendung des ganzen Werks angeben zu können, als auch meiner anderweitigen Geschäfte darnach einzurichten vermag, weil ich im Spätjahr verreisen werde.
> Ew Wohlgebohr. empfiehlt sich
> ergebenst Moritz Retzsch.[63]

> Honourable Sir,
> I have the honour to announce that at the moment four plates for Gœthe's *Faust* are again ready: and at the same time I pray you to kindly inform and instruct of our contract Mr Kummer in Leipzig; indeed, to my recent request concerning the first four plates sent to him already 10 weeks ago, with a proof impression for each, Kummer, to whom you have yourself referred me, responded that the plates have been in his hands, but he did not yet know in any way what to do with them, so that I am enabled to pursue uninterruptedly my work not alone, and therefore be in a position to give Mr Gœthe, who has already contacted me several times to this end, and all other interested parties, an approximate time for the completion of the whole work, as well as to arrange my other business accordingly because I will travel later on this year.
> I remain, Honourable Sir,
> very respectfully, yours M. Retzsch.

60 GSA 26/934, 3.
61 GSA 26/934, 4.
62 HAAB: F gr 5019, document 9, Kummer's emphasis.
63 Beinecke: YCGL MSS 6, box 14, folder 555.

Letters are fascinating in research because they bring us briskly back in time and usher us there and then into the reality of the artist's life and creation. Yet they are often infinitesimal documents abruptly torn out of context, containing indistinct and unclear indications. They beg to be completed and corroborated by other minutiae perhaps forever lost. Till now, two letters have been most used by scholars in relation to Retzsch's *Faust 1*: his contract-like letter to Cotta, and the above epistle to Cotta, asking the publisher to duly inform his representative (oddly confused in Giesen's appreciation with the printer[64]) and urging him for a publication date.

I do not consider here correspondence with J. F. Cotta posterior to 1823 as in Hildebrand-Schat's book, irrelevant to the 1810s. Retzsch's adroit argument that Goethe and "other interested parties" were anxious to announce a publication date for the *Umrisse* may have mirrored Goethe's inquiries through Verlohren, whose letters have not been preserved. The argument may also have been devised to compel Cotta: it well confirms the artist's willingness to publicize his *Faust*.

The first of these letters is in the Deutsches Literatur Archiv in Marbach, the second at the Beinecke Library in Yale University. Neither alone provides the picture, if not completed by six authentic documents in Retzsch's hand, three dated 1811, another three 1812, dates either specified on emission or recorded on reception. They are part of an artificially assembled and bound volume of variously signed autograph material, now at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar. The volume's bulk itself is an interesting example of copies *after* Retzsch to which I shall come back later (Chapter 7). As for the six documents, although digitized, they appear not to have been signalled before. Four are brief delivery notes, documenting Retzsch's transactions with Kummer in 1811–12. One, already mentioned, escorts the first 21 January 1811 consignment. The fourth, dated 8 April 1812, is an autograph receipt reading: "I hereby certify that I received 520 Thalers cash for 26 plates after Gœthe's *Faust* at 20 rt [Reichsthaler] apiece from the bookseller Kummer."[65]

The settled account could hardly reflect the order more accurately. The diligent Retzsch had indeed already completed his task. His swift processing transpires in Böttiger's assertion in the 22 April 1811 *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*: "he is engraving at this moment a series of figures, of his own rich invention, after Gœthe's *Faust*, with which Gœthe himself is said to have been satisfied when the drawings were presented to him" (*radirt in diesem Augenblick eine Reihe von Darstellungen nach Göthe's Faust, von seiner eigenen reichen Erfindung, womit Göthe selbst, als ihm die Zeichnungen vorgelegt wurden, zufrieden gewesen seyn soll.*)[66] Böttiger and Retzsch's Scharfenberg friends were certainly among the "other interested parties," mentioned in Retzsch's 9 March 1811 letter. In his devout biography, Th. S. dates the engraving process as 1812 and dramatizes Retzsch's efforts under French occupation in Dresden in an account that hardly stands the evidence of a payment receipt.[67] To cut a long story short, four months after Goethe's visit, the artist had to all intents and purposes completed drawings, etched and delivered the first batch of four metal plates. Thirteen months later, he had etched, proofed and supplied the remaining twenty-two. His work was done with, and paid off, at a sustained pace of four plates every ten weeks or so. Yet, as is well known, his *Umrisse* only came out in October 1816. What had happened in between?

Before I attempt an answer, let me point out that strong affirmations, such as the following, need to be revised: "The late publication date is probably not due to the publisher, who was constantly taking care of the publication, but to the illustrator, whose correspondence betrays hesitation and uncertainty and who suffered from an eye ailment," all the more so as it concludes by opposing Retzsch's "reserve" to Cornelius's "actionism."[68] Nothing substantiates constant care by the publisher, quite the reverse. Retzsch's eye complaint occurs much later (1828 and 1834) as record his letters to both Cottas.[69] As for a hesitant stance, besides Retzsch's obvious eagerness, another letter to Cotta dated 30 April 1812, just after the Leipzig book fair, shows that problems and delays lay indeed with the publisher's representative:

> Da das Werk von 26 Platten zu Göthens Faust schon längst beendigt ist, u ich dieselben, wie Sie wünschten jedesmal zu 4 Platten an Hr. Kum[m]er in Leipzig schickte, wogegen ich auch, nach Ihrer Anordnung, die Bezahlung für selbige sogleich erhielt, wie Ihnen die Hauptquittung, die derselbe über das Ganze von mir nun in Händen hat, auch beweisen wird; so kan[n] ich nicht einsehn, wie das zugehen muß, daß Sie sämtliche Platten noch nicht empfangen haben. Sollten Sie dieselben bei Ihrer Rückkehr nicht alle vorfinden, was ich nicht hoffen will, so wird Hr: Kummer Ihnen hierüber die beste Auskunft geben kön[n]en.

64 Giesen, "Goethes *Faust* in der europäischen Kunst," 62, n. 339.

65 HAAB: F gr 5019, document 6.

66 Karl August Böttiger, "Bilder nach Wieland, Göthe und Schiller," *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, no. 80 (22 Apr 1811): 636.

67 Th. S., "Ein Lebensbild," 7a.

68 Giesen, "Goethes *Faust* in der europäischen Kunst," 62.

69 DLA C-R, no. 12 and no. 40.

> Die Zeichnungen, welche ich zu dem Werke gemacht hatte, bestanden säm[m]tlich in einem leichten Umriß, u ich habe, nachdem dieselben auf den Firnis der Platten abgedrückt waren, mich nicht ferner darnach gerichtet, weil ich die Ausführung gleich mit dem Radieren verband; sie würden daher ohne den mindesten Nutzen für Nachhülfe, die etwan mit der Zeit nöthig werden dürfte, seyn, zu welchem Zweck übrigens die guten Abdrüke, deren zu jeder Platte einer hinzugefügt ist, am besten dienen werden.[70]
>
> Since the work of 26 plates on Gœthe's *Faust* has long been completed, and I sent it, as you requested, by [batches of] 4 plates a time to Mr Kummer in Leipzig, against which, according to your order, I received immediate payment, as my general receipt, that he now has in his hands for the whole thing, will also prove to you; I therefore cannot see how it may happen that you have not yet received all the plates. Should you not find them all on your return,[71] which I hope not, Mr Kummer will be in a position to best inform you on the matter.
>
> The drawings which I had made for the work were all in slight outline, and once they had been impressed on the plates' varnish, I did not pursue in that direction because I closely associated their execution with the etching; they would therefore be of no use whatsoever for retouching, should this ever prove necessary over time; by the way, the good impressions, one of which is attached to each plate, would best serve that purpose.

The HAAB documents are a valuable source of information. Kummer's negligence and perhaps Cotta's belated or hazy instructions were to blame for the delay. Retzsch's recourse to a local agent (to save post costs and perhaps anguish) had taken the wind out of his sail. His very proposal had turned against him. As the letter shows, he was a keen artist, attentive to the slightest detail, and even foresaw that extensive use of the plates would need refurbishing, to which his sample proofs would serve. A last note to Kummer, delivering another 4 plates on 21 May 1812, would have completed the sequence, presumably replacing the lost ones.[72]

Yet available documentation also has limits. Two years elapse before references to Retzsch's *Umrisse* emerge again in Goethe's diaries, recording on 30 June 1814 the arrival in Weimar of "drawings from Faust," attributed to Retzsch.[73] They were examined and discussed by the poet, his close friend and correspondent Carl Friedrich Zelter, perhaps the historian Georg Freiherr Sartorius von Waltershausen, and Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer, by then Goethe's amanuensis, who noted in his unpublished diary on 1 July: "In the evening at Goethe's, Zelter present. Examined Retzsch's drawings after Faust, fascinating (*reizend*)."[74] It is impossible to say whether these were meant to replace lost plates; whether Goethe had requested changes or even rejected plates (leaving no trace); whether Retzsch had reviewed some of his compositions while awaiting publication; or added further drawings.

One thing is certain, further delays occurred, on the publisher's side. Cotta solicited in vain Goethe's comment on the *Umrisse*. He well knew that such endorsement would boost the value of his publications and attract buyers. His first entreaty to Goethe along with a set of all 26 proofs, construed as "[Stuttgart October 1815]" in the Goethe-Cotta correspondence, dates clearly back to 1814, as Dorothea Kuhn notes.[75] It received no response. A second plea followed on 31 October 1815,[76] this time favourably received: "As for *Faust*, I have given it some thought, and hope to be able to deliver something, although it would be but a page, something that could be inserted as an inscription after the title, either printed or engraved." (*An den Faust habe ich gedacht und hoffe etwas liefern zu können, doch würde es etwa nur ein Blatt seyn, welches man als Dedication hinter den Titel entweder gedruckt oder gestochen einheften könnte.*)[77] A year later, nothing having come, the *Umrisse* were finally issued in October 1816 with the (anonymous) preface by Therese Huber, by then editor of the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*. Cotta's argument was that the publication had been announced in book fair catalogues (*Messekataloge*) and already charged to the booksellers.[78] He was under the obligation to bring it out. Curiously, I find no trace announcing Retzsch's *Umrisse* in Leipzig book fair catalogues between 1812 and 1818, not even after the *Umrisse* had been published. However, Cotta had indeed announced them under Goethe's name in the 1 January 1816 "Circulaire" he sent out to booksellers as "Faust, (with outlines by Retsch [*sic*])," although text

70 HAAB: F gr 5019, document 5.
71 The phrase refers to the 1812 Leipzig book fair, from 13 Apr to 1 May.
72 HAAB: F gr 5019, document 4.
73 *Tg* 5, 1:160 & 31–32.
74 Qtd. in *Tg* 5, 2:682.
75 GCB 1:282; 3, 1:349.
76 GCB 1:282.
77 GCB 1:284.
78 GCB 2:28.

was reduced to a few excerpts. From his point of view, the work was subordinate to Goethe's. His first announcement of Retzsch's outlines vaunting the artist's name would occur only in the 1 January 1831 "Circulaire" regarding Schiller's *Song of the Bell* (issued 1833). The book fair catalogues would register Retzsch's work under his name only in 1840 (outlines after Bürger).

Despite his efforts and energy, Retzsch had had to wait nearly four years before his *Faust* at last addressed a German public in October 1816. Unluckily for him, Cornelius's first instalment had come out at Easter 1816 according to Seeliger, and further sample proofs sent by Friedrich Wenner reached Weimar in August.[79]

2.5 A Speculation on Relics

How many *Faust* drawings and precisely which did Goethe see in Dresden? How many of them are today preserved in Dresden's Prints Cabinet collection? In the Thieme-Becker dictionary, Ernst Sigismund set the record—potentially a moot point—by way of a diminutive, parenthetic indication, defying detection: "R. had delivered a series of Faust sketches, which Goethe saw with great interest in September 1810 in Dresden (12 sheets, Prints Cabinet, Dresden)."[80] The greater part of the present-day Retzsch collection came to the Dresden Prints Cabinet in autumn 1892 through J. M. C. Hildebrand's bequest (*Vermächtnis*), 35 years after Retzsch's demise. It contains a large number of *Faust* drawings, none of which is dated, let alone accredited as presented to Goethe. Comparison with the etched prints shows that they may be roughly divided into five categories:

a) Early draft sketches
b) Preliminary studies of complete scenes at various stages
c) More complete studies showing alternative details
d) Detailed finished drawings close to the etched versions
e) Drawings traced from the final etchings.

When dealing with an artist's primary creation, it would be unwise to set strict limits through classification. The first and last of these notional groupings are the easiest to identify and interpret. Otherwise, they easily overlap, particularly (b) and (c) in this case. Nevertheless, roughly classifying them prompts insights into the evolution of Retzsch's work and his aesthetics.

Early draft sketches (a) is a rather inadequate term for Retzsch's outlines and their firm contours. However, this group involves no comprehensive scenes. Six drawings are but early designs capturing the core of an episode. Leaving out settings, and focussed on the protagonists, they seize key actions and gestures, turning points, and scenes of despair, devilry or desire: the covenant (C 5056); Faust in the witch's kitchen, engrossed in the magic mirror (with an ensnaring Mephistopheles slouching in an armchair, fire fan in hand) (C 5059); accosting Margaret (C 5061); raising the bed drapes in her chamber (C 5064); ascending with Mephistopheles the Brocken (C 5086); and exhorting Margaret to leave prison (C 5081). In most, an appropriate backdrop will be subsequently added, but the fitting atmosphere is already there. Three are inscribed *Faust* in a neat Roman hand, exactly as on a likewise entitled Weimar drawing. An earlier version of the Dresden covenant scene, the latter sports on the same sheet two male nudes wrestling and a third climbing. Comparison between the Weimar and Dresden drafts shows that the tension between protagonists will hardly subside. In the earlier Weimar (cf. Fig. 2.4a), Mephistopheles's fierce expression already fleets over the animal features of his widened triangular face as in the later etching (cf. Fig. 4.3). In the further developed Dresden sketch (C 5056, cf. Fig. 2.4b), Retzsch still wavers over the final position of one of Faust's legs and sparely indicates furniture. Still, he will only have to set the partners in context. His depiction of a capital moment is already there.

This part of his *Nachlass* evidences his ability to fix chief moments in an interactive minimal scene. In the final etchings, he slightly reinforces protagonists' contours, enabling the viewer to differentiate levels of image gradation. This slightly emphasized line weight, a key feature of his graphic work, is lost in later reproductions such that several items replicated appear flat.

Drawings traced after the final etchings (e) are later additions, a consequence of plying the drawings into the etching process itself. He had alluded to this in his 30 April 1812 letter to J. F. Cotta: instead of pursuing drawing, he associated it "with the etching" itself by imprinting drawings "onto the plates' varnish." Had the plates been lost, his drawings would be of no assistance but sample proofs would. He employed the same process in his Schiller outlines and subsequent assignments. In a 13 July 1831 letter to Georg von Cotta, who had asked him for drawings, he explicitly writes:

> So gern ich Ihnen die Zeichnungen, Ihrem Wunsche gemäß zustellen möchte, so wiederhole ich doch da offene Geständniß, daß dieselben gewöhnlich aus der Druckerei durch das Aufpausen vermittelst

79 See Seeliger, "Faust-Bilder von Peter Cornelius," A278; *Tg* 5, 2:978–79; RA 7:no. 447.

80 Sigismund, "Retzsch, Moritz," 193b.

FIGURES 2.4a–b
(*top*) Moritz Retzsch, *Faust*, preliminary pencil drawing, n.d., 15.8 × 15 cm; (*bottom*) same scene further developed, n.d., 14.2 × 12.3 cm
COURTESY HAAB, F GR 9228, WEIMAR, AND: SKK, C 5056, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

> der Preße, in einem so verbleichten u zum Theil schmuzigen Zustand zu mir zurück kehren, daß die mehrsten davon gänzlich unbrauchbar geworden von mir gar nicht aufbewahrt worden sind u werden kön[n]en, wovon sich män[n]iglich augenscheinlich überzeugen würde.[81]
>
> As much as I would like to send you the drawings following your wishes, I however repeat my frank confession that they usually come back to me in such a bleached and partly dirty state from the printer's because of the tracing through the press, that most of them, having become completely unusable, have not and could not have been kept by me, a fact of which anybody would be plainly convinced.

Later, he recorded the final etchings by tracing them in light outlines: three of the Dresden *Faust* drawings (C 5055, C 5058 and C 5075) are pencil copies of his extra etchings for the 1834 enlarged *Umrisse zu Faust* edition (29 instead of 26 plates). As post-production replicas, they are not reversed like the originals transferred to the plates. Such is also a pencil tracing of pl. 9, Margaret in her chamber (C 1937–1495), which joined the Dresden *Nachlass* later from Johann Friedrich Lahmann's collection, perhaps a cherished art lovers's copy (see Chapter 7).

Detailed finished drawings close to the etched versions (d) form an instructive group, albeit tricky to substantiate. Read in a certain way, they might amount to twelve, as per Sigismund's remark. Given their nearly finished status, that well-informed art historian and collector of Retzsch's work may have been tempted to see in them an ideal series of "12 plates," perhaps even those shown to Goethe. No documents uphold or gainsay such a theory, and, according to other parameters, their number ought to exceed twelve.

Far more thought-provoking than grappling with what Sigismund actually meant, is the way they have been wielded by the artist while etching. Straight lines or geometrical shapes are often not drawn in pencil. Instead, traced through the paper by means of a blunt stylus or etching needle, they directly impressed the plate's varnish beneath. Some bear slightly varying details, although they do not seem incomplete nor resemble setting-out drafts: they have been finalized via the etching process itself, as evidence blotches or chemical stains. In others, the stylus has retraced pencil contours to similar effect (C 5066, Martha adorns Margaret with the jewels). In several, remarkably detailed, fanciful minutiae are lacking and appear to have been imprinted directly onto the plates. For instance, whereas Faust drinks the potion in the witch's kitchen in C 5060 (Fig. 2.5), the drawing, clearly used for etching, includes neither the tiny creatures in the cauldron's vapours nor the string of frogs of the final plates (cf. Fig. 2.18–2.19); in Margaret imploring Our Lady of Sorrows (C 5076), the bricks and roof tiles are missing, again drawn onto the plate. Although the first plate, Prologue in Heaven (C 5052), is part of this group (with hatched clouds added on the plate), the majority corresponds to plates beyond the cycle's mid-point and includes complex crowded scenes: the cathedral (C 5085), Valentine dying (C 5083), Faust and Mephistopheles ascending the Brocken (C 5087), the witches' Sabbath (C 5077). In a drawing from group (b), extant in many versions, Faust contemplates Margaret's bed while Mephistopheles briskly enters with the jewels' casket (C 5063), yet only the latter has been traced onto the varnished plate (cf. Fig. 2.9). This suggests etching by trial and error, the final plate coalescing a choice of the most engaging drawn figures.

In the presently preserved presentation, all drawings are pasted. None of the reverse sides is accessible, although they seem to bear further indications. Yet, excitingly, this part of the *Nachlass* allows exploration of Retzsch's approach to outline etching.

It is of course possible that the artist, anxious to promptly execute the work, chose such a method to gain time, skipping the transfer of a detailed finished drawing onto the polished and varnished plate before etching. Yet, his recurrent preference over time for such practice shows he consciously capitalized on a multiplication process to get his work known. He was not anxious to preserve original drawings. He rather used them for the ultimate purpose of reproduction. Since he turned the etched plates over to a publisher (the prints belonged to Cotta, as he stressed to Goethe via Verlohren), he was wielding etching as *a medium to which industrializing features would be applied*. He will have been aware of the fact that his *Faust* interpretation was a burgeoning vehicle. He may not have yet suspected to what extent it would proliferate, but knew that the medium would propel his designs far beyond Dresden.

Retzsch thus appears as a craftsman, designer, and artist in one. He mastered engraving to the last detail, as evidence his later correspondence with Georg von Cotta and his resolve to retouch and re-engrave the plates himself, a task he considered tedious, yet necessary, for his work to show at its best. He wielded engraving both as an art and a reproduction vehicle. This shows in a bidirectional

81 DLA C-R, no. 21.

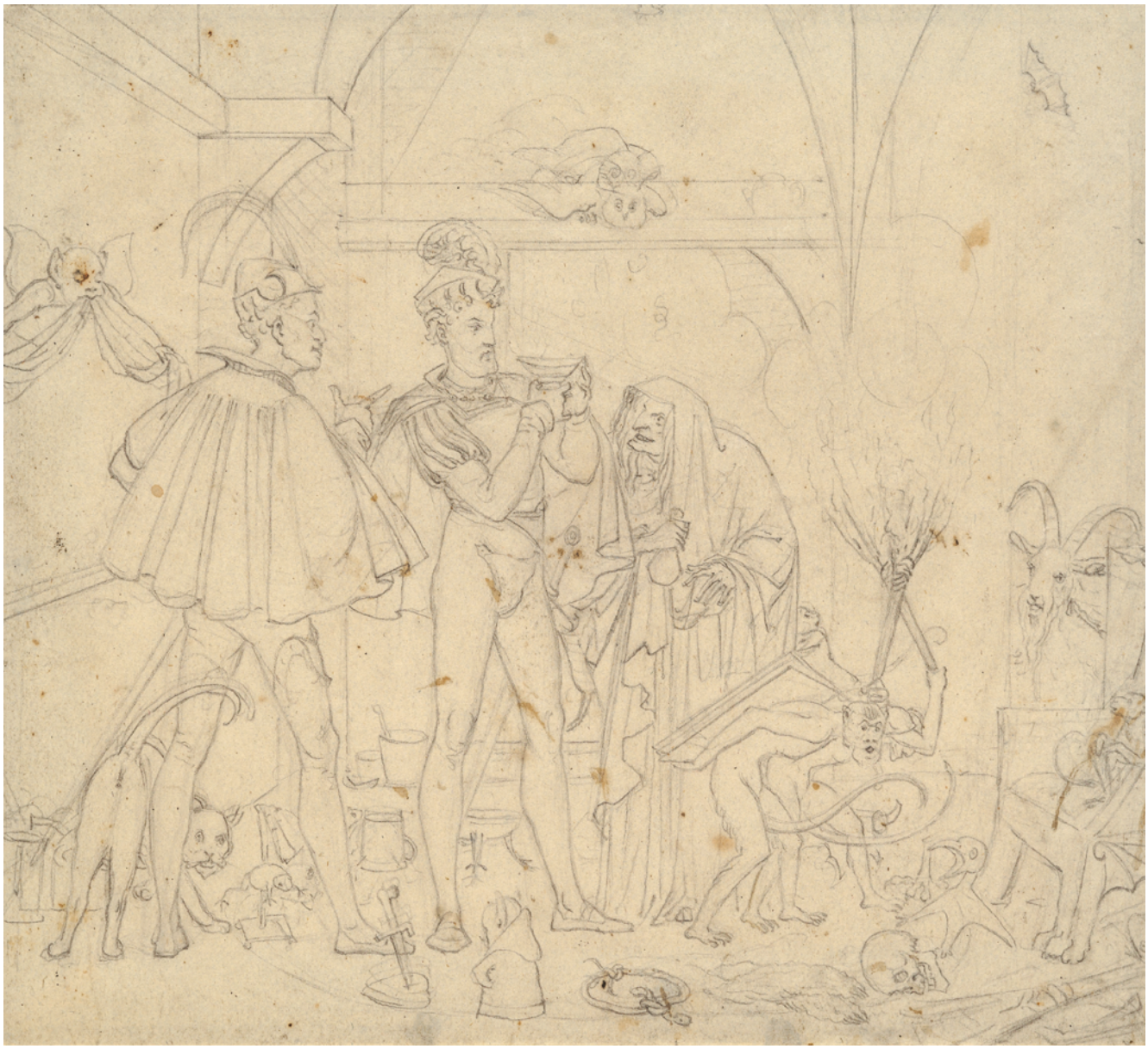

FIGURE 2.5 Moritz Retzsch, Faust drinks the potion in the witch's kitchen, chemical-stained preliminary pencil drawing, n.d., 14.8 × 16.4 cm
SKK, C 5060, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

strip-like cartoon, unfortunately undated, in the Dresden Prints Cabinet (C 1937–1500) (Fig. 2.6).

The lower half hosts four small *Faust* pencil drawings. All four are reduced, rougher outline copies of prints taken from the *Faust* sequence and recomposed as a small storyboard. Set in a run, frame by frame, they recall the eight lithographs in sequential reproduction that would form the long *Parade of the Vinedressers* (1840), albeit with several differences. This is no march (for which the plate-to-plate device would be expected) but a wilful selection. The mounting repurposes the outlines, creating a novel effect, perhaps as a prospectus design or a publishing crib. It is no satirical or caustic sequential narrative either, as in Hogarth's *The Harlot's* or *The Rake's Progress* (1732 and 1735)—famous eighteenth century etched six-plate precedents, to be viewed plate by plate in larger format, albeit later turned into picture stories on a tiny scale with German commentaries.[82] Retzsch's four images are selected, positioned, and re-structured to make a lay Margaret tetraptych, hence with Christic overtones, recalling memorable

82 See David Kunzle, *History of the Comic Strip*, vol. 1, *The Early Comic Strip* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1973), 393b.

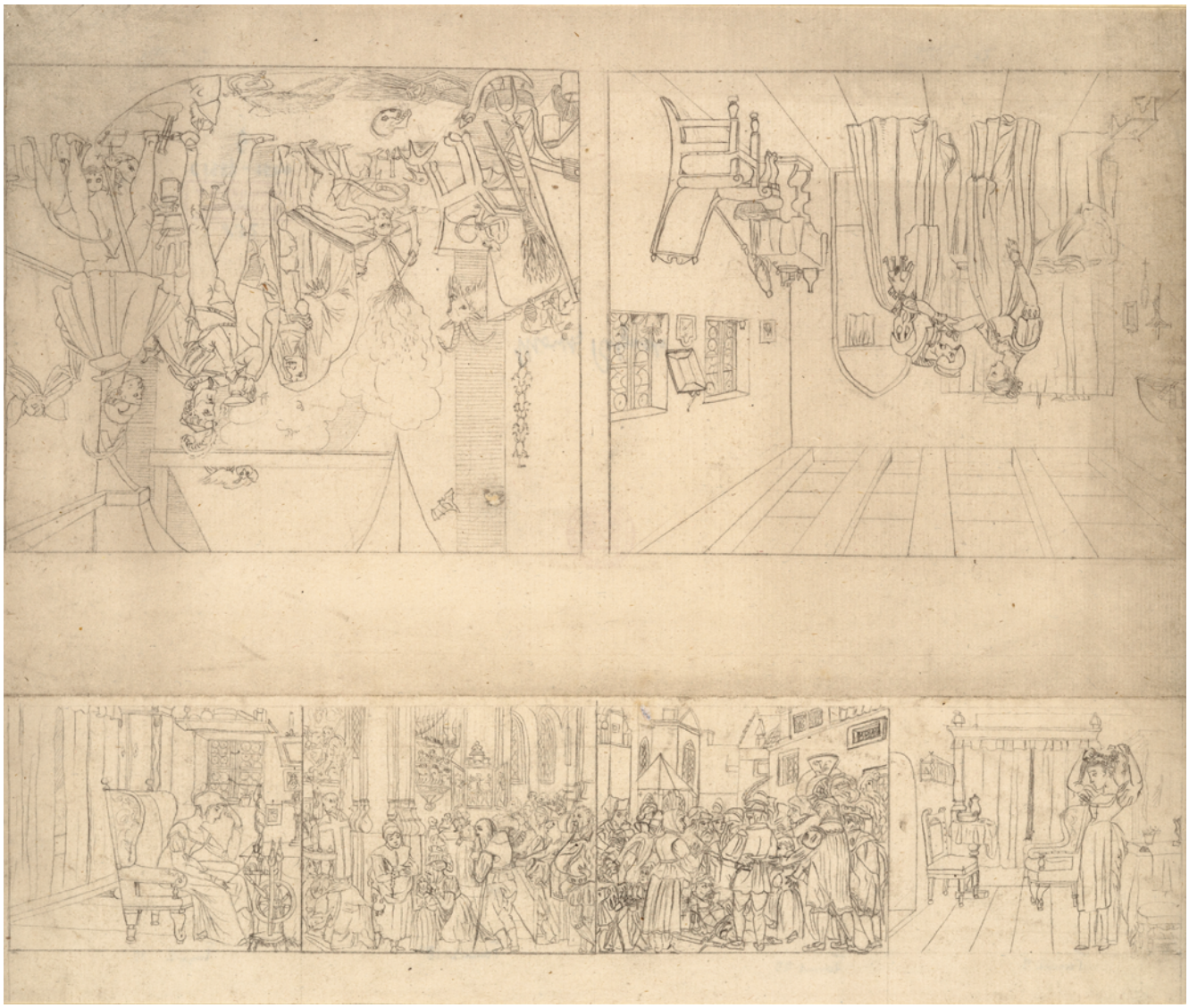

FIGURE 2.6 Moritz Retzsch, double strip of several drawings, n.d., overall 28.6 × 34.3 cm
SKK, C 1937–1500, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

moments from her story, yet not in chronological order, either from the right or from the left. Working on antithesis, they neatly counterbalance Margaret solitary at both ends with crowd scenes in the centre. The former show her loveliness in private (at the spinning wheel and musing in her chamber), the latter set in public her sense of guilt (cathedral) and disgrace (Valentine dying).

The upper half bears upside-down two other drawings of larger size that may also have been considered for reproduction in a diptych on temptation: Margaret donning the jewels at Martha's, and Faust drinking the potion in the witch's kitchen. As with Hogarth, they may have been "modern moral subjects," conceived as sequential or complementary displays for larger circulation. It is possible Retzsch had in mind Daniel Chodowiecki's visual etched narratives for almanacs.[83]

Extant graphite drawings in groups (b) and (c), *preliminary or more complete studies at various stages*, afford comparative exploration of versions, shedding light on Retzsch's reading of Goethe. Multiple versions of the same scene exemplify what enticed the artist's responsiveness or tried his ability to graphically convert his inspiration, emotions or imagination. They betray either dissatisfaction with the result or particular attraction. Here interpretation has to rely on surviving drawings. It

83 On Chodowiecki, see ibid., 393–401.

FIGURE 2.7 Moritz Retzsch, Margaret at the spinning wheel, final pencil drawing, n.d., 13 × 14.7 cm
SKK, C 5074, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

cannot be excluded that versions of *other* scenes may have been lost or destroyed. The sketch of Faust entreating Margaret to leave prison (C 5081) figures for instance on a crumpled piece of paper as if thrown away, then retrieved. Precaution thus taken, five scenes have at least one variant, drawing attention to passion and desire.

Not surprisingly, all five picture crucial moments: Faust in his study (one), Faust and Margaret (two), Margaret's sad fate (two). The latter aroused more interest than the former. In a first version of Faust's study with the poodle appearing (C 5053), Retzsch drew a ferocious bare-fanged canine barking at Faust, later abandoned for the final nightmarish beast ominously swelling by the stove on which Saint George symbolically kills the dragon (cf. Fig. 4.3). His two initial versions of the garden (C 5069 actually preceding C 5068) capture the antithetic structure of couples promenading (cf. Fig. 10.3), as in Goethe's opposed disposition. The second (C 5068) momentously catches the devil's glaring eye. Retzsch's dissatisfaction must have lain with the lovers' posture and details of Margaret's clothing, ultimately changed. His initial design of Faust entreating Margaret to leave prison unconvincingly attempts to render her madness rather than his pleading, and was abandoned for good reason (C 5081). The tension built into the final plate, as Mephistopheles pulls away Faust desperately trying to carry off Margaret, who herself lifts arms

FIGURE 2.8 Moritz Retzsch, Valentine dying accuses his sister, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 20
COURTESY HAAB, F 3487, WEIMAR

heavenward, is more dramatically effective (cf. Fig. 2.17). The first version of Margaret dejected at the spinning wheel differs from the final by an important detail: in the cast-off version, she still wears her hair in braids and ringlets as a girl (C 5072). In the final version C 5074 (as in the set) it has disappeared under a neat coif, as for a married woman, implying her loss of virginity (Fig. 2.7). The first version of Valentine dying in public poses Margaret weeping over her brother, while slanting glances publicly stigmatize her (C 5084). In the final version, lost from view within the crowd, her face concealed, but pointedly accused by Valentine, she is symbolically overwhelmed by social dishonour and indifference (two boys badger each other, oblivious to the calamity, Fig. 2.8).

Comparisons between discarded and later versions bring to the fore central features to Retzsch's art: overall image planning in which everything matters, a wealth of detail, and important symbolic implications—all meaningful changes proving his reading of Goethe's *Faust* to be sophisticated.

Moreover, expression of desire and passion in *Faust* tested Retzsch's pencil. Two episodes show complex handling in multiple drafts: entering Margaret's chamber and the lovers' kiss. They both obviously appealed to the artist and bring libido to the fore—a daring aspect for the time. His final conceptions had lasting appeal and even inspired the marketing of English albums.

The trespass on Margaret's chamber is a symbolic penetration of privacy. A first draft orchestrates the incursion itself, fusing together three distinct moments from "EVENING. A small well-kept room" (C 5063, Fig. 2.9). Foreground left, Margaret standing half-turns away from

FIGURE 2.9 Moritz Retzsch, Faust and Mephistopheles in Margaret's chamber with Margaret also present, blotched preliminary pencil drawing with Mephistopheles stylus-retraced, n.d., 16.1 × 17.8 cm
SKK, C 5063, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

her mirror as if already sporting the jewels. She is shown to be present and taken aback, whereas she should be absent and chronologically the last to appear and find the jewels (F 2753f). Mid-ground, Faust draws aside her bed curtain, his back to the viewer, lost in musings as reflected in his words some fifty lines previous (F 2709f). In the play, he discovers Margaret's virginal nature. His former sudden lust at first sight ("Look, you must get that girl for me!" F 2619, trans. D. Luke) changes suddenly into ardent love mingled to thoughts on nature ("I was resolved, my lust brooked no delay— | And now in dreams of love I wilt and melt away!" F 2722–23, trans. D. Luke). In Retzsch's drawing, with his back turned and no caption, his expression is unfathomable, and the viewer may project upon the picture a different reading. In the text, this moment also *precedes* Mephistopheles who abruptly breaks in from the left, jewel casket in hand, calling: "Quick! I can see her by the gate." (F 2729, trans. W. Arndt). Conflating three instants in simultaneous action, C 5063 stresses the forcefulness of the devil's irruption to the male lover's pondering and the girl's intimacy. Retzsch's draft also mirrors his fervour as he attempts to capture Faust's longing in yet another sketch astride the bed top. We may consider the draft as a matter-of-fact sketching sheet, in which the artist has simply tried his hand at three different poses. Yet, he later imprinted to the final etching the irruptive

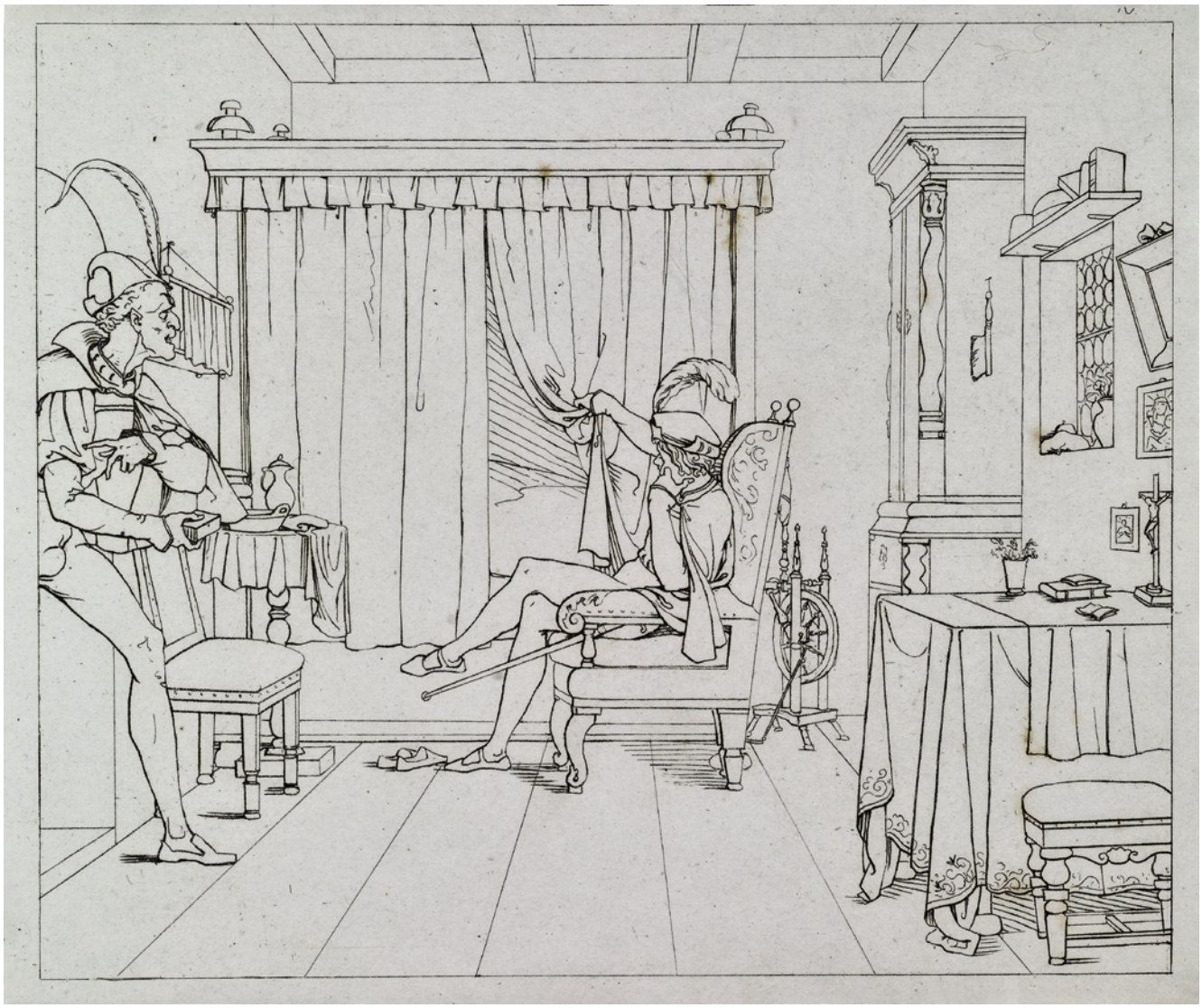

FIGURE 2.10 Moritz Retzsch, Faust and Mephistopheles in Margaret's chamber, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 10
COURTESY HAAB, F 3487, WEIMAR

Mephistopheles sectioned by the frame, a visual metaphor of erotic invasion as the vertical cuts through his crotch (Fig. 2.10). Not by chance: libido is the devil's part in the story.

This drawing shows Retzsch intuitively combining forms, shapes, and distinct moments to hint at the scene's sexual overtones. His design reflects emotion. While drawing, he broods on the text. Margaret's presence here belongs and yet does not belong to literal interpretation. Her genuine presence stresses the violation; her imagined self symbolizes her assaulted purity. Another draft of the same scene (C 5064) shows only Faust pondering and Mephistopheles stepping in, yet lacks the force and brutality of this one, and will be discarded. In the final set, the bed hangings will be changed and the two moments separately treated—Faust and Mephistopheles in plate 10 (Fig. 2.10), Margaret trying on the jewels in plate 11 (cf. Fig. 2.24).

The arresting translation, steering the lover's gaze towards Margaret's bed, first seized in *Faust* iconography, will thereafter never be lost. Engelbert Seibertz will recycle it in a woodcut inserted to his monumental edition of 1852–54. His reclining Faust's attitude is commented by a lusty plant on the left, ending in disorderly arabesque, a sign of eroticism in his iconographic programme (Fig. 2.11).[84] So will August von Kreling in his own monumental and fully illustrated *Faust* edition of 1875–76,

84 See Stead, "Les deux *Faust I* d'Engelbert Seibertz," *La Lecture littéraire*, no. 5–6 (2002): 55; Stead, "Monumental German *Faust* Editions in International Circulation and Multimedia Modernity," *Quaerendo* 50, no. 4 (2020): 388.

FIGURE 2.11 Engelbert Seibertz, composition inspired by Retzsch, in *Faust: Eine Tragödie von Goethe. Mit Zeichnungen von Engelbert Seibertz* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: J. G. Cotta, 1854), 93, wood engraving in text

COURTESY HAAB, F GR 11196, WEIMAR

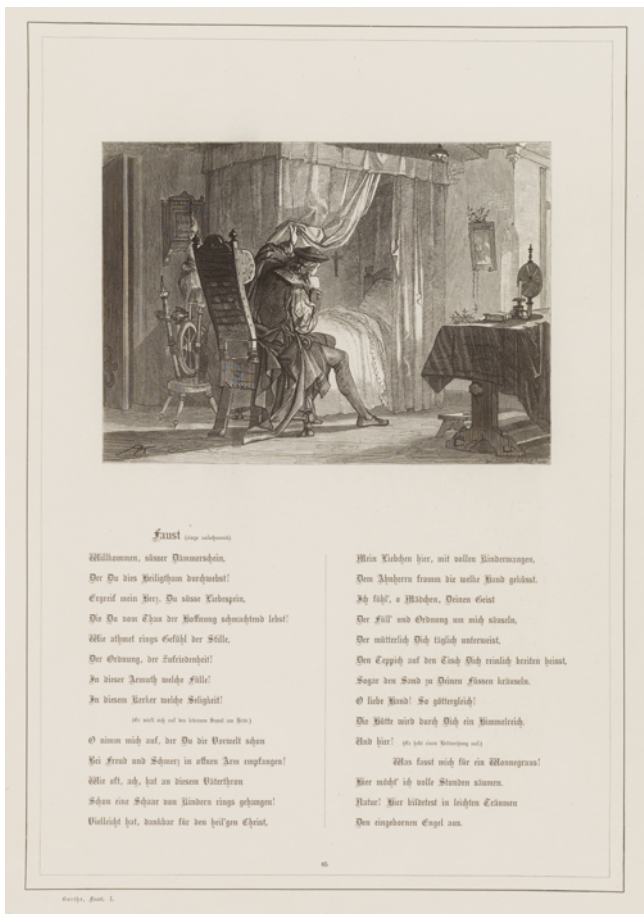

FIGURE 2.12 August von Kreling, composition inspired by Retzsch, in *Faust von Goethe, erster Theil. Mit Bildern und Zeichnungen von A. v. Kreling* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, [1875]), 85, wood engraving in text

COURTESY HAAB, F GR 5787, WEIMAR

granting Faust historical costume and demonstrably placing a crucifix above Gretchen's couch, as if to protect her from intruding eyes (Fig. 2.12). The intimate meaning of the scene will not be lost on English book traders either. A gilt reproduction of Retzsch's design will ornate the green cover of an album of his outlines, turning the item itself into the favourite object for any book lover to keep and cherish. Inviting to purchase the album itself, the device will be packaged as a tangible substitute for Gretchen's coveted body (cf. Fig. 5.20).

Retzsch's maximum effort was further granted to Faust and Margaret kissing in four drawings prior to the final etching. In two early drafts on the same sheet, the artist's focus is on the lovers clasping each other as their lips meet (C 4890, cf. Fig. 2.13). Their tender hug shows abandonment as they fondle each other's hair or neck. Still, their decorous silhouettes remain distinct, with no overt signs of arousal. Retzsch however redrew them in complex surroundings (C 5073, cf. Fig. 2.14). He cornered their uninhibited embrace between an open door and a casement giving onto dense foliage. Gretchen yields to Faust's grasp and his male specifics become visible. Vague hangings either side enhance the scene's theatricality. Their passionate kiss is robbed of a fleeting moment. Likewise, in Goethe's text, their breathless half-lines reflect passion, especially on Gretchen's part, that of a willing paramour (F 3205–06). Yet, their privacy is open to the four winds as a third person or prying voyeur appears on the left. Perhaps inspired by Flaxman's *The Lovers Surprised*, rendering the kiss of Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini in Dante's *Inferno*, as Krüger astutely remarks,[85] Retzsch's conception shows two important differences.

That Retzsch borrowed Flaxman's idea is of course possible but Goethe's text is equally suggestive with Mephistopheles and Martha breaking in on the amorous couple. The first line following their embrace, sundered in four (F 3207), accentuates Faust and Mephistopheles' violent verbal exchange:

> Faust, *stamping his foot*.
> Who's there?
> MEPHISTOPHELES.
> A friend!
> FAUST.
> A beast!
> MEPHISTOPHELES.
> We must take leave now, come!
> (trans. A. G. Latham)

Thus prompted, Retzsch merged the two moments in one, in another pair of drawings and the final engraving. He first depicted the two prowlers through the open door, at a small distance, approaching, with Martha hanging off Mephistopheles's arm (C 5071, cf. Fig. 2.15). On the left, the ample casement affords the lovers breathing space. In the final drawing, however, to be impressed upon the plate, the door is under assault as the intruders attempt to burst in (C 5070, cf. Fig. 2.16). Verbal violence is transferred to movement, underpinning the scene's erotic overtones. Mephistopheles's pelvis is thrust against the door while Martha lifts her skirts as if to cross the threshold. Such vigour is absent from Goethe's text where the lovers must part at the onset of dark, and the short scene ends with Gretchen wondering: "What a poor untaught child am I! | I know not what he can find in me!" (F 3215–16, trans. A. G. Latham). Contrariwise, Retzsch has Mephistopheles's glaring look encroach while in the foreground hovers a mask with similar slanting features. The devil's expression itself was likewise retouched on the metal plate giving him a disturbing, indiscreet mien (cf. Fig. 7.17).

The result, attained by small touches, is a brilliant instance making us aware, by contrast, of the lovers' passionate sexual mutual consent, and forces opposing their happiness. In accomplishing it, Retzsch surpassed Flaxman's Paolo and Francesca, by far one of the most famous embraces in literature. Intruding viewers set aside, Paolo's kiss on Francesca's cheek by Flaxman has none of Retzsch's intensity in bringing into full view Faust and Gretchen's rapture, riveted in each other's arms. Their kiss as *pars pro toto* is a metonymy for lovemaking and a turning point in the story. No contemporary kiss image displays such ardour, astonishing to viewers of the time. Examples abound: we may think of Huldbrand and Undine's decorous kiss as they hardly touch lips in an idyllic landscape in plate 7 from C. F. Schultze's 14 outlines for Fouqué's *Undine*, published in Frankfurt *c.*1818. Or even Retzsch's own *Der Kuß* (*The Kiss*, *Le Baiser*), plate 4 in his trilingual *Fancies and Truths* (1831) with his own comments. In this, a young priest leans towards the girl, caressing her chin, but the viewer grasps from the title, although does not see, that he kisses her on the cheek. Retzsch's own comment stresses moral and social aspects as in his subtitle *Altes und neues Coelibat* (*Old and New Celibate*):

> Ein junger Priester umarmt und küßt an den Kirchenmauer ein sich nur wenig sträubendes Mädchen. Das in die Mauer eingelassene Steinbild einer die Hände faltenden, fast ganz verhüllten Matrone scheint einen strafenden Blick auf das Paar zu richten. Auf dem Sarkophag eines Bischofs (im Hintergrund) wälzt sich ein höhnisch lachender Teufels-Satyr.

85 Eva Krüger, *Bilder zu Goethes "Faust": Moritz Retzsch und Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2009), 33.

FIGURE 2.13
Moritz Retzsch, preliminary drawings for Faust and Margaret kissing, n.d., 16.1 × 18.1 cm
SKK, C 4890, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

FIGURE 2.14
Moritz Retzsch, drawing for Faust and Margaret kissing, n.d., 13.6 × 15 cm
SKK, C 5073, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

FIGURE 2.15
Moritz Retzsch, Faust and Margaret kissing, drawing, n.d., 13.6 × 12 cm
SKK, C 5071, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

FIGURE 2.16
Moritz Retzsch, Faust and Margaret kissing, final drawing used for the etched plate, n.d., 14 × 16.3 cm
SKK, C 5070, DRESDEN, PHOTO ANDREAS DIESEND

> A young priest by the church wall hugs and kisses a young girl who is but little resisting. The effigy of an almost completely veiled matron folding her hands, set into the wall, seems to direct a reproving glance at the couple. On a bishop's sarcophagus (in the background) a mockingly laughing devil-satyr exults.

Hollywood screen close-ups of kissing actors had not yet dulled sensibilities. Retzsch's treatment caused a stir and thrilled audiences. Faust and Gretchen's kiss is one of his best-known images from *Faust*, vowed to ulterior treatment and numerous handlings as will be later discovered.

2.6 "Full of Spirit"

What did Goethe mean by *geistreich*? What gave him, when comparing the originals to the English copies, "food for thought"? Retzsch's treatments of *Faust* episodes and his inventing images by "simultaneousness of effect and concurrence of meaning"[86] have already illustrated such points. Yet an overall view could further highlight a few aspects.

Conspicuous features have been stressed over and again: William Vaughan, assessing the reception of German romanticism in England, showed that Retzsch appealed to an English audience by "the clarity and dramatic power of his visualizations."[87] His treatment combined narrative vigour, moral symbolism, and sentimentality.[88] On this score, Viola Hildebrand-Schat delved in detail into Retzsch's stylization and means of characterization, and highlighted formal aspects from a German art historian's point of view, considering his designs as "mediating literature" for the bourgeoisie.[89] In three insightful articles, Gerd-Helge Vogel replaced Retzsch within German romanticism and set in perspective the artist's reading of Goethe in the tradition and renewal of *exempla amoris*.[90] In gauging Retzsch's influence on Rossetti, Eva Krüger studied text-image relations, though the weight she gives to the brochure excerpts confuses publisher's choices with those of the artist.[91] Retzsch clearly read Faust *in extenso*. There seems little left to say. Yet, further singularities of Retzsch's spirited art need to be added. They stand out on closer examination of original, not later, *Umrisse* editions.

His first major and recognized achievement was turning Goethe's tragedy into a picture story circumscribed and delimited, bordered and defined, accessible to audiences albeit Staël's dismissal. Retzsch abridged it and redrafted its main features. He left out key passages (Faust's night monologue, his invocation of the Earth Spirit, his near suicide, long exchanges with Mephistopheles, etc.). Metaphysical considerations beat a retreat, even disappeared, in favour of a poignant love story at Margaret's expense. Plot shifted from the dejected doctor to Gretchen: more than half the lines (F 1–2604) correspond to only seven plates, while nineteen follow Faust and Margaret from their meeting to the very end (2,008 lines). Retzsch charted Goethe's perplexing textual geography and epitomized the protagonists' personae. Still, he did not idealize Margaret's purity. In the kiss, she is an amorous female yielding to desire and her youthful shape will develop into that of a full-grown woman. When, in prison, she lifts her arms heavenward, her full round breasts and deep lap are no more that of demure innocence (Fig. 2.17).

Hitherto unremarked, in unfolding events according to Goethe, Retzsch also displays personal liberty by swapping the cathedral (pl. 18) for the duel and Valentine dying scenes (pl. 19–20). In Goethe, Gretchen haunted at the cathedral *follows* on Faust and Valentine's deceitful duel and her brother's murder. Attending a requiem (taken to be her mother's, as in *Urfaust*), resonant with *Dies irae*, she is accused by an evil spirit for calamities: her mother's passing, her brother dying on her threshold struck by her lover's hand, and herself being with child. In Retzsch (and Goethe's own *Urfaust*), Gretchen in the cathedral *precedes*. That the artist preferred the previous version to the 1808 *Faust* is implausible. He rather sought viewers' sympathy by setting her pangs in a triptych just after the ardent kiss: pensive at her spinning wheel (pl. 16), imploring Virgin Mary as a *Mater dolorosa*-to-be herself (pl. 17), crushed by guilt in the cathedral (pl. 18). A sort of a lay altarpiece within the set, the three prints track Gretchen from intimate guilt and dejection to public stigma and shame. Through this device, Retzsch discreetly affirms his artistic independence while faithfully following Goethe in detail. The subtle reversal of order became a distinctive mark of *his* interpretation, particularly in its reception abroad: the sequence of 18 (cathedral)–19 (duel)–20 (Valentine's contempt) shows the degree, as we shall see, of his plates' assimilation in British, North American, French and Continental culture. It also proved a sure sign of his set's resistance to an altogether alien medium, the

86 Vaughan, *German Romanticism*, 123.
87 Ibid.
88 As summarized by Kevin J. Hayes, "Retzsch's Outlines and Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd'," *Gothic Studies* 12, no. 2 (Nov 2010): 36.
89 Hildebrand-Schat, *Moritz Retzschs Illustrationen*, 37–64, 112–7.
90 See in bibliography Gerd-Helge Vogel 1999 (twice) and 2008.
91 Krüger, *Retzsch und Rossetti*, 18–24.

FIGURE 2.17 Moritz Retzsch, Final prison scene, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 26
COURTESY HAAB, F 3487, WEIMAR

illustrated book, which would impose on the images obedience to text, instead of the artist's own order.

The popularity he gained rests on his gift for pulling the reader into the story thanks to simple devices: a continuum of images at viewer's eye level, and unpretentious yet careful landscape framing. Horizontal presentation gave viewers width of space, a hold on the image, and fostered their possession of setting and background. It corresponds to the eye's natural movement, taking in the middle-band at a glance. It allows for scene breadth, accommodates outside and inside, and engages reading in an evolving chain. It offers a proscenium vista, a continuous theatrical run, threaded as distinct spaces, each hosting a small sequence of events. Faust's study houses the poodle's mutation, the devil's advent, and the covenant. The witch's kitchen cements Faust's temptation and rejuvenation. Gretchen's bedroom catches her musings, her find of the jewels, and subsequent dejection. Martha's home lodges the jewels' decoy and Mephistopheles's visit. Space identity is attained by consistent viewing, bordered by a thin linear frame, unchanged furniture and objects, and, discreetly yet crucially, *distinct image dimensions*: Faust's study, the witch's kitchen, Gretchen's chamber, Martha's interior, even the prison, each possess, in their own right, their proper width and height. This hitherto unremarked trait explains why image sizes differ within the series all the while strengthening graphic narrative. Space identity conceals a potential kinetic quality that will later transpire in an English edition with new typeset and layout (cf. Fig. 5.11a–c). Typical features foreshadowing an

FIGURE 2.18 Moritz Retzsch, The witch's kitchen, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 6
COURTESY HAAB, F 3487, WEIMAR

original story, conveyed via multiple framed images, emerge in Retzsch some twenty years before Rodolphe Töpffer's *Story of Mr. Jabot* (1833) and the birth of the comic strip.

Retzsch varies inside and outside events, alternates individual and group scenes, and peppers the sequence with dramatic hints. Scenes are treated close-up or remotely, individuality and uniqueness offset by over-crowded symbolic spaces: the cathedral stages piety; Valentine's demise, public contempt; the witches' Sabbath, the orgiastic nature of devilry. The two former underline the share of society in Margaret's decline, conviction, and death. Such treatment diverges from the play, based on individual confrontation, while encouraging sympathy for the heroine. Retzsch may have been judged sentimental but did not lack humour (Fig. 2.18 & 2.19). When he pictured the witch's kitchen in two successive plates, he drew tiny creatures bobbing in the vapours of the witch's cauldron, an inquisitive-looking owl strutting on the mantelpiece (pl. 6), then bewildered at what it saw (pl. 7), a spider at the end of its thread dropping from the ceiling, and a string of frogs hanging from the wall. He wittily deflated the hocus-pocus with whimsical creatures, mock-macabre trappings, and cavorting monkeys.

His numerous details open up further possible story lines and make room for personal interpretation beyond Goethe's text. Such is his rendering of the witches' Sabbath with its sprawling grotesque bodies, swarming crowds, bizarre animals, irrepressible individuals, erotic interludes, wild dances, and rowdy scenes, while Faust and Mephistopheles, perceiving Margaret's spectral apparition, still cut a clear figure (cf. Fig. 5.7). The combination in one single sheet of chaotic goings-on in strong contrast

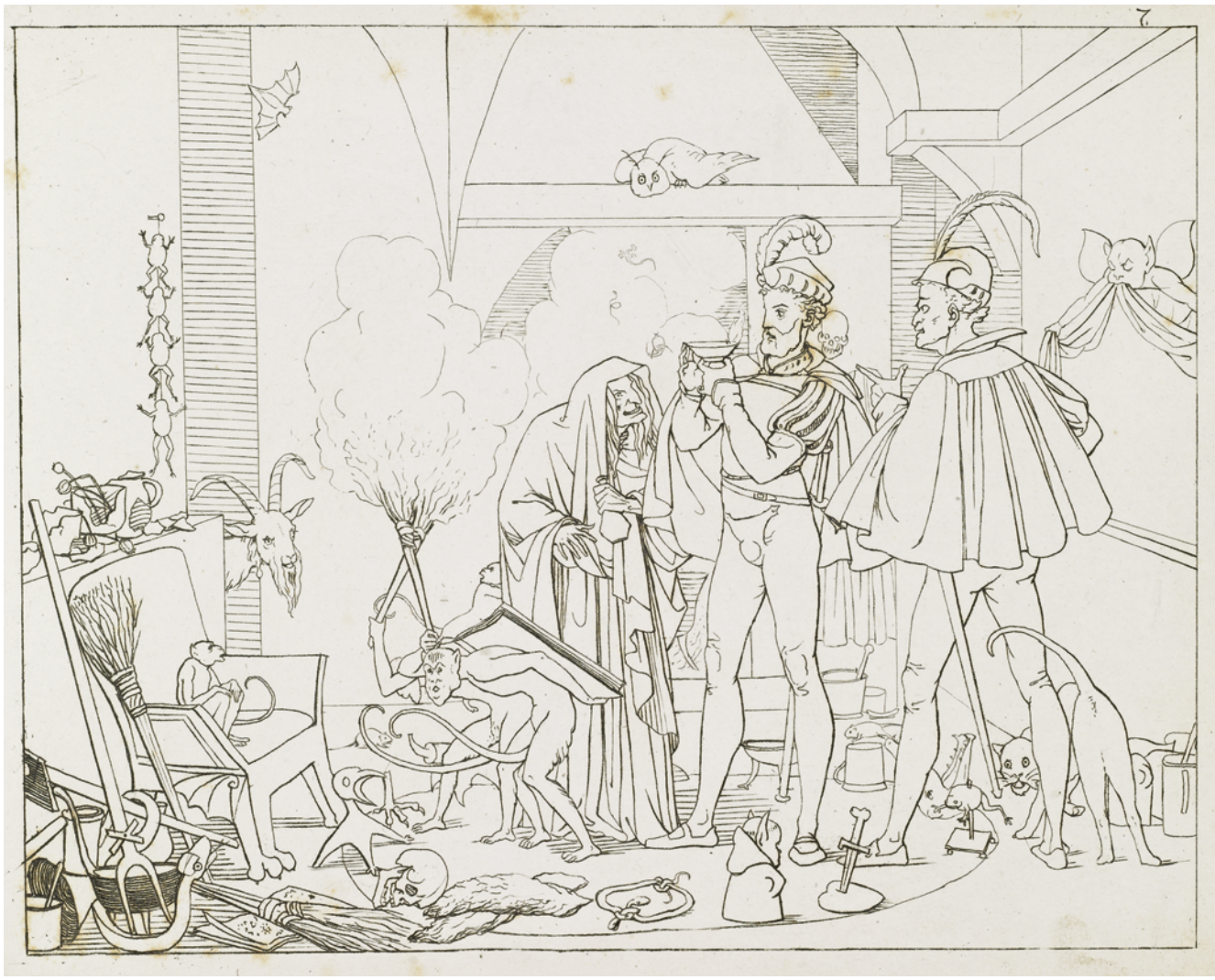

FIGURE 2.19 Moritz Retzsch, Faust drinks the potion in the witch's kitchen, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 7
COURTESY HAAB, F 3487, WEIMAR

to Gretchen, a thin line marking her would-be severed head, pays credit to his artistic efficacy. Commenting on this plate's copy by Moses (cf. Fig. 5.6), Shelley gives him due praise: "I never perfectly understood the Har[t]z Mountain scene, until I saw the etching."[92] The subjective treatment of his short riding scene, between Faust's clash with Mephistopheles (pl. 23) and the prison (pl. 25), also shows subtlety. While the text stresses urgency (horses galloping in the foreground), Retzsch's background hosts a dance of death, a Sabbath residue, around the combined image of the gallows and an execution wheel. The murder of Margaret's illegitimate child and her chastisement haunt it. The impatient stampede of horses reworks dark romantic motifs, yet the backdrop billets a show of quirky gesticulating skeletons (cf. Fig. 2.20). In both scenes, Retzsch develops an elusive spectacular dimension. His minute treatment, fit to capture the spectators' imagination, also includes a grim kind of comic relief.

His twenty-six prints may look simplistic or poor to an eye avid for grand spectacular effects. True, they offer an interpretation based on *Faust* events, and he had better grasped "the merely depictable" (Goethe to Stieler). The poem was little suited to fine art, Goethe had added, because "it was too poetic" (*wenig für die bildende Kunst geeignet ist, weil es zu poetisch ist*).[93] Retzsch's minute chronicling and multiplication of objects develops however interpretation of character and feeling, but also symbolism. There is poetry in his art, for instance, in the

92 *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2:407.

93 GG 3: no. 2586.

FIGURE 2.20 Moritz Retzsch, Faust and Mephistopheles galloping past the Rabenstein, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 24
COURTESY HAAB, F 3487, WEIMAR

depiction of Margaret's neat and orderly chamber, every single object on her table reflecting her inner life. Her lamp (a neoclassical *lucerna*) follows her even inside her prison cell, a metaphor of light and love (cf. Fig. 2.17). In place of the absent monologue, Faust's crammed study pictures his dead-end science and despair. Its disorder and disarray reveal anguish and desolation. Two jars contain a foetus and a conserved heart, bleak symbols of the future drowning of Margaret's baby and their doomed love affair (Fig. 2.21). Delacroix, who loved these plates, would take the hint and develop it into an overladen shelf of paraphernalia, sagging under the weight of the doctor's melancholy as Mephistopheles appears in his lithograph no. 5. As Benz recorded, Retzsch was often the first to treat an episode in a genuinely typifying way.[94] The devil's cunning smirk and sinewy silhouette are amongst the most remarkable ever devised in outline (see Chapter 9).

Yet Retzsch's imaging may strongly diverge from Goethe's intention and promote inconsistent interpretation. In plate 4, Faust hands a sheet of paper to Mephistopheles while his open palm touches his breast. His expressive gesture (meant to stress the weight of the given word as opposed to any signed document, F 1716–19) is lost on the reader as Mephistopheles eagerly grips the document. Retzsch has failed to depict the most significant aspect of *Faust*, the wager proffered to God by the devil, even though his set opens with their dialogue (pl. 1). That wager has become a written pledge. The lines credited to the scene do not resolve the ambiguity: "But one thing still, come life, come death, I prithee | Give me a written line or two." (F 1714–45, trans. A. G. Latham). English copies by Moses unambiguously name it "Faust makes over his soul to Mephistopheles," and French ones

94 Benz, *Goethe und die romantische Kunst*, 176.

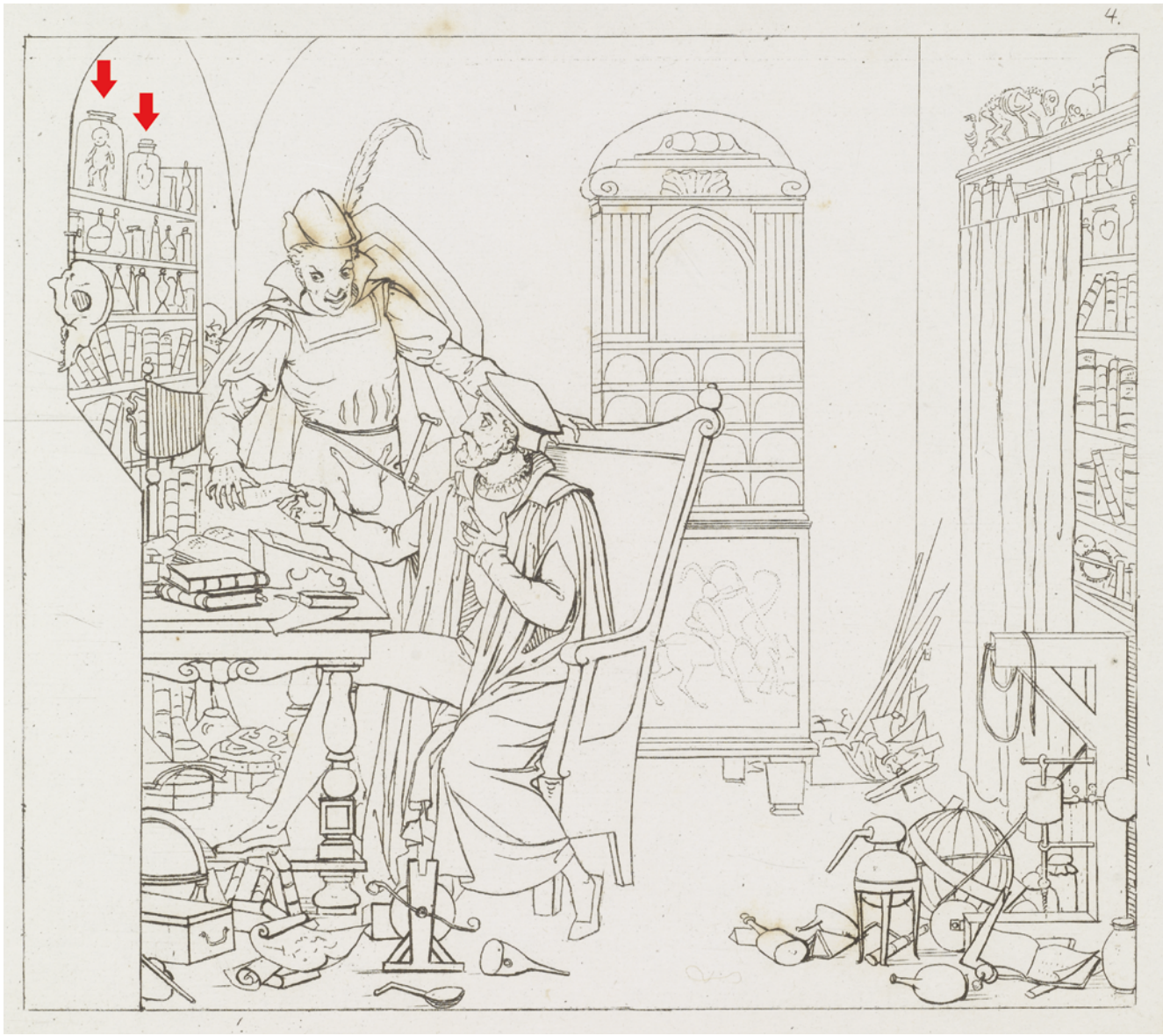

FIGURE 2.21 Moritz Retzsch, Faust and Mephistopheles in Faust's study, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 4
COURTESY HAAB, F 3487, WEIMAR

"Faust signs the covenant with Mephistopheles" from Muret's lithographs (1824) to the frontispiece of Nerval's translation (1828). The wager has vanished, damnation is on the books.

Nevertheless, depicting desire and the devil's eye are particular achievements. Retzsch chose attire with particular care. In his preface to Retzsch's outlines after Bürger's poems (1840), Carl Borromäus von Miltitz quotes a long letter from the artist, responding to criticism and explaining his choice of outfits. Epoch considerations and aesthetics come into play in his *exposé*.[95] We may be certain he devised Faust's and Mephistopheles's tight leggings and bulging codpieces after Renaissance models. The Dresden Armoury (*Rüstkammer*) and the collections of historical weapons and costumes put together by Augustus the Strong were precious material to hand. Several Renaissance items respond to the clothing adopted. Drastic expurgation of codpiece specifics in English and French copies evidences how disturbing the detail was. It thrust Faust's desire under spectators' eyes, often at the centre of the picture, in no less than fifteen plates (pl. 4–10, 13–15, 21–26). Its suppression, and that of a few others, gave Goethe "food for thought." Blatant sexuality pervaded the witch's kitchen (Faust enthralled by a reclining female in the magic mirror), in Gretchen's

95 *Retzsch's Outlines to Buerger's Ballads/Umrisse zu Buerger's Balladen* (Leipzig: Ernst Fleischer, 1840), III–IV.

bedroom (Faust poring over her bed), in the summerhouse, at the Sabbath. The prying devil's eye intrusively spiced the garden and summerhouse scenes.

Full of spirit: Retzsch plied images, in detail as in sequence, in complex ways. Recurrent disparagement of his "thin and dry" style and of his figures as "pale lifeless abstractions,"[96] merits refutation. I have stressed here aspects of his *Faust* rendering that have hardly been noticed in the hope that further nuanced assessments, such as Gretchen's reading by Gesa von Essen, based on Giesen's analysis, will help to evaluate Retzsch's subtlety:

> Auffallend an den Illustrationen von Retzsch ist jedenfalls insgesamt, dass Margarete in der Proportionierung des Körpers, mit dem klassisch geschnitten Gesicht sowie der kunstvoll hochgesteckten Frisur beinahe antikisierend gezeichnet ist und im weiteren Verlauf des Geschehens als beherzt handelnde Frau auftritt, die in der Beziehung zu Faust einen eigenen aktiven Part übernimmt, sodass hier erstmals ein Mitwirken bzw. eine Mitschuld Margaretes im Fortgang der Handlung deutlich wird.[97]

> In any case, what is altogether striking about Retzsch's illustrations is that Margaret's bodily proportions, her classically cut face and the artful hair get-up, are drawn in an almost classicizing style, and in the further course of events she appears as a boldly acting female who, in her relationship to Faust, takes her own active part, so that here for the first time an involvement, if not complicity, of Margaret in the course of the plot becomes clear.

2.7 Outline Reformation

Retzsch's privileged technique, the outline drawing (*Umriss*, *dessin au trait*), had made a remarked entry into European stylistic vocabulary at the end of the eighteenth century. Flaxman's outlines after great poets of antiquity (Homer, Aeschylus, Hesiod), but also decisive works at the origins of modern literature such as Dante's *Divina Commedia*, had been well diffused thanks to Tommaso Piroli's engravings across Europe. Their success grew on ground well prepared by neoclassical theories of art. They launched a vogue, studied in depth since Robert Rosenblum's pioneer 1956 thesis, published only twenty years later,[98] and the 1979 joint English and German exhibitions on Flaxman. The historical birth of outline, and its impact on German, French, Spanish and Danish artists has been recorded.[99] Outline has also been studied in relation to arabesque as a major contribution to the German art of the book in the first nineteenth century.[100] Like other German artists, Retzsch followed Flaxman, but more decisively adapted him. His *Umrisse* show key differences to identify.

In the 1799 German-speaking world, Goethe's veiled criticism of Flaxman as "all dilettanti's idol" (*der Abgott aller Dilettanten*)[101] jousted with August Wilhelm Schlegel's *Athenaeum* essay on Flaxman and the outline style. Goethe's reservation itself was ambiguous.[102] Schlegel mockingly evoked the declining art of illustration in Germany and critically contrasted it to the potency of Flaxman's outlines, calling for a renewal. Although, influenced by Lessing's concept of beauty, he dismissed Hogarth and Chodowiecki as crude and prosaic,[103] Schlegel's views clashed with Lessing's celebrated *paragone* regarding competition of text with image. In his *Laocoon* (1766), Lessing had opposed text as art of sequence to images, considered synchronic, timeless, and fixed, while words were diachronic and in motion. Schlegel undermined such strong antitheses, opening new paths in romantic art. Three key characteristics of outline (meaningful abstraction, liberation of the imaginative powers, and initiation) bade new ways of reading as reflected in this well known passage, here newly translated and commented:

> Ihre Zeichen werden fast Hieroglyphen, wie die des Dichters; die Phantasie wird aufgefodert zu ergänzen, und nach der empfangenen Anregung selbständig

96 Clösges, "Die Illustration von Goethes Dichtung," 179f.

97 "Gretchen," in *Faust-Handbuch*, 248a; Giesen, "Goethes *Faust* in der europäischen Kunst," 63.

98 Robert Rosenblum, *The International Style of 1800: A Study in Linear Abstraction* (New York: Garland, 1976); Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, 3rd repr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

99 Werner Hofmann ed., *John Flaxman: Mythologie und Industrie* (Munich: Prestel, 1979), and David Bindman, ed., *John Flaxman* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979); Sarah Symmons, *Flaxman and Europe* (New York: Garland, 1984).

100 Werner Busch, "Umrißzeichnung und Arabeske als Kunstprinzipien des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Buchillustration im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. R. Timm (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988), 119–48; Grewe, "Outline and Arabesque," 228–47.

101 WA 1, 47:245–46.

102 See Peter-Klaus Schuster, "'Flaxman der Abgott aller Dilettanten.' Zu einem Dilemma des klassischen Goethe und den Folgen," in Hofmann ed., 32–35; Symmons, *Flaxman and Europe*, 208–211.

103 Symmons, *Flaxman and Europe*, 203.

> fortzubilden, statt daß das ausgeführte Gemählde sie durch entgegen kommende Befriedigung gefangen nimmt. […] So wie die Worte des Dichters eigentlich Beschwörungsformeln für Leben und Schönheit sind, denen man nach ihren Bestandtheilen ihre geheime Gewalt nicht anmerkt, so kommt es einem bey dem gelungenen Umriß wie eine wahre Zauberey vor, daß in so wenigen und zarten Strichen so viel Seele wohnen kann.[104]
>
> Their signs almost become hieroglyphs, like those of the poet; from the stimulus received, imagination is encouraged to complete and continue to create independently, whereas, finished paintings hold it prisoner through a gratifying sense of satisfaction. […] Just as the words of the poet are inherently bewitching formulae for life and beauty, even if one does not perceive the secret power of their components, it turns out, as if by true magic, that in a successful outline so much soul can dwell in so few delicate lines.

Goethe's ideal of Faust as "chief sorcerer" (*Hexenmeister*), having "to fend for himself" without images, springs again to mind.[105] In Schlegel's essay, true magic (*wahre Zauberey*) had no more to do with Faust's labours. In Retzsch's work, it became the means of evoking the "sorcerer" through the outlines' power as poetry's *analogon*. However, Schlegel's was not just a statement of equivalents but an active prompting of *movement* between word and image. Like the poet's verse, contours thrived on economy of means. Focused on the truly characteristic, in opposition to the completeness and detail of stipple engravings, the delineated forms worked by allusion, championing symbolism and connotation. Evocative and secret, they roused creative faculties. Likened to the poet's incantatory formulas, they were initiatory, pulling the viewer into the drawing and directing him back to the poem that had instigated the images. A new form of reading was implied for reader-spectators, drawn in as active co-participants, mind's eye stirred and interpretative faculty kindled. Unlike the engraved versions of Flaxman's compositions, Retzsch's etchings were not captioned. Simple numbering led readers from one frame to the next, while excerpts met in the separate letterpress brochure (cf. Fig. 2.1b).Reviving the experience of how the set devoid of captions worked at the time, the present reader may peruse Retzsch's images in this book's initial booklet (p. 9–21).

If Cotta's portfolio thus prompted interactive reading, outline further nurtured fantasy. Although based on neoclassical ideal and archetype, it was a theatrical invention through which the dream effect could unfurl. "The outline's tyrannical presence, which may seem an impoverishment, imposes on the other hand evidence of a second world, alleviated of its reality attributes, deprived of broad daylight's sun, and docile to the transcription of desire," writes Jean Starobinski. An art of delicate poise, hovering between boldness and submission, "the graphic dream may well take the most daring shapes: it will find its defence in the illustrious text it claims adhering to."[106]

It is to this art that Retzsch had subscribed, shifting from classicism to romanticism, yet in personal manner at variance with Schlegel's ideal conceptions. He enhanced outline with detail, pleased and intrigued the eye, making his work quickly known. "His reputation in England briefly exceeded that of Flaxman," states the 2001 *Oxford Companion to Western Art*.[107] Let us try to understand how, especially since Flaxman himself had declared to Crabb Robinson that Retzsch "did not properly understand the nature of an Outline," and avowed to Schorn that Cornelius's were "thought out in a grander sense and with a deeper spirit" than Retzsch's.[108]

A close comparison of Retzsch's pl. 1 (Prologue in Heaven) with Flaxman's assembly of the Gods in Homer's *Iliad* led Hildebrand-Schat to skilfully conclude on two main formal differences between their respective treatments: on the one hand, Flaxman uses flatness in bodies and space but attains shape even in blank areas thanks to structuring, while Retzsch combines two-dimensional manner with volumes and perspectival elements, achieving forms proportionally. The former casts characters as academically idealized figures, whereas the latter imparts to them an array of emotions through posture, gestures and facial expression. On the other, Flaxman's compositions correspond to an illustrative abstraction of poetic plot, blurring episodes, while Retzsch's maintain narrative precision from beginning to end.[109] Let me add that Retzsch's detailed conceptions privileged a story of dramatic colouring at the expense of philosophical and

104 Schlegel, "Über Zeichnungen zu Gedichten und John Flaxman's Umrisse," *Athenaeum* 2, no. 2 (1799): 205.

105 See p. 55.

106 Jean Starobinski, "La vision de la dormeuse," in *Trois fureurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 151, 153.

107 *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*, ed. H. Brigstocke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 630c.

108 Schorn, "Besuch bey Flaxman," 120. On Crabb Robinson and Flaxman, see pp. 121, 123–24.

109 Hildebrand-Schat, *Moritz Retzschs Illustrationen*, 82–87.

certain poetical aspects. Yet, his was neither melodramatic nor excessively sentimental. Absence of dialogue and wording repressed emotions. Although English reviews frequently stressed the compositions' pathos, witty and quirky elements pepper his scenes alongside sexual yearning. Vogel, for instance, emphasized Retzsch's handling as counterpart to Goethe's, and argued that his work successfully responds to the poet's incisiveness (*Prägnanz*) and forcefulness (*Eindringlichkeit*).[110]

Contrariwise, English articles of the time comparing Retzsch with Flaxman were engaged in disputes over aesthetic principles, evidencing period preferences. A prominent 1825 article featured in the first issue of a new fine-arts periodical, *The Parthenon: A Magazine of Art and Literature*, "the first journal to be produced anywhere entirely by lithography," using both right-reading (reverse) types impressed on the stone, and illustrations, autographs or music reproduced via transfer paper.[111] "Remarkable for its ambitious and technically daring foray into typolithography," the *Parthenon* nonetheless supported a classicist stance, faithful to its title. Flaxman's "sublime conceptions" were championed over Retzsch's "puerile extravaganzas," "showy dashes," "tricks of mannerism," and "ostentation." The English artist prevailed thanks to "chaste models of antiquity." Yet, when the writer (signing in cipher and Greek initials Φ. Χ. Ψ.) considered Retzsch's feats on their own merit, he largely praised their "exuberance of fancy," "power of combination and versatility," and "creative faculty" adapting "with admirable facility" to the wildest subjects (such as produced by "Goethe's imagination"). Subject matter constrained Retzsch more than style *per se*. However, there is more to his case than meets the eye; his example served a distinction between fanciful and imaginative art as Vaughan has shown,[112] but also a discussion on the value and efficacy (or not) of outline in art. Ruskin's discussion of Retzsch shows how the artist's appreciation evolved in the course of the nineteenth century.

In his second volume of *Modern Painters* (1846), John Ruskin examined in detail three kinds of imagination (penetrative, associative, and contemplative) opposing them to fancy. Fancy consisted of the outside, of what was clear, brilliant, and full of detail. Retzsch was thus opposed to Turner, true master of the imagination, like Dante to Milton. Eleven years later, in *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), Ruskin somewhat imperiously wrote off outline as bad, on the basis of a perceived deficiency in rendering artistic subjects: "The published works of Retzsch, and all the English translations of them, and all the outline engravings from pictures, are bad work, and only serve to corrupt the public taste," he asserted.[113] Yet, later on in the same work, he conceded: "Retzsch's outlines have more real material in them than Flaxman's, occasionally showing true fancy and power; in artistic principle they are nearly as bad, and in taste, worse."[114] It was only several years later that differences eased as Ruskin wrote in "The Black Arts: A Reverie in the Strand" (1887): "a man of imaginative power can do more and express more, and excite the fancy of the spectator more, by frank outline than by completed work; and that assuredly there ought to be in all our national art schools an outline class trained to express themselves vigorously and accurately in such manner."[115] He thus aligned himself with Schlegel's views, albeit late in the day. By then, he had been overwhelmed by the mass proliferation of images and new reproduction technologies.[116] His attitude to outline had considerably changed: "the value of outline is in its power of suggesting quantity, intricacy, and character," he added,[117] all qualities perhaps taught him through Retzsch.[118] He had considered the German artist in *The Art of England* (1883) as the master of "only grotesque or terrible fancies" with "a very real gift of making visibly terrible such legend as that of the ballad of Leonora, and interpreting, with a wild aspect of veracity, the passages of sorcery in *Faust*."[119] In the same text, he had disparaged *The Genius of Poetry* (in fact *The Fate of the Poet* or *The Poet and the Undines* from Retzsch's *Fancies*) as lacking dignity and beauty. Retzsch represented "states of gloomy fantasy" but ranked alongside with Blake's *Book of Job*, Dürer's *Apocalypse*, and Rethel's dances of death. By at last recognizing the

110 Gerd-Helge Vogel, "Faust und Gretchen—Goethes Drama in den Umrissstichen und -zeichnungen von Moritz August Retzsch," in *"Man halte sich ans fortschreitende Leben …": über Goethe und Goethezeitliches aus Güstrower Sicht*, ed. E. Neumann, D. Pocher, V. Probst (Güstrow: Heidberg, 1999), 19; Vogel, "Moritz August Retzschs Annäherung an Goethe im poetischen Motiv der 'exempla amoris'," *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* (2008): 61.

111 Michael Twyman, *Early Lithographed Books* (London: Farrand Press & Private Libraries Association, 1990), 54, 56.

112 Vaughan, *German Romanticism*, 126.

113 *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903–12), 15:83.

114 Ibid., 225.

115 *The Works of John Ruskin*, 14:360.

116 See Jonah Siegel, "Black Arts, Ruined Cathedrals, and the Grave in Engraving: Ruskin and the Fatal Excess of Art," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27, no. 2 (1999): 395–417.

117 *The Works of John Ruskin*, 14:360.

118 Attempts to illustrate his own written works may have reconciled Ruskin to the utility of outline.

119 *The Works of John Ruskin*, 33:334.

value of outline in "The Black Arts," Ruskin admitted that, although Retzsch and Adrian Ludwig Richter would never have become painters, "their countrymen owe more to their unassuming instinct of invention than to the most exalted efforts of their historical schools."[120]

The last two qualities, Retzsch's inspiration from gloomy fantasies and his capacity for invention, are also two of his distinctive contributions to outline art. Goethe's *Faust* was such a gloomy fantasy, arresting by its novel elliptical and unorthodox structure. Frequent gaps in plot, based on the disconnected and piecemeal quality of twenty-five episodes, were mostly labelled after succinct, spatial and occasionally time markers. The whole play seemed but a gigantic splinter in a variety of language levels and metres, made of somewhat erratic shards in moods changing from tragedy to comedy, embracing irony and bitter sarcasm. An abstruse creation by period standards, it seemed a nocturne or winter's tale from Faust's first night monologue to the prison scene immersed in darkness. Retzsch had translated its blackness into clear sequential picturing to dramatic effect.

Moreover, by early treating it in outline, Retzsch had made a claim for Goethe's play in international classification: thanks to his technique, it would rank with the great poems of antiquity and Dante's *Comedy*, with which *Faust* compares as "disguised comedy" in Dieter Borchmeyer's brilliant study.[121] What has been repeatedly called the "simplicity" of Retzsch[122] is misleading. The term conceals the concentration of his abridged compositions and their synthetic qualities. These resound in the etched prints. Yet, they themselves invited reproduction and copying, steering off dissemination of the reinterpreted poetic text.

2.8 Retzsch in Colour

The vogue of outline did not last long in Germany. By the end of the 1830s, outlines already looked outmoded while Retzsch kept producing his work (and means of living) in engraved sets as before. Line reproductions in his favourite technique had gained him worldwide fame, yet its very aesthetics prepared the weakening of his appeal and his falling into oblivion and critical silence. Although he persevered, it is dismissive to suggest he was a belated artist and his productions out-dated,[123] as refutes an exceptional document in colour, originating from Dresden and attributed to Retzsch himself.

It currently consists of fourteen of his prints carefully coloured, now at Frankfurt's Freies Deutsches Hochstift. They carry strong theatrical assumptions that seem uncertain. As late as July 1951, twelve of them were offered by antique bookseller Gerd Rosen to Ernst Beutler, then director of the FDH, as a "likely basis for a production get-up" with reference to Klingemann's Braunschweig *Faust*.[124] Another two (pl. 13 and 14, Mephistopheles at Martha's, and the garden scene) were likely added later. All fourteen had belonged to Stumme as shows a seal someone vainly tried to mask or erase. They also differ from Carl Niessen's detailed listing who had traced them to Stumme with a stronger Braunschweig postulation: Niessen includes a (non-extant) Walpurgis Night, while omitting the (extant) poodle's appearance.[125] Shading and hues indeed resemble closely the use of colour in the Retzsch brothers' early diary and all correspond to startling scenes: the poodle appearing in flat country; swelling to monstrous size in Faust's study; Auerbach's cellar; Faust accosting Margaret; Gretchen with the jewels; Martha adorning Gretchen; Margaret, Martha and Mephistopheles; Margaret plucking the daisy; the kiss; Margaret pensive at the spinning wheel; imploring the Mater dolorosa; in the cathedral; Valentine dying; and Faust entering the prison.

The original etchings, carefully trimmed down to their thin line frames, have been pasted on a backing sheet, given a redrawn double frame, and coloured. A sophisticated use of pigments, shadows and light produces an atmospheric, supernatural dimension. Twilight descends on the fields, on Faust's black mantle and white shirt (a deck of clothes signalling his melancholic disposition in contrast to Wagner's russet and brown) while the poodle's smouldering breath, red eyes, and incandescent trail highlight the supernatural (Fig. 2.22). Faust's study is a remarkable night scene. A bright lamp projects the strong shadows of his armchair and stove unto the black poodle, towering with glowing eyeballs and foaming jowls (Fig. 2.23). In Auerbach's cellar, the light comes in from

120 Ibid., 14:361.

121 See Borchmeyer, "*Faust*—Goethes verkappte Komödie," in *Die großen Komödien Europas*, ed. F. N. Mennemeier (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), 199–225.

122 Peter W. Guenther, "Concerning Illustrations to Goethe's *Faust*," in *The Age of Goethe Today: Critical Reexamination and Literary Reflection*, ed. G. Bauer Pickar and S. Cramer (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1990), 106.

123 Vaughan, *German Romanticism*, 128–29. He states inaccurately that the subscription list to Retzsch's *Chess Players* "remained pathetically small." Recurrent reports from Fleischer in Retzsch's SLUB *Nachlass* show the opposite. Hellwig provides a long list of booksellers involved in its diffusion, 202–4.

124 FDH: VIIId-gr, 13098/13109, item data file.

125 Niessen, no. 515–28.

FIGURE 2.22 Moritz Retzsch, The poodle appearing in open country, coloured version, n.d., 14.6 × 19.4 cm. *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 2
FDH, FRANKFURTER GOETHE-MUSEUM, III-13099, FRANKFURT

FIGURE 2.23 Moritz Retzsch, Faust's study with the poodle growing, coloured version, n.d., 13.9 × 15.8 cm. *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816) pl. 3
FDH, FRANKFURTER GOETHE-MUSEUM, III-13098, FRANKFURT

FIGURE 2.24 Moritz Retzsch, Margaret discovers the jewels, coloured version, n.d., *c.*14 × 16.7 cm. *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 11
FDH, FRANKFURTER GOETHE-MUSEUM, III-13100, FRANKFURT

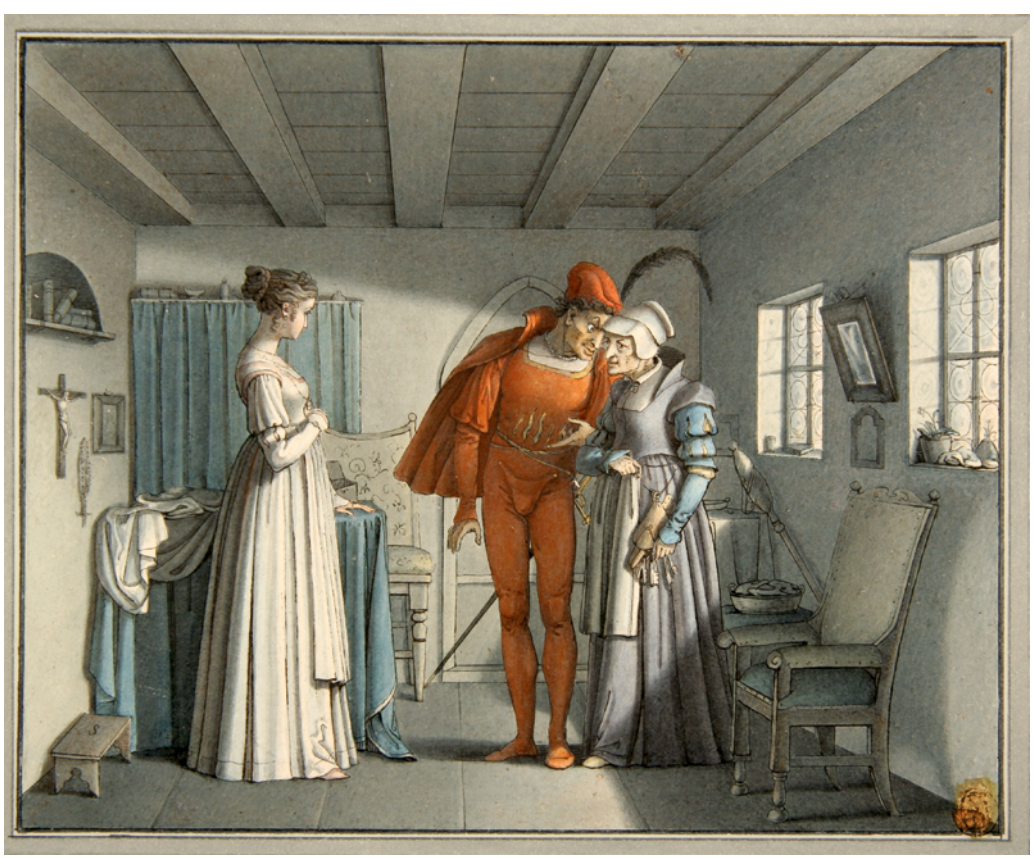

FIGURE 2.25 Moritz Retzsch, At the neighbour's house, coloured version, n.d., 23 × 31 cm
COURTESY FDH, FRANKFURTER GOETHE-MUSEUM, III-13929, FRANKFURT

the right, revealing Mephistopheles's red costume full centre and Faust's worried mien. On meeting, the couple stand in full light: Margaret's expression of defence and surprise surfaces delicately, while Faust parallels a lurking Mephistopheles, whose ominous sword pointing downward grants him a third lower member. Finding the jewels, Margaret is doubly lit by the lamp on the table and an external source that uncannily, yet significantly, projects her drawn-out shadow onto the bed behind her (Fig. 2.24). White becomes Margaret, and interiors around her are shaded, cool and blue. One of the palest versions shows her imploring the Virgin, the shadow of her clasped hands and uplifted body falling on the white statue, raising arms in entreaty. Her chamber in dark green, blue and grey is attuned to her melancholic resignation. Half-light reigns in Martha's lodging while she lays the gems on Margaret and Mephistopheles intrudes in red, tingeing violet Martha's blue dress (Fig. 2.25). In the garden, plucking the daisy's petals, or in Faust's arms in the summerhouse, Margaret is fair-haired and rosy-cheeked. A large tree shadows Mephistopheles and Martha, and the devil's eye lights up either in the gathering dark or as he pushes open the summerhouse's door. For Valentine expiring and Faust finding Margaret prostate in prison, Retzsch's source of light is an antique oil lamp carried by hand, subtly shining on Margaret's public disgrace and private misery, whilst the cathedral's vaults are lit by high Gothic windows in alternate glow and gloom.

The expert rendering of atmosphere, protracted shadows and subtle glow are striking. They bring the compositions forward vividly and make them theatrically explicit. Conversely, the uncoloured outlines lead the reader into the poem to imagine situations, invent feelings, and suppose effects. Such an important difference in function and purport may have led to believe that the coloured version was meant for stage production at a time of developments in gas lighting. The 1825 advent of the limelight, fascination with the magic lantern and optical effects,[126] the soft grey ambiance suffusing the coloured prints show responsiveness to emotions raised by the play. The finely layered wash—whether diluted ink or watercolour—is evenly spread, devoid of brush marks. Depth and volume seem to echo profundity of feeling.

Far from the theatre, the coloured set corresponded to Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher's contemporary theories on the expressiveness of colour, Goethe's own research on chromatics (1810), and Philipp Otto Runge's investigation of colour symbolism, as Viola Hildebrand-Schat has expertly shown.[127] Sensing that outline, his privileged means of expression, was aesthetically on the wane, Retzsch probably ventured a painted version of the work that had made him known. It is further tempting to think that his subtle colouring rebutted regular criticism alleging poor or inadequate use of colour as one of his artistic failings. Mrs Hall for instance mentioned two paintings "both exquisitely drawn and designed, but so unlike what we had expected in colour, that for a moment we felt disappointed;"[128] David d'Angers noted: "We recognize, however, that this painter is not experienced colour-wise" (*n'est pas rompu au mécanisme de la couleur*).[129] Could it also be that his shadows and clever darkening were a response to Delacroix's lithographs' fantastic atmosphere and deep blacks? The question has to remain open.

Whatever the case, it would be false to consider the FDH coloured series "unique" as repeatedly assumed. Weimar's HAAB also preserves a coloured copy of the garden scene—not an original print carefully tinted, but an outline redrawn and coloured by an unknown hand (Fig. 2.26). Like the numerous copies of Retzsch's *Faust*, achieved freehand or thanks to tracing paper (see Chapter 7), it confirms Retzsch's appeal but also the unknown artist's desire to pep up the scene, while introducing slight yet meaningful interpretative changes. Colour is used symbolically: Faust's sword is tinted with the blood of Valentine yet to flow, Mephistopheles's is black like night or Hell (and placed on the other side of his body to reveal his skin-tight costume in all its blazing splendour); luxuriant vegetation marks this earthly paradise (complete with serpent) while the true-to-life background shows a day's end in a real garden: a wall catches the afternoon sun, clouds cover the sky. In the foreground, Faust and Margaret, with expressions delicately changed, have been treated in grisaille, a clever rendering of the original's slight relief of both characters thanks to enhanced line. The grey monochrome grants them a ghostly presence as of figures brought into a well-known painted scene, the recognizable temptation scene in a garden.

2.9 To Conclude

New archival evidence highlights in Retzsch a resourceful young artist, keen to deal with *Faust* on professional grounds with promptness and inventiveness. He is verily

126 Burwick, "Stage Illusion and the Stage Designs of Goethe and Hugo," *Word and Image* 4, no. 3–4 (July–Dec 1988): 694.

127 Hildebrand-Schat, *Moritz Retzschs Illustrationen*, 103–11.

128 Hall, "A Morning with Retzsch," 21c.

129 *Les Carnets de David d'Angers*, 2:216.

FIGURE 2.26 In Martha's garden, anonymous coloured version, n.d., 14.5 × 15.3 cm, after Moritz Retzsch, *Umrisse zu Goethe's Faust gezeichnet von Retsch* (Stuttgart & Tübingen: Cotta, 1816), pl. 14
COURTESY HAAB, F GR 9228, WEIMAR

the first to graphically turn a play, unruly in contemporaries' eyes, into a silent story with rich interpretative potential. Despite his inventiveness, his artistic identity remains inconspicuous in his native land. In his *Faust Umrisse*, original remediated authorship looms higher than hitherto appreciated in all stages of their devising. The Cotta product is a clever marketing tool, when fathomed in its initial materiality and potential uses. Its diffusion starts with *Faust*'s author himself, as Goethe plies the set to philanthropic, political, cultural and relational expenditure. He also turns it into a benchmark medium to assess the first English copy against the German original. Most importantly, originality drives Retzsch's own creative inspiration.

The artist's studio drawings reveal not only his keen reading, attentive to dramatic effect and close to story line, but also an open-minded responsiveness to the play's suggestive and ardent aspects, capable of nuance and counterpoise. Retzsch masterly renders an effective alliance of narrative with moving, fantastic, yet also droll effects all the while potently involving imaginative readers as inventive agents. As his cycle draws them in,

it provides them with a wealth of detail they may invest according to their own creative capacities, as we shall see. Yet such qualities do not loom in his work as either evident or immediate. They depend on initiation. Retzsch had seized the nature of outline as medium and aesthetic to which he conferred a personal twist and particular brio. He left his own mark in the original *Faust* set thanks to a displaced plate, Margaret in the cathedral, which stresses his independence from text, and the multifaceted value of his interpretation. If seen for its true complexity, his *Faust* worked well beyond appearances of simplicity. Retzsch's appeal was real, evidenced by burgeoning editions of the *Umrisse* in German lands.