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## Ecocriticism, the Elements, and the Ascent/Descent into Weather in Goethe's *Faust*

Heather I. Sullivan, Trinity University

Des Menschen Seele  
Gleicht dem Wasser:  
Vom Himmel kommt es,  
Zum Himmel steigt es,  
Und wieder nieder  
Zur Erde muß es,  
Ewig wechselnd.

“Gesang der Geister über den Wassern”

The ostensibly religious and ethical significance of Faust's final ascension after his death tends to distract, if not blind, readers to other possible implications of that upwards movement and to the idea that he may continue and return “back to earth.” The assumption that heavenly powers reward Faust leads to the claim that Goethe's tragedy validates the quest of “land developers” or those who would strive regardless of the consequences. I propose, in contrast, that we read Faust's “final” ascension alongside Goethe's weather essay, “Witterungslehre 1825,” and thereby note that this upward motion is not necessarily “final” at all but rather part of the circulation of the elements driven by their polarities to create weather patterns flowing upwards and downwards. Goethe describes just such a pattern in his “Gesang der Geister über den Wassern”: “Des Menschen Seele / Gleicht dem Wasser: / Vom Himmel kommt es, / Zum Himmel steigt es, / Und wieder nieder / Zur Erde muß es, / Ewig wechselnd.”<sup>1</sup> Faust's earthly remains travel, in fact, through the same three layers of air, “die Luftregionen” that he describes in the weather essays. And since such flows “zum Himmel,” also come “vom Himmel” as part of inevitable polarities, he shall also likely return “wieder nieder.” When understood within the context of Goethe's science and this poem, the tragedy appears less a final affirmation of Faust's skills as “modern developer” than a portrayal of elemental forces in whose flows we exist. Failure to appreciate and conceptualize their patterns allows us to be swept away all too easily

into Mephistophelean land grabs, exploitation of other people and life forms, and the seductive promise of sex, power, and the rapid access to “fire-driven” energy forms. Whether Faust succeeds in diverting the powerful interactions of the four elements and their atmospheric perturbations or rather is swept away in their flows is hence a significant question to ask of the closing scene of Goethe’s “final masterpiece.” The answer, typically Goethean, is a little of both.

My efforts here to revisit *Faust* in terms of Goethe’s science, and so to join the work proposed by Astrida Orle Tantillo,<sup>2</sup> also have an eye towards the environmental questions of ecocriticism. The essay has three parts that are each informed by a specific scholar. First, I look at Goethe’s “Gesang” in conjunction with his weather essays to see how they relate to the closing scene of the play, putting a particular emphasis on how Goethe explains atmospheric conditions via interactions of the four elements (earth, air, water, fire). This first section is largely guided by John McCarthy’s masterful analysis of the play in terms of chaos theory and complexity that also examines Goethe’s weather essays and the four elements.<sup>3</sup> Unlike McCarthy, however, I see Faust less as achieving ever greater knowledge himself than acting out his impulses driven by his own and other energies—the creativity that McCarthy attributes to Faust the man I would attribute instead to *Faust* the play. Second, I briefly survey how engagements with the four elements drive and structure much of the play’s action, which suggests that the Faustian quest seeks power by grappling with and seeking to control natural processes. This section is guided by Tantillo’s assessment of *Faust* as a play in which “Goethe’s scientific principles replace a Christian moral code.”<sup>4</sup> Tantillo asserts that “[p]roductive activity replaces moral rectitude as the goal of human striving,”<sup>5</sup> and so “Faust’s final end is tragic in that he is rendered incapable of further activity”;<sup>6</sup> I maintain, conversely, that the very gist of the play is the *continuation* of the processes in which Faust is involved regardless of his own desires. Third, I consider the

environmental implications of Faust's final land reclamation project with the dyke—which results in a putrid swamp—and I claim that Faust and Mephistopheles do not “technologically” conquer the elements but rather succumb to them. Nature is radically re-shaped, and yet the elemental flows continue their typical patterns. For this third section on the dyke and the “new land” it creates, I reflect on Kate Rigby's ground-breaking ecocritical analysis of *Faust* that also relates the play to the “Witterungslehre.” Rigby critiques not only Faust but also Goethe as being part of an old-fashioned “tradition from which he never entirely freed himself, whereby the appropriation and domination of the earth by humanity was in some sense preordained.”<sup>7</sup> I agree with Rigby that Faust is part of this tradition, but Goethe clearly delineates within the play the problematic aspects of the dyke's funding by brutal piracy and colonization in collaboration with the Archbishop, which suggests a more nuanced view of human-land interactions. *Faust* presents us with the tension between our own conflicts with/in the elements and an ecocritically-relevant condemnation of the radical reshaping of nature without understanding it. Goethe, in fact, situates human beings *within the elements*, not merely as masters or opponents of them. The play appears to document eventual transcendence, but it is actually quite grounded.

It's time, in other words, to disenchant *Faust*. This goal of “disenchantment” using ecocriticism is one I take from Dana Phillips, who speaks not of *Faust* but of ecocriticism itself. He provocatively reformulates ecocriticism's project by declaring the need to overcome the original emphasis on “realistic” nature writing and to engage to a much greater extent with literary theory and the science of ecology. Phillips writes that

it's time to disenchant ecocriticism. We can do that by deploying theoretical, philosophical, and scientific insights in the development of a rationale for describing and interpreting the multifarious relations of culture and nature in the present day, as well as in the recent past. The difficult thing will be doing all this while avoiding the cryptic and totalizing tendencies, as well as the pastoral ones, that lead us astray...<sup>8</sup>

While the proliferation of new directions in ecocriticism is well on its way towards productive “disenchantment,” I seek here a similar disenchantment of Goethe’s play that is neither cryptic nor pastoral, neither moralistic nor tending towards prophecy, but rather one that is, as with Phillips’s suggestion for ecocriticism, “picaresque”:

I think the ecocritic would do well to emulate the picaro’s mobility and fluid, playful sensibility. Like the picaro, we have to find our environmental sustenance as best we can, whenever and wherever it is to be found. Nor can we afford to be moralistic. An offensive and picaresque ecocritic will be less like a watchdog policing the boundaries of the wild and more like a coyote expanding the territories of the wild opportunistically and wherever it roams. The ecocritic-as-picaro will be much less attracted to prophecy, and will make judgments that, though they may seem expedient—and even offensive—to some, will be a lot more expeditious than ecocritical judgments currently are.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, my picaresque-ecocritical reading of Goethe’s *Faust* attempts to disenchant some of the typical interpretations of the play’s “Modern,” “Human,” and “Technological” wonders, even as it *strives* (onwards) for a closer grasp of Goethean “nature-culture” (another term from Phillips). The fact that Goethe famously contextualizes a great many of his most notorious characters in terms of “nature” is oddly underappreciated in the many readings of *Faust* that celebrate the construction of the dyke and the “free earth” that it creates at the end of the play. Let us remedy that here with a somewhat less reverent view of human progress, the human soul, and our “fate.”

As Goethe claims in “Gesang der Geister über den Wassern,” our fate is like the wind, and our soul is like water that flows downward, then evaporates, only to fall again to earth. “Seele des Menschen, / Wie gleichst du dem Wasser! / Schicksal des Menschen, / Wie gleichst du dem Wind!” He describes in this poem how the water streams downwards from the high, steep cliff, down to the depths and so depicts the *reverse* path of Faust’s ascending remains. “Strömt von der hohen / Steilen Felswand / Der reine Strahl, / Dann stäubt er lieblich / In Wolkenwellen / Zum glatten Fels, / Und leicht empfangen, / Wallt er verschleiernd, / Leisrauschend, / Zur Tiefe nieder.” Once the water has reached the depths of the valley and the

lake, it smoothly reflects the stars on its surface. “Im flachen Bette / Schleicht er das Wiesental hin, / Und in dem glatten See / Weiden ihr Antlitz / Alle Gestirne.” This peaceful image of heavenly reflection remains until the next wind stirs the waves: “Wind ist der Welle / Lieblicher Buhler; / Wind mischt vom Grund aus / Schäumende Wogen.” To have a soul “like water” suggests that our lives exist within, or relate to, the context of elemental motions, and that, in a parallel fashion, we might say that Faust is still participating in them at the end—less “actively” than is usually believed. He’s not transcending, he’s evaporating. Moreover, I seek to demonstrate that much of his choices and “deeds”—even while he’s still breathing—are considerably less “active” than often assumed.

If our soul “resembles water” flowing cyclically rather than in a linear path with a closed finality ending in “heaven,” then further study of what Goethe says about “water,” its relationship to the “heavens,” and to the other three elements of fire, earth, and air could help us interpret *Faust* in terms more expansive than simple divine intervention. Indeed, his “Versuch einer Witterungslehre 1825” and other weather essays explore precisely the issue of the interacting forces of the four elements, and our battles against them, as Rigby points out. Goethe claims that the structuring concept of the four elements, taken from antiquity, remains scientifically relevant as an attempt to keep things at their simplest level, one that is based not on *isolated substances* but rather on *polarities and interrelated processes*. He defends the use of the four elements by Bernadini in his science despite their mythological associations, because they relate to simpler principles. “Die Uranfänge der sinnlich erscheinenden Dinge vierfach einzuteilen, Feuer, Wasser, Luft und Erde, einander gegenüber zu stellen, ist einer sinnlich-tüchtigen, gewissermaßen poetischen Anschauung keineswegs zu verargen, dagegen auch der Versuch höchst lobenswert, auf einfachere Prinzipien, auf einen einzigen Gegensatz die

Erscheinung zurückzuführen.”<sup>10</sup> Goethe specifies that the four elements are the concrete matrix of our existence in his 1805 “Physikalische Vorträge,” defining them as following: “Luft das alles Umbegende. Feuer das alles Durchdringende. Wasser das alles Belebende. Erde das in allem Sinn zu Belebende.”<sup>11</sup> He then explores how the elements interact and concludes that air-pressure changes and the resulting weather patterns have an “Einfluß auf alles Irdische. Lebloses sowohl als Lebendiges... Auch wir sind Völker des Luftmeeres.”<sup>12</sup> We are the “air-ocean folk” sustained by the elements and living within the weather patterns created by changing air pressure. Air pressure fluctuates, according to Goethe, as the earth’s pulsating gravity draws the air more or less towards itself, as if an inhalation and exhalation. Air and earth are in competition, a polarity interacting in turn with the heat of fire and the flows of water to create the weather.

Nehmen wir also mit den Physikern an, daß die Anziehungskraft der ganzen Erdmasse, von der uns unerforschten Tiefe bis zu dem Meeresufer, und von dieser Grenze der uns bekannten Erdoberfläche bis zu den höchsten Berggipfeln und darüber hinaus erfahrungsgemäß nach und nach abnehme, wobei ein gewisses Auf- und Absteigen, Aus- und Einatmen sich ergebe...<sup>13</sup>

Above all, Goethe repeatedly emphasizes that these weather processes are driven neither by cosmic nor planetary forces (as in astrology), but rather by “telluric” or earthly forces. Regarding “die astrologischen Grillen als regiere der gestirnte Himmel die Schicksale der Menschen,” he vehemently declares: “Alle dergleichen Einwirkungen aber lehnen wir ab; die Witterungs-Erscheinungen auf der Erde halten wir weder für kosmisch noch planetarisch, sondern wir müssen sie nach unseren Prämissen für rein tellurisch erklären” (“Witterungslehre” 276). Although inaccurate in terms of the cause of changing air pressure, Goethe’s concentration on a telluric cause for weather patterns (and the storms that continue even today to be attributed to heavenly wrath) is highly relevant for a disenchantment of *Faust*.

While McCarthy's work on *Faust* and chaos theory also juxtaposes the play with the "Witterungslehre," explores the four elements, and notes Goethe's insistence on maintaining "telluric" explanations, my study differs from his in three very concrete ways. First, I consider *Faust* not only in reference to the "Witterungslehre," but also more broadly to his other weather essays as well as to the poem "Gesang." Second, McCarthy describes the four elements as being indistinguishable and primarily part of the light/dark, production/destruction, disorder/form "cycles of contraction and expansion" typical of chaos theory.<sup>14</sup> I suggest, in contrast, that in both his weather essays and *Faust*, Goethe allows the four elements to emerge more distinctly as specific and concrete aspects of the natural world with distinguishable boundaries—although they are constantly interacting and altering each other. Third, I contest McCarthy's crediting of Faust himself with attaining great knowledge during his rather excessively long series of adventures. McCarthy writes that already in the witch's kitchen:

These lines [from the witch!] express the core of Faust's incipient conversion from mechanistic Newtonian science to a new metathinking ... Faust's previously methodical inquiry becomes free flowing, seemingly random. In his subsequent experiences, he realizes ever more the need to reorient his thinking radically. Instead of laboring further under the delusion that he can achieve ultimate knowledge through orderly, self-directed microreduction, he must allow himself to be moved by the deep structures of existence...<sup>15</sup>

I concur rather with Jane Brown that Faust doesn't really develop even though the play itself enacts specific developments. According to Brown: "To ask, then, how Faust develops, what he learns, how his relationship to the devil evolves, is hardly meaningful, for if he ever learns not to err, he will not be human. Faust is instead a static character who repeatedly destroys other lives in his haste to realize ideals."<sup>16</sup>

To Brown's statement, I would like to add that we readers need some picaresque reconsideration of what Faust himself actually states are his wishes. Mephistopheles provides

much of the impulses and action of the play; what Faust demands directly is much more limited. His primary demands are 1) for greater knowledge in the infamous first monologue; 2) to experience the thrills and “Freuden” of life (or to demonstrate that even they would not sate his striving thirst), as he states in the “gamble”/pact with Mephistopheles; and then, after having imbibed the witch’s brew: 3) for intimate contact with Gretchen; 4) to seek the “Mothers” so that he can bring Helen to life; 5) for the ability to seduce Helen; and finally 6) to bound the sea, the “maternal,” disorderly force of endless waves. In other words, his requests most generally are to have carnal knowledge of and/or control over females or what are typically considered “feminine” forces in nature and culture, and he believes that he will, in this arena at least, (safely!) never achieve satisfaction. During many of the momentous events in the play—beyond seduction—he’s either literally sleeping or else distracted by desire and so going along with whatever Mephistopheles proposes to do (such as when Mephistopheles creates the paper money system, during Wagner’s and Mephistopheles’ creation of the Homunculus, as they travel to the classical Walpurgis scene, and during the warfare helping one emperor conquer the other with the help of the water spirits, when Faust mourns the loss of Helen and then decides to focus on controlling the waves). These examples of his desires appear rather gendered in nature, so much so that I would note that they appear less the augury of modern and technological progress than some sort of timeless “male” desire to conquer “the feminine,” whether in the form of Gretchen’s youthful flesh, the mythological “Mothers,” the ultimate symbol of beauty (Helen), or the so-called feminine powers of nature (the sea). I thus suggest in contrast to McCarthy that Goethe may have spoken tongue in cheek when closing this “magnum opus” with the phrase “Das Ewig-Weibliche / Zieht uns hinan.”<sup>17</sup> This is surely fitting for Goethe’s “ernst gemeinte Scherze” in *Faust*.

While both McCarthy and Rigby note the direct parallels between the “Witterungslehre” and *Faust*, neither addresses in any detail the equally relevant parallels to another one of Goethe’s weather essays, “Wolkengestalt nach Howard,” published in 1820 (although other scholars do).<sup>18</sup> It is in “Wolkengestalt” where Goethe describes how the atmosphere is made up of three “Luft-Regionen” (“die obere, mittlere und untere”) that are the same as those in the play’s final scene, “Bergschluchten, Wald, Fels” (“Tiefe Region, Mittlere Region, and höhere Atmosphäre”). The lowest region, as he describes it in the cloud essay, is one that “die dichteste Feuchtigkeit an sich zu ziehen und in fühlbaren Tropfen darzustellen geneigt ist,” and it is there that rain forms (“Wolkengestalt” 232). The “Tiefe Region” described in *Faust* is, similarly, essentially a description of water flowing downwards driven by lightning and wild weather. “Ist um mich her ein wildes Brausen, / Als wogte Wald und Felsenrund, / Und doch stürzt, liebevoll im Sausen, / Die Wasserfülle sich zum Schlund, / Berufen gleich das Tal zu wässern; / Der Blitz der flammend niederschlug / Die Atmosphäre zu verbessern...”<sup>19</sup> The middle region in the cloud essay is where cumulus clouds form and is the space for conflict between the upper air and the earth: “in ihr wird eigentlich der Konflikt bereitet, ob die obere Luft oder die Erde den Sieg erhalten soll” (“Wolkengestalt” 231). In *Faust*, the “Mittlere Region” is also the stage of conflict; Pater Seraphicus “takes up” the “Knaben” inside of him as the clouds do with the water droplets, only to have them demand to be let go: “von innen” they cry: “Doch zu düster ist der Ort, / Schüttelt uns mit Schreck und Grauen, / Edler, Guter laß uns fort” (*Faust* 11915-17). They are released and climb ever higher. The highest level of air, Goethe writes in “Wolkengestalt,” reigns supreme in dry, beautiful weather and has transformative powers, so that “die Atmosphäre ist in einem Zustande daß sie Feuchtigkeit in sich aufnehmen, tragen, emporheben kann, es sei nun daß sie das Wäßrige zerteilt in sich enthalte, oder daß sie solches verändert, in seine

Elemente getrennt in sich aufnehmen” (“Wolkengestalt” 231). In *Faust*, the angels appear in “der höhern Atmosphäre,” carrying his remains and, appropriately, transforming him. “Vom edlen Geisterchor umgeben / Wird sich der Neue kaum gewahr, / Er ahnet kaum das frische Leben / So gleicht er schon der heiligen Schar. / Sieh! wie er jedem Erdenbände / Der alten Hülle sich entrafft, / Und aus ätherischem Gewande / Hervortritt erste Jugendkraft” (*Faust* 12084-91). This transformation can only occur with “love.” “Wenn starke Geisteskraft / Die Elemente / An sich herangerafft,” no angel can separate the “Geeinte Zwienatur, for only “love” can do that. “Kein Engel trennte / Geeinte Zwienatur / Der innigen Beiden, / Die ewige Liebe nur / Vermags zu scheiden” (*Faust* 11961-65). In other words, each of the three levels of air described in the cloud essay share very closely actions and transformations with those described in the play ending with the loving guidance of the “eternal feminine.”

Of course, the usual celebratory analysis of Faust’s love for Gretchen and vice versa must be contextualized here by what the angels actually say: they describe the “love” that succeeded in winning “den Sieg” as being the fiery rose blossoms inflaming Mephistopheles’ lust so that they can whisk away Faust’s remains. “Jene Rosen, aus den Händen / Liebend-heiliger Büsserinnen, / Halfen uns den Sieg gewinnen, /... Statt gewohnter Höllenstrafen, / Fühlten Liebesqual die Geister; / Selbst der alte Satans-Meister / War von spitzer Pein durchdrungen” (*Faust* 11942-52 ). The “fire of love” distracts Mephistopheles and so aids the angels in lifting Faust’s remains—they rise as if “heated” and so follow the usual directive of the four elements delineated by Goethe. In the cloud essay, there is a similar struggle between the dry upper region in conflict with the earth as each draws the air and moisture up and down. “Wie wir von oben herunter gestiegen sind, so kann man wieder von unten hinaufsteigen, so daß sich dichte Nebel erheben und in der untern Luft schwere Schichten bilden, die sich aber doch wieder an ihrem

oberen Teile ballen, höher dringen und zuletzt nach und nach in die obere Luft aufgelöst werden” (“Wolkengestalt” 232). Similarly, in another essay, “Barometerschwankungen,” Goethe describes how water vapor is drawn upwards by the higher atmosphere or even broken down there into its “elements.” Additionally, the tension between earth and air is a battle, and the earth’s pull is an “Anziehungskraft” (much like the final words of the play, “Das Ewig-Weibliche / *Zieht uns hinan*”).

Hoher Barometerstand hebt die Wasserbildung auf, die Atmosphäre vermag die Feuchte zu tragen, oder *sie in ihre Elemente zu zersetzen*... Nach unserer Terminologie würden wir also sagen: *zeigt die Erde sich mächtig, vermehrt sie ihre Anziehungskraft, so überwindet sie die Atmosphäre, deren Inhalt ihr nun ganz angehört; was allenfalls darin zu Stande kommt muß als Tau, als Reif herunter, der Himmel bleibt klar in verhältnismäßigem Bezug.*”<sup>20</sup>

In other words, what goes up also comes down. The “elemental” force of love appears to follow similar patterns to those of the four elements.

A study of the four elements in *Faust*, in fact, illustrates that this unwieldy play often considered an ingenious hodgepodge of epic proportions has, at the very least, a general framework if not an underlying structure.<sup>21</sup> This brings us to the second part of this essay that examines how the polarities of earth-air and water-fire evoke vertical and horizontal tensions as general structuring principles. The earth-air polarity frames the play; hence the action after Faust’s monologue begins with Faust’s conjuring of the Earth spirit, is followed by his oft-repeated desire to fly through the air, and ends with Faust’s final claim to have “opened up new earth” quite concretely with his dyke: “Eröffn’ ich Räume vielen Millionen, / ... Mensch und Herde / Sogleich behaglich auf der neuesten Erde,” (*Faust* 11563-65). As he speaks, of course, he summons his “Grab/Graben” in the earth, into which he falls only to be lifted (passively, again) for final ascension through the three “Luft-Regionen.” Horizontally, manipulation of water and fire provides worldly powers over people and land as well as over illusions such as in

Auerbach's Keller and the magical waterfall that defeats the army in Part II, Act IV. There is not the space here to describe how the extensive references to the four elements in *Faust* relate to these polarities, so I shall simply highlight several key examples.

Our guide in this part of the essay is Tantillo, with her provocative assertion that the tragedy of *Faust* "is not a moral one in the Christian sense," but rather one of "scientific principles."<sup>22</sup> Tantillo emphasizes Faust's cessation of activity as that which brings about the tragedy. By becoming self-satisfied, he stops "engaging with the world" and "becomes a scientist of the Newtonian, Cartesian ilk: someone who is more interested in conquering and controlling nature than in understanding it. Moreover, his feelings of self-satisfaction that ultimately spell his doom are linked to this modern stance."<sup>23</sup> According to Tantillo, Faust develops from seeking to understand nature to longing to control it with the dyke's technology: "Faust's relationship to nature changes drastically by the end of the play, and in this change one can begin to track him as a doomed man."<sup>24</sup> Tantillo sees his death as tragic because: "In death, Faust does not return to nature, but ascends into heaven where the creative weaving and subsequent striving is denied to him."<sup>25</sup> Perhaps, I suggest, Tantillo doesn't go far enough, even though asserting that the ascent to heaven is "tragic" should definitely rank quite high in terms of rousing readings of Goethe's play. Where I disagree with Tantillo is in the idea that "Faust does not return to nature"—he remains fully *within*, as Goethe says, the "Luftmeer" of the four elements and their polarities which make up nature. In other words, Tantillo eliminates the Christian morality of the play up until the last moment where she allows it to return full-force as tragic redemption. The play itself is obviously tantalizingly oblique, rendering the final scene's ascent in undeniably Catholic imagery even as it also, in my reading, interjects into this imagery the elemental flows that drive the ascent/descent into weather.

Further exploration of several specific instances of the four elements in *Faust* supports this rather picaresque reading of the play as more atmospheric than didactic. Mephistopheles, for example, revels regularly in his relationship to specific elements and bemoans the power of others. He claims fire as his own element, but he actually appears in the play immediately after Faust cries out his desire to *fly through the air*. The black poodle appears once Faust has stated his choice to seek the air and flight with his cry to “spirits of the air” on Easter day. This is his famous “zwei Seelen” speech: one part of Faust desires lustfully to hold onto the earth, whereas the other longs to free itself from the dust and head off into the air—if only if there were “Geister in der Luft” to take him there.

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,  
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;  
Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust,  
Sich an die Welt, mit klammernden Organen;  
Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust  
Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.  
O gibt es Geister in der Luft,  
Die zwischen Erd' und Himmel herrschend weben,  
So steigt nieder aus dem goldnen Duft  
Und führt mich weg, zu neuem buntem Leben! (*Faust* 1112-1121).

Faust is torn between earth and the heavens (where “air” reigns by pulling water away from the earth), between being grounded here and the dreams of flight through the air. This is what Mephistopheles first gives Faust: a means to travel through the air with the magic cape, “Zaubermantel,” and the help of some “fire-air”: “Wir breiten nur den Mantel aus, / Der soll uns durch die Lüfte tragen.../ Ein Bißchen Feuerluft, die ich bereiten werde, / Hebt uns bebend von *dieser Erde*” (Faust 2065-69, emphasis mine). To fly is to take advantage of the elements, perhaps even to master them, or so Mephistopheles and Faust believe. This is their hubris; they contend that they can control the elements and it is there that they both finally fail: Mephistopheles is overcome by his “own” element of fire when the angels tantalize him with

fiery rose petals fluttering around their backsides, and Faust is unable to conquer water in that it may be partially delimited with a dyke, but the swamp remains.<sup>26</sup> And, of course, both can do naught but watch or float as Faust's "earthly" remains rise as if moisture in the air.

While the vertical polarity of air and earth frames the play, the horizontal polarity of fire and water represents the struggles for worldly power played out in many forms including sex, economics, warfare, and land reclamation. Water plays a key role in each scene in Part II and it is that against which Faust dedicates his last battle. The water scenes structure the play and link the two parts through the waterfall imagery. In Act I of Part II, the famous waterfall echoes Faust's self-description as a waterfall crashing down on Gretchen, the "little hut" in Part I. The rest of Part II is also structured by water scenes, including the watery birth with flame of the Homunculus who dives to his fiery death in the sea in Act II; Helena's chorus that convinces her to stay with Faust and then decides as a group to remain "above ground" as water spirits once she returns to the underworld in Act III; the aid the water spirits provide in the war via the illusory waterfall that defeats the other Kaiser, and, also in Act IV, Faust's decision to dedicate himself to damming the sea; and finally the dyke itself, holding back the sea's water in Act V. Water inspires Faust's rage against the unruly elements, and provides him with his final goal. "Mein Auge war aufs hohe Meer gezogen, / Es schwoll empor, sich in sich selbst zu türmen. / Dann ließ es nach und schüttete die Wogen, / Des flachen Ufers Breite zu bestürmen" (*Faust* 10198-201). He continues, "leidenschaftlich":

Sie schleicht heran, an abertausend Enden  
Unfruchtbar selbst Unfruchtbarkeit zu spenden,  
Nun schwillt's und wächst und rollt und überzieht  
Der wüsten Strecke widerlich Gebiet.  
Da herrschet Well auf Welle kraftbegeistert,  
Zieht sich zurück und es ist nichts geleistet.  
Was zur Verzweiflung mich beängstigen könnte,  
Zwecklose Kraft, *unbändiger Elemente!*

Da wagt mein Geist sich selbst zu überfliegen,  
Hier möcht' ich kämpfen, dies möcht ich besiegen. (*Faust* 10212-21, emphasis mine).

The power of the waves as “unrestrained elements” continually crashing against the cliffs is “unproductive,” and Faust longs to “conquer it.” He fails, at least partially, in this war against water as evidenced by the putrid swamp remaining after he dams the sea. Furthermore, the lofty interpretations of the land gained by building the dyke as well as those celebrating the religious victory in Faust’s final “ascension” drawn with specifically Catholic images neglect the conversation taking place with the Archbishop and the Emperor to negotiate the terms for Faust’s land-reclamation project in Act IV. The Bishop agrees to allow the project, but demands ever more profit for the church. As long as land and taxes are promised, the undertakings with the devil are to be forgiven. The battle with water provides the initial step towards Faust’s much-celebrated “absolution.” The problematic contexts suggest that we might reconsider with a more careful eye the final scene of the play so often read primarily as God’s forgiveness of Faust.

While Mephistopheles dabbles with manipulating water in an effort to satisfy Faust, he believes that fire is “his own element,” the only one which he can claim. He bemoans the power of the other elements to reproduce life endlessly despite his best efforts to destroy its endless emergence out of water, land, and air.

Wie viele hab' ich schon begraben!  
Und immer zirkuliert ein neues, frisches Blut.  
So geht es fort, man möchte rasend werden!  
Der Luft, dem Wasser, wie der Erden  
Entwinden tausend Keime sich,  
Im Trocknen, Feuchten, Warmen, Kalten!  
Hätt' ich mir nicht die Flamme vorbehalten:  
Ich hätte nichts Apart's für mich (*Faust* 1371-78).

In this proliferation of life and energy, only fire is left to him and yet even that, we eventually learn, is not quite as controllable as he thought. The scenes in which Mephistopheles seems to be

in command of fire include when he offers burning drinks to Faust in the tavern and then in the witch's kitchen with the fiery rejuvenating brew. When Faust hesitates, his companion quips: "Nur frisch hinunter! Immer zu! / Es wird dir gleich das Herz erfreuen. / Bist mit dem Teufel du und du, / Und willst dich vor der Flamme scheuen?" (*Faust* 2583-86). Other scenes emphasizing fire reveal its potential to escape from the bounds set to it, for example with Faust's and Helen's son, Euphorion, who flies in the "air" following the "flaming girl" only to perish when he falls. Philemon and Baucis are burned to death when Faust orders their hut to be removed even as he denies the responsibility for the fire. So does Mephistopheles, who describes their deaths as an "accident": "Verzeiht! Es ging nicht gütlich ab. / Wir klopfen an, wir pochten an, / Und immer ward nicht aufgetan; / ... In wilden Kampfes kurzer Zeit, / Von Kohlen, ringsumher gestreut, / Entflammte Stroh. Nun loderts frei, / Als Scheiterhaufen dieser Drei" (*Faust* 11351-53 and 11366-69 ).

Additionally, the fiery Homunculus dives to his death in the sea in a moment of creation and energy. Indeed, this moment at the end of Act II shows life as the interaction of fire and water together, and it contrasts directly to Act V where fire kills and water is dammed only to produce a pestilent swamp. This Homunculus scene celebrates a moment when water and fire come together in unity, and in that it highlights the four elements I cite it here in full.

#### THALES

Homunkulus ist es, von Proteus verführt . . .  
Es sind die Symptome des herrischen Sehns,  
Mir ahnet das Ächzen beängsteten Dröhnens;  
Er wird sich zerschellen am glänzenden Thron;  
Jetzt flammt es, nun blitzt es, ergießet sich schon.

#### SIRENEN

Welch feuriges Wunder verklärt uns die Wellen,  
Die gegeneinander sich funkelnd zerschellen?  
So leuchtet's und schwanket und hellet hinan:  
Die Körper sie glühen auf nächtlicher Bahn,  
Und rings ist alles vom Feuer umronnen;

So herrsche denn Eros der alles begonnen!  
Heil dem Meere! Heil den Wogen!  
Von dem heiligen Feuer umzogen;  
Heil dem Wasser! Heil dem Feuer!  
Heil dem seltnen Abenteuer!

ALL ALLE!

Heil den mildgewogenen Lüften!  
Heil geheimnisreichen Grüften!  
Hochgefeiert sind allhier  
Element' ihr alle vier! (*Faust* 8469- 87).

This scene highlights the four elements and their productive power that appears when seeking unity between them rather than exacerbating or seeking to bind their tensions.<sup>27</sup> It may seem that Mephistopheles “controls” fire, but these elements have a life—quite literally—of their own. We see ever more clearly by the end of Part II that his ability to dominate this element is primarily to harness it briefly for illusions or destruction. When it is used against him by the angels, he, too, falls prey to the literal “fire” of rose blossoms bursting into flame as they flutter around the attractive angelic backsides. Indeed, his belief that he controls fire proves to be his own delusion in the end, and he finally succumbs to the fire of desire or the “super-devilish element—the “*überteuflich Element.*” “Mir brennt der Kopf, das Herz, die Leber brennt, / Ein überteuflich Element! / Weit spitziger als Höllenfeuer” And then: “Ist dies das Liebeselement? / Der ganze Körper steht in Feuer, / Ich fühle kaum daß es im Nacken brennt. / ...Auch könntet ihr anständig-nackter gehen, / Das lange Faltenhemd ist übersittlich — / Sie wenden sich — Von hinten anzusehen! — / Die Racker sind doch gar zu appetitlich” (*Faust* 11753- 55, 11784-87, and 11797-800). The tricky elements carry on, as it were, according to their polarities, regardless of those who would control them for their own ends.

In this third and final section of the essay, I turn to the question of the elements and land development in response to Rigby’s analysis. While Rigby critiques the dyke, as noted below, there are those who celebrate Faust’s technological marvel. Indeed, the critical scholarship is

inundated by interpretations of *Faust* emphasizing the heroic development of land and the winning of resources as the inevitable bounty of those who would “strive.” R.H. Stephenson, Krzysztof Lipinski, and Géza von Molnár serve as examples of those describing Faust as a “developer” who enacts the finest deeds of “man’s” domination of land (earth), air, water, and fire. Stephenson writes: “What Faust is evoking..., is the typically Western application of science to the optimum conversion of the resources of nature to benefit humanity; such engineering feats have contributed, historically, to human welfare by providing the goods of shelter and comfort and by making human life as pleasant and satisfying as possible—precisely the objective Faust has in mind.”<sup>28</sup> Lipinski similarly states: “Erstaunlicherweise enthalten Mephistos Pläne einen gesunden Kern—die Nutzung der natürlichen Ressourcen, der Bodenschätze und der Landwirtschaft ... als mögliche Quellen des Reichtums. Hinter diesen Gedanken verbirgt sich das ökonomische Wissen des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts und Faust als Autor des Projekts.”<sup>29</sup> Certainly, one can hardly deny the provocative nature of reading Faust’s enterprise as having a “healthy core” of converting natural resources “to benefit humanity” and achieve economic success, yet this celebration may be overly hasty. Von Molnár joins the optimistic group of land developers, asserting similarly that “Goethe’s Faust comes to see himself as a free agent among other free agents on free soil, that is to say on territory wrested from the control of nature and made into a free sphere of human intercourse.”<sup>30</sup> It is unclear how much knowledge of “nature” the blinded and delusional Faust has achieved at the end, at it is equally unclear just how “free” the land is that he claims to have created. Von Molnár and the others downplay the “price” (including murder) of gaining “knowledge” and of “wresting” the land from “nature,” and they thereby strip away any moral considerations regarding land development (and the piracy funding it). Faust does not “free” himself nor the land “from nature,”

much less from the elements; instead, he has altered their paths (but not their basic qualities) and is then caught up in their flows (upwards in the last scene, which is likely not the final direction).

Let us seek an antidote to those readings overwhelmed by the heady joy of a new dyke and “free land” by turning to ecocriticism. Jost Hermand, for example, posits that Goethe’s “grüne Weltfrömmigkeit” would inevitably condemn such a frenzied “torture of nature”:

Auch Fausts Schlußmonolog, in dem er triumphierend behauptet, einen faulen Pfuhl entsumpft und eingedeicht zu haben, läßt sich nur als Manifest eines falschen Bewußtseins lesen, mit dem Goethe noch einmal jenen widersinnigen Tätigkeitsdrang anprangern wollte ... Wie ein Berserker hat Faust sogar in seiner nächsten Umgebung die Natur gequält, eingezwängt, zerstört und dabei eine Freiheit gepriesen, die auf gut kapitalistische Weise jeden Tag ‘neu erobert’ werden muß.<sup>31</sup>

Yet Hermand perhaps overstates the case; Goethe is not opposed to reshaping the natural landscape, but it is a matter of *how* one does it, and whether it follows “nature’s patterns.” Faust fails with his efforts to control the elements since he does not acknowledge the natural laws that dictate their flows. Conceivably, Goethe might less piously suggest that one could do it better.

Rigby, like Hermand, is critical of the dyke, yet she includes Goethe himself in her critique, condemning the entire enterprise as one in which both Goethe and Faust are complicit as adversaries of nature:

‘Man’s gain of habitable land’ was in Goethe’s view a laudable enterprise. In his essay on meteorology of 1825, for example, he observes that, ‘[w]here man has taken possession of the earth and is obliged to keep it, he must be forever vigilant and ready to resist.’ Here it becomes apparent that Goethe is, after all, the inheritor of a tradition from which he never entirely freed himself, whereby the appropriation and domination of the earth by humanity was in some sense preordained. This is conjoined here with an adversarial construction of the relationship between humanity and the natural world, whereby ‘the elements are to be viewed as colossal opponents with whom we must forever do battle.’<sup>32</sup>

Rigby accurately cites Goethe’s “Witterungslehre,” as describing the “wild elements” yet she neglects other parts of the essay that clearly contrast the elements to nature. This distinction deserves our attention as it provides a strategy for reading *Faust*’s final scene. Rigby translates

the following: “Es ist offenbar daß was wir Elemente nennen, seinen eigenen wilden wüsten Gang zu nehmen immerhin den Trieb hat. Insofern sich nun der Mensch den Besitz der Erde ergriffen und ihn zu erhalten Pflicht hat, muß er sich zum Widerstand bereiten und wachsam erhalten” (“Witterungslehre,” 295). She highlights, interestingly enough, the antagonistic comments but she leaves out the conciliatory ones. Again, Goethe’s riotous declaration fuels her argument: “Die Elemente daher sind als kolossale Gegner zu betrachten, mit denen wir ewig zu kämpfen haben, und sie nur durch die höchste Kraft des Geistes, durch Mut und List, im einzelnen Fall bewältigen” (“Witterungslehre” 295). Rigby overlooks Goethe’s solution that appears exactly between the two quotations listed above: “nature” provides the model which we should emulate when engaging with the unruly elements. The best strategy for countering the elements is: “wenn man dem Regellosen [den Elementen] das Gesetz entgegen zu stellen vermöchte, und hier hat uns die Natur aufs herrlichste vorgearbeitet und zwar indem sie ein gestaltetes Leben dem Gestaltlosen entgegen setzt” (“Witterungslehre” 295). In Goethe’s terms, our battle is not against the “natural world” as Rigby asserts, but rather against the furious elements of water, air, earth, and fire, and we shall have the best success by observing and following “nature.” He repeats this idea: “Das Höchste jedoch was in solchen Fällen dem Gedanken gelingt ist gewahr zu werden was die Natur in sich selbst als Gesetz und Regel trägt, jenem ungezügelden gesetzlosen Wesen zu imponieren” (“Witterungslehre” 296). While Rigby brings ecocriticism to *Faust* (with greater complexity than Hermand) and insightfully contextualizes the play within larger European trends, I would like, in turn, to bring greater differentiation to her comments. First, the elements and nature in Goethe’s weather essays are not exactly equivalent; rather he distinguishes clearly between them. Second, her critique of

Faust himself is entirely accurate yet Goethe's texts demonstrate that he is not exactly Faust when it comes to nature and the elements.

The distinction that Goethe makes in his weather essays between nature and the elements is simply one where the elements are the basic, raw materials and energies, and nature is the aesthetic, productive/destructive forms that develop out of the elements' actions (forms such as living beings, geological structures, and landscapes). One could put it like this: we can shape nature by building a dam, but we cannot change the "elemental" laws of physics. For Goethe, these laws include the idea that the elements are always in wild motion, and are always battling and seeking transformation of each other.

Die Elemente daher sind die Willkür selbst zu nennen; die Erde möchte sich des Wassers immerfort bemächtigen und es zur Solideszenz zwingen; als Erde, Fels oder Eis, in ihren Umfang nötigen. Eben so unruhig möchte das Wasser die Erde die es ungerne verließ, wieder in seinen Abgrund reißen, die Luft die uns freundlich umhüllen und beleben sollte rast auf einmal als Sturm daher uns niederzuschmettern und zu ersticken; das Feuer ergreift unaufhaltsam was von Brennbarem, Schmelzbarem zu erreichen ist."  
("Witterungslehre" 295-96)

Earth seeks to solidify water, water rips earth along with it into the depths, air shifts from the quiet winds to a raging storm in an instant, and fire seeks to reduce everything it touches. Goethe's nature, in contrast, provides the rules and forms that are the only possible hope for containment of the elements' unruly actions. Noting this Goethean distinction between the elements and nature allows for a closer reading of the final scene of *Faust* as one enacting elemental battles and weather patterns.

I have already explored the ascent/descent into weather in terms of Goethe's atmospheric studies; let us now follow Rigby's lead and turn to the dyke and the swamp and see what aspects of the elements are to be found there. Many readers of *Faust*, of course, stress the grand potential of this dyke as well as Faust's future hopes for "free land" and "new earth" thereby downplaying

Goethe's specific mention that the funding for the project is derived from brutal colonial enterprises and piracy carried out by the "drei gewaltigen Gesellen." Mephitopheles makes quite clear the origins of their bounty brought for Faust: "Nur mit zwei Schiffen ging es fort, / Mit zwanzig sind wir nun im Port. / ... Man hat Gewalt, so hat man recht. / Man fragt ums Was? und nicht ums Wie? / Ich müßte keine Schifffahrt kennen. / Krieg, Handel und Piraterie, / Dreieinig sind sie, nicht zu trennen" (*Faust* 11173-74 and 84-89). Provocatively enough, we also do not directly see *any* of the "heroic" efforts to build the dyke, but rather just the aftermath and the lemurs digging the grave—which Faust, of course, thinks are the "Graben" that would carry away the swamp water, rather than his own "Grab." The complete lack of any description of the dyke's construction as well as of its form and material content should curb the impulse to read Faust's final "act" as a celebration of the technological structure itself.<sup>33</sup> The dyke is, well, there, apparently, but we do *not see* it with our own eyes in the text, nor through Faust's since he is blind, delusional (at least in terms of the "Grab/Graben"), and falling into death. Even before he is blinded by Care, his major complaint is that he *cannot see* his "Welt-Besitz" because of the Linden trees. We must take his blind assessment of the dyke as truth. Indeed, that is exactly what so many readers have done.

Let us thus look carefully at Faust's actual statement of the circumstances: a swamp is fouling his glorious land-reclamation project. "Ein Sumpf zieht am Gebirge hin, / Verpestet alles schon Errungene; / Den faulen Pfuhl auch abzuziehn / Das Letzte wär das Höchsterrungene" (*Faust* 11559-62). Faust muses (blindly and incorrectly) about the joy of the process and the power of restraining the ocean. "Wie das Geklirr der Spaten mich ergötzt! / Es ist die Menge, die mir frönet, / Die Erde mit sich selbst versöhnet, / Den Wellen ihre Grenze setzt, / Das Meer mit strengem Band umzieht" (*Faust* 11539-43). He hears his grave being dug and hubristically

believes to have “reconciled the earth with itself,” and to have “provided boundaries to the sea.” Mephistopheles provides a significant clue to how we might read this scene in terms of the elements, even as he himself is wrong about his power over fire as becomes clear shortly thereafter. In an aside, Mephistopheles quips: “Du bist doch nur für uns bemüht / Mit deinen Dämmen deinen Bühnen; / Denn du bereitest schon Neptunen, / Dem Wasserteufel, großen Schmaus. / In jeder Art seid ihr verloren, / *Die Elemente sind mit uns verschworen*” (*Faust* 11544-49, emphasis mine). The elements, of course, have their own energies and very soon after this scene even Mephistopheles must accept that as he is overcome with fiery roses. It appears that the elements are not in league with anyone or anything but rather follow their own wild paths. Plans to exploit their power can go wildly awry. In the end, weather takes over.

In conclusion, reading Goethe’s *Faust* alongside his weather essays allows a perspective somewhat less blinded by either glorious technological achievement or religious salvation. As in the “Gesang der Geister über den Wassern,” we might see Faust as still part of the “ewig wechselnd” motions of ascent and descent. I have sought here a picaresque interpretation of *Faust* that, in Phillips’s terms, might “disenchant” some of the more standard views celebrating Faustian quests. Rather than falling prey to the blindness that sees only the dyke and not the pestilent swamp (nor the piracy, colonization, hard labor, or need for vast material resources to build such structures), I suggest we open our eyes and look closely at the Goethean context for both the dyke and Faust’s ascent. *Faust* documents the Mephistophelean belief that because we can shape nature into dykes, as if at whim, that we can also control and divert the more fundamental elements themselves. It should not be surprising that the elements have the advantage at the end. This is not to say that the beauty and power of nature “win,” but rather, in picaresque terms, that unexpected elemental flows and wild weather may emerge from our own

constructions. One might “strive” to see what form of blindness we suffer from today, or, rather, to note what kind of fiery rose petals—or angelic backsides—are distracting us in this age of environmental woes.

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<sup>1</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, “Gesang der Geister über den Wassern,” In *Gedichte 1756-1799*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Klassiker, 1987) 318-19.

<sup>2</sup> Astrida Orle Tantillo notes in “Damned to Heaven: The Tragedy of *Faust* Revisited,” *Monatshefte* 99.4 (2007): 454-68: “In other words, although most critics agree that the play focuses upon issues of modern science, technology, and the conflicts between scientific knowledge and life experience, Goethe’s own scientific writings have played but a minor role in the history of the play’s interpretation” (454).

<sup>3</sup> See: John McCarthy, *Remapping Reality: Chaos and Creativity in Science in Literature: (Goethe-Nietzsche-Grass)* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Tantillo 455.

<sup>5</sup> Tantillo 455.

<sup>6</sup> Tantillo 455.

<sup>7</sup> Kate Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred: The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2004) 211.

<sup>8</sup> Dana Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003) 40-41.

<sup>9</sup> Phillips 241.

<sup>10</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, “Chromatik,” *Schriften zur Allgemeinen Geologie und Mineralogie*, vol. 25. (Frankfurt: Klassiker, 1989) 729-88; 777.

<sup>11</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, “Physikalische Vorträge,” *Schriften zur Allgemeinen Geologie und Mineralogie*, vol. 25 (Frankfurt: Klassiker, 1989); 142-75; 161-62.

<sup>12</sup> Goethe, “Physikalische Vorträge” 165.

<sup>13</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, “Versuch einer Witterungslehre 1825” in *Schriften zur Allgemeinen Naturlehre Geologie und Mineralogie* vol. 25. (Frankfurt: Klassiker, 1989) 274-300; 278. Henceforth cited parenthetically in the essay.

<sup>14</sup> McCarthy 193.

<sup>15</sup> McCarthy 204-5. Peter D. Smith similarly claims that “Faust has attained a deep and practical knowledge of nature. And yet it is clear that Faust’s achievements have been won at a price.” “‘Was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält’: Scientific Themes in Goethe’s *Faust*,” In *A Companion to Goethe’s Faust: Parts I and II*, ed. Paul Bishop (Rochester, NY: Camden, 2006) 194-220; 214.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Brown, *Goethe’s Faust: The German Tragedy* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986) 22.

<sup>17</sup> For insightful studies into the gendered aspects of Goethe’s *Faust*, see Gail Hart’s discussion of how male desire is disrupted by rather passive males and active females in “Errant Strivings: Goethe, *Faust* and the Feminist Reader,” *From Goethe to Gide: Feminism, Aesthetics and the French and German Literary Canon 1770-1936*, eds. Mary Orr and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter, UK: U of Exeter P, 2005) 7-21; and Lynn D. Zimmermann, “Interiority, Power, and Female Subjectivity in Goethe’s *Faust I*,” *New German Review* 13 (1997-98): 36-46.

<sup>18</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, “Wolkengestalt, nach Howard,” in *Schriften zur Allgemeinen Naturlehre Geologie und Mineralogie* vol. 25 (Frankfurt: Klassiker, 1989) 214-34. Henceforth listed parenthetically in the essay. For discussions of specific parallels between the cloud essay and the final scene in *Faust*, see Gernot Böhme, “‘Mir läuft ein Schauer über’n ganzen Leib’—das Wetter, die Witterungslehre und die Sprache der Gefühle,” *Goethe Jahrbuch* (2007): 133-41; and Christoph König, “Fortifikationen: Zur Szene ‘Bergschluchten, Wald, Fels’ in Goethes *Faust, Zweiter Teil*,” *Die Neue Rundschau* 110.1 (1999) 107-13. Wilhelm Emrich also refers to Goethe’s cloud essay on Howard, but in reference to the Helen-scene in Part II, Act IV, when she appears as a cloud; *Die Symbolik von Faust II* (Bonn: Athenäum, 1957), especially 371-72.

<sup>19</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust. Texte*, vol. 7.1 (Frankfurt: Klassiker, 1994) 11874-80. Henceforth listed parenthetically in the essay.

<sup>20</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, “Über die Ursache der Barometerschwankungen,” In: *Schriften zur Allgemeinen Geologie und Mineralogie*, vol. 25 (Frankfurt: Klassiker, 1989) 255-64; 259, emphasis mine.

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<sup>21</sup> For a summary of the debate about whether *Faust* has an overall unity or is rather a fragmentary mix, see J. M. van der Laan's discussion of the "Unitarier" and the "Fragmentarier" in his *Seeking Meaning for Goethe's Faust* (London: Continuum, 2007), especially pgs. 19-21.

<sup>22</sup> Tantillo 455.

<sup>23</sup> Tantillo 462.

<sup>24</sup> Tantillo 463.

<sup>25</sup> Tantillo 464.

<sup>26</sup> Goethe suffered similar defeat in the battle against water with his work in the Ilmenau mine. In his *Amtliche Schriften*, he documents how flooding forced the mine to close despite all great efforts to dig "Wassergraben." Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Amtliche Schriften: Teil I*, vol. 26 (Frankfurt: Klassiker, 1998). See especially the section on the "Bergwerkskommission," pgs 431-460, for references to the Ilmenau mine, the problems with water and flooding, and especially the need for "Graben" to guide the water.

<sup>27</sup> Steven D. Martinson regards this scene only in terms of "fire and water" as "a sign of the fundamental interrelationship between Vulcanism and Neptunism," rather than as one contextualized by all four elements. "Organizing Chaos: 'Organization' in Herder and Goethe's *Werther* and *Faust*," in *Goethe, Chaos, and Complexity*, ed. Herbert Rowland (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) 135-46.

<sup>28</sup> R. H. Stephenson, "The Diachronic Solidity of Goethe's *Faust*," In *A Companion to Goethe's Faust: Parts I and II*, ed. Paul Bishop (Rochester, NY: Camden, 2006) 243-270; 262.

<sup>29</sup> Krzysztof Lipinski, "'Denn dies Metall lässt sich in alles wandeln...': Gold und Sexualität als Instrumente des Bösen in Goethes 'Faust,'" In *Resonanzen*, ed. Sabine Doering, et al. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000) 159-169; 168.

<sup>30</sup> Géza von Molnár, "Hidden in Plain View: Another Look at Goethe's *Faust*," *Goethe Yearbook XI* (2002) 33-76; 64.

<sup>31</sup> Jost Hermand, *Im Wettlauf mit der Zeit: Anstöße zu einer ökologiebewußten Ästhetik* (Berlin: Sigma Bohn, 1991) 48.

<sup>32</sup> Rigby 211.

<sup>33</sup> Van der Laan provides an excellent critique of technology in the play, commenting that: "Faust's loss of sight proves especially telling with respect to his technological accomplishments. Typically, his physical blindness has been understood to result in an even more perceptive inner insight. A more careful reading suggests, however, that his blindness is not only physical, but intellectual and spiritual as well. To be sure, Faust conceives ever grander schemes for his world, but he is utterly blind to the trouble with his investment and trust in a technological mastery of the natural world... He deceives himself concerning his project and its future beneficial contribution to humanity" (*Seeking Meaning* 106).