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NECESSARY EVIL:
THE INTERPLAY OF COMPULSION AND NECESSITY
IN DOCTOR FAUSTUS AND MACBETH

by

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To William Andrew Habington I

(1920 - 1997)

οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη

τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·

ὥς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἢ μὲν φύει ἢ δ' ἀπολήγει.

(Homer Iliad. Z. 146-9) .

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Abstract

Comparative readings of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and Shakespeare's Macbeth commonly cite contemporary theological doctrine as a context for the two plays' depictions of sin and damnation. In doing so, some studies--notably Richard Waswo's essay on "Macbeth, Faustus and Christian Tragedy"--either neglect or deny the importance of the Aristotelian conception of *hamartia* as a formal element of plot. In both plays, however, the sense of urgency which incites the protagonists to commit their errors gains force from the internal necessity of the tragic plot. The urgency of the plot's forward drive toward fulfilment in the *telos* of the drama is, in turn, contingent on what is "necessary and likely" in the character of the protagonist. Both Faustus and Macbeth satisfy the Aristotelian formulation by creating a processive interaction of plot and character, dramatic elements which correspond (respectively) to the forces of necessity and compulsion. While the compulsive drives of individual characters may appear subject to external determinants like fate and predestination, both individual compulsion and the supernatural agencies influencing it are subsumed by the necessity of resolving the needs of tragedy. That said, the fact that the resolution of essential tragic elements (such as the purging of "pity and fear" through *katharsis*) is contingent on the decisions of a specific type of character ensures that the interplay of necessity and compulsion remains dynamic, flexible, and complex.

Introduction: *Fearful Echoes*

As several critics have noticed, Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and Shakespeare's Macbeth are alike in depicting heroes who literally damn themselves through tragic error. In each play, the hero's decision necessarily entails a jumping of "the life to come" and, in each case, an awareness of this consequence does little to deter ambition or prevent *hamartia*. Accordingly, parallel readings of these plays have tended to invoke contemporary theological contexts to illuminate the Renaissance Christian refashioning of the ancient form of tragedy. The word *hamartia* has a double force in the discourse of tragedy, viewed through Christian eyes: it evokes, firstly, the Aristotelian formulation of the "tragic error" (or "big mistake" as George Whalley renders it [94-5]), and, secondly, the concept of "sin," which it came to denote in the original Greek of the New Testament. If Doctor Faustus and Macbeth represent definitive examples of "Christian Tragedy," they do so at least partly by making tragic *hamartia* entail *sin*.

Intriguingly though, many critics attempting to read these plays in specifically Christian contexts do so to the point of denying the influence of the classical form. Richard Waswo, who explicitly groups Doctor Faustus and Macbeth under the heading of "Christian Tragedy," argues persuasively that they dramatize fears thrust on the contemporary audience by Calvinist doctrine. In valorizing historical context, he also dismisses the

Aristotelian formulation of tragedy as irrelevant (63, 89). Michael Keefer, in identifying Calvin's doctrine of "predestined" reprobation as an ideological index for Faustus's fall, excludes Greek tragedy even more effectively, simply by failing to mention Aristotle or the tragic poets of Attica. From a historicist standpoint, such exclusions may seem justified by the fact that neither the Poetics nor the works of Aischylos, Sophokles, or Euripides were widely circulated in England at the turn of the seventeenth century. If, however, the realization of this kind of drama is judged both "genuinely Christian" and "genuinely tragic" (Waswo 63), then the contexts of the Renaissance re-conception of tragedy must not be allowed to preside wholly over form. On the contrary, the dynamic process of representation which is re-conceived in the tragic falls of Faustus and Macbeth derives much of its urgent force from the ancients' more elemental conception of *hamartia*. A sense of necessity, which the best tragic poems have made immanent in both plot and character from the dawn of Western literature, must be recovered if the "rebirth" of this form in the Renaissance is to be acknowledged *genuine*.

In outlining his perception of "tragic vision" in Doctor Faustus, Richard B. Sewall hits upon an interesting dilemma:

...within the wonder [of the black art] is the terror of its fascination and compulsion, beckoning man into the peculiar dilemma of modern times. On the one hand, is human limitation and finiteness, the necessary postulate and the first step in the Christian experience. On the other, with the old catechism wearing thin, it is the compulsion of modern man to deny his limitations, press even further into the mysteries of a universe which appears steadily to

yield more and more of its secrets to an inquiring mind. (67)

Fittingly, the writing of Marlowe's play occurred in connection with the rebirth of tragedy in the English theatre. The constraints of medieval drama were falling away as something peculiarly modern began to take form; but, as Sewall implies, the "compulsion of modern man" was not singularly "modern" in character. He also claims that "knowledge of the Greek form, to [Renaissance] humanists like Marlowe, must have had a compulsive force of its own" (61).

Sidestepping, for a moment, the problems raised by this last point--which offers no clue as to how Marlowe might have accessed the "Greek form"--Sewall's pairing of compulsion and necessity merits consideration. On the surface this pairing seems antithetical, since Faustus's modern "compulsion" comes into conflict with the "necessity" of human limitations. When, however, one considers that the Greeks regarded compulsion as an aspect of necessity, the tragic form's basis in Greek thought becomes clearer. Depending on the context in which it is used, the word *ἀνάγκη* can denote either *necessity*, conceived as a universal force, or a *compulsion*, designed to fit an individual (Fagles and Stanford 291). In Faustus's case at least, compulsion comes paradoxically, but necessarily, into conflict with human limitations. His tragedy is facilitated by an urgent desire to do what he, as a human being, must not do.

Limitations also confront Macbeth when he first perceives the opportunity to advance his ambitions by committing an

unthinkable crime. On a secular level, the killing of Duncan will violate the terms of his fealty and destroy utterly the basis of his honoured place in society. Beyond that, a stark transgression of God's law will require him to forfeit divine grace and, ultimately, to suffer damnation. Yet Macbeth chooses to sin in pursuit of fulfilment. The witches' prophecies, his wife's persuasions, and the spectral dagger which marshals him to Duncan's chamber all offer him increasingly cogent images of his potential to achieve satisfaction. Where Banquo manages to restrain "the cursed thoughts that nature / Gives way to in repose," Macbeth rises to embrace them. Banquo, after all, is no Macbeth. The fearful truth that the First Witch's words (1. 3. 65) express only in the negative is that Macbeth is, in one tragic respect, greater than his more moderate companion--his ability to perceive, in temptation, the necessity of doing what he must not do creates the basis for a compelling tragedy.

Returning to the issue of the "compulsive force" of Greek tragedy in English Renaissance drama, Sewall's comment does beg the question of how such an influence would have been transmitted to Marlowe. Nowadays, of course, it is uncommon to find Greek tragedy invoked as a literary context for Renaissance tragedy. The plays of Seneca are known to have had a much wider circulation, during the English Renaissance, than the works of Homer or the Attic playwrights (most of whom had not yet been translated into English); and yet Sewall assumes knowledge of the "Greek form." Lacking conclusive evidence of such a knowledge,

or of the lines of transmission that would have enabled it, we may instead consider the pervasiveness of some of the original form's defining qualities.

In the Poetics, Aristotle identifies *muthos* (plot) as "the soul of tragedy" and allows it to have primacy over character (6. § 23. 1, § 20). Significantly though, plot and character are both repeatedly said to be governed by the force of "likelihood or necessity," a provision which makes some *pragmata* ("happenings"; "[plot] developments") more imminent in the tragic *schēma* than others. Commenting on a key passage in §27, which defines the "end" of the tragic action as something which happens necessarily, Whalley speaks of the *internal* or "dramatic" necessity to which the tragic dramatist is bound (76). By definition, nothing happens after the end; and, more importantly, nothing that happened before the end could (necessarily) have developed otherwise (7 §27, 27-31).

If plot is "the soul of tragedy," urgency is at the heart of plot, an elemental characteristic of the tragic design. Aristotle's basic definition of tragedy--a *mimesis* of a serious, end-directed action, employing actors to enact a process of "pity and fear," and thereby to effect a purification of "destructive or painful acts" (6. 24-9)--identifies the fulfilment of certain criteria, themselves subordinate to action, as the means by which the action is defined. Certain goals *need* to be satisfied: character *needs* to be represented by action; actions (*praxeis*) *need* to cause sufferings (*pathēmata*), which, in turn, *need* to be

purged.

In addition to telling us that the *praxis* being represented is *teleia* ("end implying," "complete," and "purposeful" [Whalley]), Aristotle insists that poets should draw protagonists who--

...ἀνάγκη ποιοῦς τινὰς εἶναι κατὰ τὸ ἦθος καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν.

...must necessarily have a certain kind of character and cast of mind.

(6. §19. 1-2 [Trans. Whalley]).

This use of the word *anagkē* (which denotes necessity more emphatically than the related term *dei* [Whalley 96]) is worth noting. It insistently underscores the need for a certain type of protagonist: a morally serious (*spoudaios*) man to perform a morally serious action. As regards the central thrust of this study, the *spoudaios* criterion offers a problematic, but immensely interesting challenge to any assumption of a straightforward cautionary purpose in either Faustus or Macbeth. Waswo infers a moral exclusiveness in Aristotle's formulation and uses it to discourage its application to these plays (63-5). In his view, any awareness of evil or conscious realization of villainy disqualifies a protagonist from Aristotle's norm by identifying him as *phaulos* (a term suggesting "meanness," or "squalor" and directly opposed to *spoudaios* throughout the Poetics).

As I will demonstrate, however, the grave moral implications of the crimes of both Faustus and Macbeth reflect the *necessary*

evil conceived in the Renaissance recontextualization of *hamartia*. Like *katharsis*, *hamartia* is integral to the tragic form. When, as in Faustus and Macbeth, it is re-conceived as "sin," the *katharsis* which it helps realize must evoke a correspondingly forceful sense of evil. By representing an evil potential brought to completion, each play also merges the tragic *dunamis* of the protagonist with certain potentialities which contemporary theatre-goers would have regarded as inherent to all sinners and hence, at least potentially, to themselves.

This much is requisite to an understanding of how the context of *hamartia*'s reconception might have shaped the contemporary reception of these plays; but what of the fearful power that unites them both, in kind, with the ancient tragic forms? As is the case with Sewall's reading, attempts to link ancient conceptions of tragedy with modern ones naturally suggest universalist speculations. Claiming that it is "the privilege of genius" to base sweeping theories on incomplete evidence, Whalley argues that "what Aristotle has to say about tragedy is absolute" (28-9). Bypassing such bold (yet tempting) claims, I assert simply that there is a certain potency, ancient in origin, which rigidly historical readings of Faustus and Macbeth leave unaddressed. The sense of urgency which informs Aristotle's systematic account of tragedy may be accessed, in part, through an engagement of relevant passages in Homer's Iliad. In addition to being the first masterpiece of Western literature, this work is an indispensable literary context for the Poetics.

Like the most daemonic of Homer's heroes, both Faustus and Macbeth are motivated by compulsive drives so strong that they collapse necessity and compulsion in such a manner as to make the unthinkable seem necessary. In doing so, however, they also make the compulsion and necessity of tragedy cohere to facilitate an ineluctable conclusion. Sewall is right to identify "compulsion" as a phenomenon of both ancient and modern significance in the early modern theatre. However, the nature of the older idea's assimilation prompts a distinction: if contemporary fears and ideological conflicts supply Faustus and Macbeth with a poignancy peculiar to the early modern stage, the concept of *anagkē* (a salient force in Greek thought) supplies stark, elemental power.

I. Return Stroke:

***Hamartia* and Moral Dynamism in Poetics. 13**

I have already commented on the usefulness of Waswo's model for reading "Christian tragedy" as a means of addressing some of the difficulties raised by a comparative reading of Dr. Faustus and Macbeth. In this chapter, I will challenge his claim that "Aristotle's formulation of tragedy, involving character and fate" cannot be applied to these plays (63). An attentive consideration of the specific terms Aristotle uses to outline the moral characteristics of the tragic *protagonist* exposes Waswo's reading of Poetics 13 as unduly sententious and exclusive. Part of the reason that Waswo's rejection of the Aristotelian approach falters stems from his failure to engage what Whalley has described as the "morally dynamic" features of Aristotle's axioms for character and decisive action. That Whalley himself stopped short of developing this concept into a longer, more thorough exposition of Aristotle's ideas underscores the need for an extensive engagement of moral dynamism in relation to the sketchier matter of character (an element of tragedy which the discourse on "the poietic art" consistently shuffles into a subordinate position). Through the uncovering of the dynamic nature of the dispositional element of *hamartia*, the complexity and salience of the Aristotelian model may be fully appreciated.

A consideration of the dispositional nature of action also leads conveniently into the exploration of the concept that I

have already identified as the third principle of tragic determinism: the compulsion (ἀνάγκη) of the individual character in tragedy. The amount of importance Aristotle attaches to the matter of the necessary and the likely (ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ τὸ εἰκός) in character draws attention to a much-neglected dispositional aspect of character in tragedy. The acknowledgement of integral links between character (ἦθος) and "likelihood or necessity" also sheds light on Aristotle's complex conception of the tragic protagonist's virtue, or "aptness" as I will attempt to characterize it. The strand of interconnected denotations which draws the positive character-terms of the Poetics together into a roughly coherent ethical system resists the sort of exclusive reading assumed by Waswo's argument while retaining relevance to later conceptions of tragedy.

Waswo focusses his initial discussion of Aristotle's tragic model and its inappropriateness to his own formulation of "Christian tragedy" on the self-consciously sinful deliberations of Faustus and Macbeth. According to his argument, the sufferings which each of these characters undergoes as a result of their guilty choices (if they are to be regarded as such) appear to be "merely the just punishment of bad men," which, Waswo argues "is not tragic." Alternatively, if the two characters' choices are seen as innocent then "their suffering becomes undeserved and its spectacle disgusting" (64). Having made these observations, both of which indicate some engagement with Poetics 13, Waswo launches into a more general critique of

the Aristotelian model, and so doing rejects the moderate, "fourth" character type mentioned by Aristotle:

Aristotle's concept of Hamartia as a mistake committed (preferably unknowingly, as in the case of Oedipus) by a man of average virtue is simply insufficient to allow a properly tragic catastrophe to result from the choices of Faustus and Macbeth. Even more embarrassing, both to Aristotle and to some later theorists, are the consequences of the choices for the heroes: one becomes a childish buffoon, the other a savage killer. With either silliness or fiendishness what sympathy is possible? (Waswo 64)

Regardless of the strengths of the larger argument, this portion of Waswo's discussion fails to provide either a satisfying exposition of Aristotelian theory or an adequate account of the conventions of Attic tragedy--Aristotle's model tragedy-maker, Euripides, contrived to depict both Pentheus (made laughable by the enchantment of the angry god Dionysus) and Hekabe (driven to savage and murderous extremes by the murder of her son) as "properly tragic" protagonists, capable of arousing sympathy.

But these objections are of secondary interest to this portion of the study; issues of how the Aristotelian model may be applied to both Dr. Faustus and Macbeth will be addressed in due course. At this point, the intrinsic logic of Aristotle's own argument needs to be engaged and appreciated. The analytical meat of Waswo's objections is in the alleged restrictiveness of Aristotle's definition, which is understood to rule out both the just punishment of evil men and the undeserved suffering of good men.

The most urgent objections to such a rigidly moral interpretation of Poetics 13 emerge from a cautious reading of

the relevant passages, considering key terms as they appear in the original Greek. Whalley translates the first stipulation thus:

[I]t is clear (a) that *capable* [ἐπικεῖς] men should not be shown *changing from prosperity to disaster* [μεταβάλλοντας φαίνεσθαι ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν] because that is not terrible or pitiful but [simply] *repulsive* [μισαρόν],

(95--un-transliterated Greek words and italics added)

To begin with, the problems raised by the word ἐπικεῖς (the nominative plural of ἐπικτής which Waswo, following convention, translates simply as "good") are more troubling than any reductive interpretation could suggest. Some of these problems arise from perceived discrepancies between the first stipulation regarding character-type in Poetics. 13, and the three stipulations that follow:

and (b) dissolute men [should not be shown changing] from bad to good fortune, because that is the most untragic thing of all--it has none of the requirements [for tragic action] because it doesn't even engage 'sympathy' let alone pity and terror; and again [it is clear] (c) that the thoroughly evil man should not fall from good fortune into bad, for such a scheme would arouse 'sympathy' [perhaps] but not pity and terror (for the one [i.e. pity] is to do with the man brought to disaster undeservedly, the other [i.e. terror] is to do with [what happens to] men like us) and that way the result will be neither pitiful nor terrible. (d) There is still the man in among these, though--the sort of man who is not of outstanding virtue and judgement and who comes upon disaster not through wickedness or depravity but because of some mistake--[one] of those men of great reputation and prosperity like Oedipus and Thyestes--notable men from that kind of family. (95)

The adjective translated as "virtuous," in the fourth stipulation, is *spoudaios*, the term which denotes moral

seriousness throughout the Poetics and serves as an overarching principle, encompassing other "good" character words (including *epieikēs*, *chrēstos*, and *agathos*). Whalley bases his decision to translate the word *epieikēs* as "capable" on the supposition that, if *epieikēs* "is allowed to become a synonym for *spoudaios*, the definition of the *spoudaios* protagonist in (d) fails because the *epieikēs* man of (a) is virtually equivalent" (94). If, with Whalley, we accept the translation of *epieikēs* as "useful," the first of Waswo's objections to Aristotelian readings of Doctor Faustus and Macbeth loses much of its sway--it no longer supports a reading of Faustus and Macbeth as innocents subjected to unjust suffering (if such a reading had ever actually been likely in the first place). Yet it is not necessary to raise such philological caveats to uncover a serious weakness in Waswo's reading of the passage. Whereas Waswo's paraphrase of the first stipulation lists "undeserved suffering" as a repellent spectacle in drama, Aristotle's comments, regarding "pity and terror" indicate that it is precisely the undeservedness of the protagonist's suffering which arouses feelings of *ἔλεος* (pity).

Unfortunately, the observation of the positive function of "undeserved suffering" in Aristotle's formulation does little to resolve the issue of exactly what the word *epieikēs* denotes in this passage. For several reasons, I remain unconvinced that either Waswo's reductive translation of the term or Whalley's interpretive use is entirely satisfactory. To begin with, both commentators (and apparently a long line of translators) ignore

one of the common meanings of the term as an adjective applied to people. Liddel and Scott list the words "fair," "kind," and "moderate" as uses of *epieikēs* pertaining to persons and, more revealingly, cite *δίκαιος* as an antonym (Liddel & Scott, s. v. *ἐπιεικής*). Given that *δίκαιος* implies an "insistence on strict justice," the opposing of the two terms lends credence to a reading of *epieikēs* as "moderate." For reasons outlined below, the contention that tragedy should not depict "moderate men changing from prosperity to disaster" seems reasonable in the context of Poetics 13. The fact that this translation poses no difficulties to the definition of the *spoudaios* protagonist makes it an even more attractive alternative to "good" or "capable."

That is not to say that Whalley's translation of *epieikēs* is completely baseless--the fact that the term *chrēstos* (which strongly connotes "capability") denotes the tragic protagonist's worth in Chapter 14 supports an allied reading of *epieikēs*. This sensibility seems also to inform Whalley's translation of *agathon*, as it appears in Poetics 15 (p. 109), as "capable." At any rate, Whalley's point that Aristotle's use of *epieikēs* in Chapter 13 could not simply mean "good" is, in itself, damaging to Waswo's reading of the first of the four points regarding character.

Waswo's other objection, based on the Aristotelian principle that the "just punishment of bad men...is not tragic" (Waswo. 64) is, of course, more difficult to deflect. Of the two principles

the critic cites as being in direct conflict with the "Christian tragedies" of Faustus and Macbeth, the reading of these characters as "bad" (μοχθηρός or πονηρός) is more likely to be applied to the two Renaissance protagonists. In this case, it is tempting to extend Whalley's strategy of tracing out a network of interconnected meanings among the positive character terms to the interpretation of the negative terms. As mentioned above, his treatments of Aristotle's positive moral terms acknowledge the encompassing capacity of the word *spoudaios*. Commenting on the meaning of *phaulos*, Whalley observes that it is "not devoid of a hint of squalor" and alludes approvingly to Else's rendering of *phaulos* as "no-account" (50). Traces of "squalor" and "meanness" are evident in Liddell & Scott's definitions for both *mochthēros* and *ponēros*: the former may mean "wretched" while the latter, even taken in a moral sense, may mean "worthless" (453, 577). Even so, Whalley favours a morally-charged treatment of both words, translating *mochthēros* as "depraved" and *ponēros* as "thoroughly evil" (95). Admittedly, the interpretation of *ponēros* as denoting something to the effect of "wicked" or "evil" is hard to ignore. The pejorative weight of this term, in its most familiar moral sense, is greater than that of *phaulos* and, for this reason, it cannot prudently be reduced to the level of mere "worthlessness."

Given the strongly negative moral connotations of *ponēros*, then, Waswo's morally exclusive reading of Poetics 13 seems, on the surface, partly justified. It follows that carefully

substantiated readings of Faustus and Macbeth as *ponēroi* protagonists would pose grave difficulties to Aristotelian readings of their respective tragedies. When, however, the two contested points in *Poetics* 13 are read in light of other key passages in the *Poetics*, the moral dynamic of Aristotle's model comes tightly into focus. The first of these passages, appearing midway through Chapter 15, sheds new light on the possible meaning (or meanings) of *epieikēs*:

Since tragedy is a mimesis of people better than us, you should follow good portrait painters; while they make likenesses by giving the 'true shape' [of their subjects] they also paint them better-looking (more beautiful); so the poet, when he is representing men [who are] hot-tempered or easy-going or with any other such [idiosyncracies], he should make them like that [certainly, but at the same time] 'capable' men (*epieikēs*), the way Homer made Achilles [both] able (*agathos*) and <human>. (108-9).

Aristotle's insistence that a poet should make his mimesis of the aristocratic tragic protagonist (a *βελτίων*, or "better" man) "*epieikēs*, the way Homer made Achilles" belies his earlier use of *epieikēs*, regardless of which translation is favoured. If the use of *epieikēs* in 13 is taken simply to mean "good" and this meaning is assumed to remain consistent between the two passages, then there appears to be an inconsistency in Aristotle's reasoning: how can the tragic protagonist be both necessarily *epieikēs* (as per the use in 15) and necessarily not so (as the stipulation in 13 suggests)?

Returning to the earlier passage, I offer two tentative solutions to this problem. Firstly, given Chapter 13's emphasis

on *hamartia* as the cause of the protagonist's fall from "prosperity to disaster," it could be argued that the purpose of the first stipulation (πρῶτον μὲν δῆλον ὅτι οὔτε τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς ἄνδρας δεῖ μεταβάλλοντας φαίνεσθαι ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν) is to bolster the behavioral element of the "big mistake." In other words, a protagonist should not be shown merely "changing" [μεταβάλλοντας] from good fortune to bad, but actively causing his own downfall through error. This argument is, however, undermined by the importance Aristotle attaches to the spectacle of undeserved suffering as a source of pity; the protagonist, although active and morally dynamic will inevitably be subjected to unintended and undeserved consequences of his own *hamartia*. Alternatively, it may be argued that Aristotle is simply employing two distinctive uses of *epieikēs*, the second of which is qualified by its application to Achilles (who is, as Whalley notes, "a model of stubbornness" [109]). The types of actions which could be deemed "apt" and "fitting" for a high-born figure like Achilles would differ from those of an average, moderate man who was *epieikēs* without being *beltiōn*. The interpretation of *epieikēs* as a flexible term which takes on a special significance when applied to the tragic protagonist strikes me as the most reasonable, and it is this definition I will refer to for the remainder of this section.

Before proceeding with my discussion of *epieikēs* as a characteristic of the morally dynamic tragic hero, I will return

briefly to the issue of *ponēros* as a potentially damaging label for a certain type of dramatic figure. On this topic, it is interesting to note that one critic accepted the third character-type listed in Poetics 13 as partly tragic (arousing everything but "pity") and applied it to the figure of Macbeth. In outlining the tragic and emotional form of Macbeth, R. S. Crane characterizes it as falling between "the contrasting plot-forms embodied respectively in Othello and Richard III." Crane identifies the first of these plot-forms with "the classic sense of Aristotle's analysis in Poetics 13"; while distinguishing the second as "a plot-form which Aristotle rejected as non-tragic but which appealed strongly to the tragic poets in the Renaissance" (170). Although I am reluctant to dispute Crane's claim that Richard III is not fully tragic in the Aristotelian sense, I wonder if such a tidy distinction can be made between these two "plot-forms."

The distinction which Crane draws between the ambiguously tragic Macbeth and the properly tragic Othello hinges on his claim that the former commits acts which are "unlike Othello's killing of Desdemona--[done] in full knowledge of their moral character" (171). In addition to de-emphasizing the grave moral failings which incite Othello's *hamartia*, this portion of Crane's argument fails to consider that the "[morally] unjust" results of Macbeth's decision might occur *per accidens*. Even so, the ensuing attempt to account for the problematic tragedy of Macbeth includes a comment of surprising shrewdness and (for the purposes

of this inquiry) usefulness:

[T]he essential story of Macbeth is that of man, not naturally depraved, who has fallen under the compulsive power of an imagined better state for himself which he can attain only by acting contrary to his normal habits and feelings; who attains this state and then finds that he must continue to act thus, and even worse, in order to hold on to what he has got; who persists and becomes progressively hardened morally in the process; and who then, ultimately, when the once alluring good is about to be taken away from him, faces the loss in terms of what is left of his original character. (172)

This piece of commentary provides an apt introduction to the moral dynamism of Macbeth's tragic career, and a strong hint at why the third stipulation of Poetics 13 should not be applied as rigidly as Waswo's approach suggests.

And yet Crane's "structural formula" for Macbeth is also somewhat over-formulated and in need of qualification. On the one hand, the diagnosis of a "compulsive power" which is distinct from an intrinsic state of "natural depravity" displays the sort of flexibility needed here and even the idea of a character "acting contrary to his normal habits" is acceptably even-handed—inasmuch as "normal habits" implies *customary practices* rather than *intrinsic character* (an overly rigid reading of *ἦθος*). On the other hand, Crane's speculation about what tendencies might constitute Macbeth's "normal" feelings seems to imply that virtuous feelings and purposes are somehow more native to the protagonist's character than evil ones. At risk of engaging Macbeth's tragic purpose too directly, too early in this project, I will here offer a tentative account of why his character does

not fit the rejected fourth type in Poetics 13: although Macbeth's *hamartia* involves both an evil intent and an evil act, his wickedness (the quality of being *ponēros*) cannot be identified exclusively with character, but instead takes form from a processive interaction of disposition, behaviour, and situation.

As with Dr. Faustus, the application of Aristotelian theory to Macbeth does not require a modification of the Poetics; on the contrary, it will, if successfully executed, demonstrate the flexibility of the ancient theory. But, once again, these assertions are premature. Before the Renaissance texts can be adequately examined, the earliest axioms for tragedy must be more thoroughly sounded-out. To appreciate the sort of compulsive force which the ancients envisaged as existing on the individual level, we must attempt a definition of *anagkē* which encompasses necessity as both a universal force and a personal drive. Although this line of inquiry leads inevitably to the tragic compulsion of Achilles in the Iliad, it would be useful to return to Aristotle at this point. Commenting on the importance of "likelihood or necessity" in tragedy, he writes:

Χρὴ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἡθεσιν ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων συστάσει
ἀεὶ ζητεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ τὸ εἰκός, ὥστε τὸν τοιοῦτον τὰ τοιαῦτα
λέγειν ἢ πράττειν ἢ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ εἰκός καὶ τοῦτο γίνεσθαι ἢ
ἀναγκαῖον ἢ εἰκός. (56--in the Loeb series text)

Whalley's translation of this passage reads:

In [shaping] of character, as also in the putting together of the events [in a plot], you must always seek [to get an effect] either of the necessary or the likely, so that [it will appear] either necessary or

likely that that sort of person would say or do that sort of thing, in the same way that [in a plot] it is necessary or likely that this [particular thing] should happen after that. (111)

In this portion of his discussion, Aristotle attaches importance to character which, surprisingly, is conceived as exerting influence over action. That Aristotle should praise consistency in character comes as no great shock, in light of his comments in 15 (1454^a25, 26), but the mere suggestion that a character's actions should unfold according to a consistent *ēthos* may seem to belie the philosopher's maxim "we become what we do." In fact, it does not. The excursus on "the likely and the necessary" strongly implies the need to depict a tragic *ἥξις*: a "settled state of character" or "disposition [to act in a certain way]." A full consideration of how Aristotle's dual emphasis on character-forming action and action-forming character may be appreciated without contradiction prompts a brief survey of the tragic career of Homer's *epieikēs* hero Achilles.

Given Achilles's reticent behaviour throughout two-thirds of the *Iliad*--he retires into self-imposed exile from the end of Book 1 until the beginning of Book 18--the hero may seem an unlikely model for tragic compulsion. As the poet must have realised, however, it is precisely the ambivalence of Achilles's character, ingrained by tradition and fleshed out in monumental verse, which makes him an ideal protagonist. Whalley correctly argues that, however inevitable the tragic protagonist's fall may appear, the character is never "simply propelled, is not a mere

victim" in the grand sweep of the tragic *praxis* (25). Being morally dynamic consists partly in having a range of moral choices, and a skilful tragic poet will interpose deeds and happenings (both of which are suggested by the Greek word *πράγματα*) to the extent that determinism and individual deliberation become thoroughly interconnected.

An attentive reading of Achilles's own articulation of his choice, in light of other relevant passages, casts some interesting light on these issues. When confronted by the entreaties of an embassy sent by Agamemnon to lure Achilles back to battle in Book 9, the hero responds:

μήτηρ γάρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
 διχθαδίας κήρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλοσδε.
 εἰ μέν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχομαι,
 ὤλετο μέν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται·
 εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
 ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δῆρδ' ὃν δέ μοι αἰὼν
 ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ' ὤκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη.

[For] my mother, divine, shining-footed Thetis tells me / that I bear a divided fate toward my end in death. / If, remaining here, I continue to fight around the city of the Trojans, I wipe out [the possibility of] my homecoming, yet I will have undying fame. / If I go homeward to my beloved Fatherland, / I negate my noble glory, but my lifetime [will be] long / nor would death assail me too swiftly.

([l. 410-16 [My translation]]).

Achilles's identification of the two-fold fate which he bears

θανάτοιο τέλοσδε (literally: endward to death) highlights the peculiarity of his own position as a professed free agent.

Before his quarrel with Agamemnon and angry departure from battle, he had been engaged in the pursuit of his first option:

to earn undying glory by fighting until his death in the war against Troy. When he delivers his famous speech at 9: 410-16, however, he has altered his disposition to favour the second choice of an inglorious homecoming. If it can be assumed that Achilles actually does have a choice in determining his own fate, the popular translation of *θανάτιο τέλοςδε* as "the day of my death" (Lattimore 209) appears suspect--since any actual "day" would, of course, vary with the choice.

At any rate, it would be improper to describe Achilles's temporary reversal of his original choice as an uncharacteristic action. Even as he chooses to abandon his original plan, he is further characterizing himself, sounding out his own moral dynamism. And the choice that he makes is (in keeping with Whalley's formula) a moral one: in choosing to abandon his friends in a time of need he chooses his own concern for honour (*τιμή*) over the opposed ethical concept of shame-motivated duty (*αἰδώς*). The second of these is equal in its importance to Greek ethics and more morally-charged than *timē*. The full moral import of Achilles's choice can only be grasped in light of other passages in the poem. The fact that the choice will, in light of later developments, be exposed as a *hamartia* is obviously of primary concern here. As early as the end of Book 9, however, an important clue about Achilles's role as an active agent in a pre-ordained schema of events is offered by Diomedes. Seeking to console Agamemnon and the other Greek leaders about

Achilleus's continued obstinacy, he advises them to leave the warrior to his own devices and speculates that:

He [Achilleus] will fight again, whenever the time
comes
that the heart in his body urges him and the god
drives him.

(I. 702-3 [Lattimore Trans.]).

The language Diomedes uses to express this statement is particularly revealing. His scarcely-qualified use of the future indicative (μαχήσεται--"he will fight") where one might expect to find a *future more vivid* construction of a conditional clause, indicates that he believes it is only a matter of time until Achilleus returns.

Diomedes's choice of the word *anōgēi* ("would urge") imparts a sense of urgency eclipsing agency. Autenrieth's Homeric Dictionary lists ἄγγω ("to strangle") as a possible cognate word for *anōgē*, as it appears in the Homeric poems. With this connection in mind, it is no great stretch to connect *anōgēi* to *anakgē*, a widely-accepted cognate of *agchō*. Even if this connection is rejected as overly-speculative, *anōgē* retains a strongly determinative sense. It is also the kind of reasoning which Diomedes had used to characterize his own heroic drives. In refusing his comrade Sthenelos's offer to prepare his chariot for a speedy escape from a dangerous encounter, he had said: "It ill-befits my high-born blood [οὐ γάρ μοι γενναῖον] too shrink from fighting," and added "Pallas Athene [would] not let me flee" (E. 253, 256). This combination of character determining action and

divine influence complicates any notion of a hero like Diomedes exercising free-will. But that is not to say that he is a mere projectile of a larger deterministic scheme. As the individualized notion of compulsion conveyed by the proverbial expression Διομήδεος ἀνάγκη suggests (perhaps coincidentally), an individual hero may have an urgent personal sense of what sort of behaviour is necessary.

This seems also to be the case with Achilles. Almost immediately after he learns of Patroklos's death he renews his original decision to die fighting at Troy, with a compulsive fervour. Achilles also confirms Diomedes's prediction in Book 9, when he tells his mother Thetis:

As it is, there must be on your heart a numberless
sorrow
for your son's death, since you can never again
receive him
won home again to his country; **since the spirit within
does not drive me
to go on living and be among men**, except on the
condition
that Hektor first be beaten down under my spear, lose
his life
and pay the price for stripping Patroklos, the son of
Menoitios. (Σ. 88-93)

Taken in isolation, Achilles words "the spirit within does not drive me [οὐδ' ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἄνωγε] / to go on living among men" might actually seem to contradict Diomedes's prediction. If it is the lack, rather than the presence, of compulsion which is understood to drive Achilles to forsake his life in pursuit of vengeance, the urgency of the heroic drive to act seems diminished. Yet the incontestable fact is that Achilles has been driven, by an

unforeseen contingency, to realign himself on a critical path of action. He identifies the killing of Hektor as the contingency whose projected fulfilment sustains his desire to live in the present. Fittingly, Achilles's resolve to avenge Patroklos holds, until he has killed Hektor in Book 22, and even after he has accomplished the deed he shows little concern for the consequences of his choice.

In spite of its strongly deterministic character, individual compulsion remains subject to contingency (*pragmata*--including the actions of other characters and happenings which occur independently of human influence). Hence, when Zeus weighs the two fates of Achilles and Hektor, as the fateful moment of their final duel approaches, the *δύο κῆρε* (210) in the pans are necessarily unbalanced. The potentialities of Hektor's own career have been cut short by Achilles's decision to return to battle. Whereas two possibilities had existed in the recent past, the inevitability of Hektor's fall now appears to have been set from the beginning; the anticipated spectacle of his death becomes more and more vivid until it is embodied by actual events. The accomplishment of this necessary deed, which climaxes the *Iliad*'s dramatic action, also marks the nexus of two types of *anagkē*: the skein of interconnected events which facilitates the final duel between the two great heroes and the tragic *hexis* of Achilles's character which makes any other response to Patroklos's death unthinkable.

Achilles is *epieikēs* in more ways than one. He is not only

"capable"--a designation which encompasses his status as a man of consequence, in an important position in society--but also "apt." His heroic disposition to act in a certain manner is not unconditional but is, evidently, subject to outside influences such as his clash with Agamemnon in Book 1. He commits his *hamartia* with some awareness of its moral import but (to state a crucial point) without a clear appreciation of its ultimate result. To put it another way, he understands the efficient cause of his decision to withdraw (realising that his willful abandonment of his friends will cause them suffering) without grasping the cause *per accidens* (that his denial of *φιλία* will provide occasion for the killing of his most beloved friend Patroklos). And yet Achilles is an apt protagonist. When finally he accepts responsibility for Patroklos's death (Σ. 98-100), his inclination to pursue the heroic course of action reasserts itself as he responds to a new impetus in the only manner acceptable to him. The disclosure of critical new *pragmata* addresses his **particular** condition and urges him (in accordance with Diomedes's prediction) to "fight again." Thus, the tragic protagonist's "aptness" consists in flexibility rather than intransigence, or inherent states of virtue or depravity. If such protagonists are subject to the compulsive forces, generated and directed at them by the tragic *praxis*, they respond to these forces as only *epieikeis* men would.

The actions and transactions of Achilles's career imply a link between tragic "aptness" (or "aptitude") and what is likely

(*eikos*) in character, and indeed, the adjective *epieikēs* implies "plausible" as well as "capable." It is tempting to cite *anagkē* as a term which denotes individual compulsion in the same way that *epieikēs* denotes individual likelihood (or tendency conceived on an individual level). In any event, Aristotle's own comments regarding "likelihood or necessity" attach a definite importance to the dispositional aspect of dramatic determinism, making the aptness of the protagonist a crucial element of a successful tragedy. If this emphasis is to be maintained in an expository reading of the Poetics, however, the tendencies of individual characters must be understood as *dynamic* [a collection of strong potentialities] rather than inherent, or even latent.

The dynamic process of the tragic *praxis*, with its binding-together of internal and external determinants, finds a striking analogy in the familiar natural process of an air-to-ground lightning strike (a familiar phenomenon, but one which is inaccurately constructed in the popular imagination). Although traditionally envisioned as striking downward from the sky to the earth, a visible bolt of lightning actually represents the culmination of a reflexive discharge of potential energy between a thundercloud and the ground. When the charge separation between a negatively-charged cloud and the surface of the earth (positively-charged, relative to the cloud) becomes sufficient to cause a high-current discharge in the air, an invisible current of energy called a "stepped leader" moves earthward in discrete steps. As the stepped leader approaches the earth, another

invisible leader emerges from the earth to meet it. Only when the two charges connect, does the visible "bolt" of lightning (called the "return stroke") appear, surging up from the ground toward the sky. Further strokes, originating from the same discharge of potential difference which had caused the return stroke continue to flash into the visible sphere, until the charge in the cloud has dissipated.

Though, for obvious reasons, this parallel should not be taken to suggest that Aristotle had a modern meteorologists's understanding of atmospheric phenomena, the close correspondences illustrate the dynamic and organic nature of his theory. The positive charge of the ground parallels the tragic *hexis* of the protagonist whose deeds (*πράξεις*) actualize the particular, dispositional aspects of his character. Although the charge separation in the cloud may be considered more essential to the process than the positive charge of the ground, the charge-separation, with its dual discharge of potential energy, is not possible without both contingencies occurring in unison. Similarly, the dissipation of the negative charge in the cloud provides a striking analogy to the achievement of *katharsis*, a process which closely accompanies the trajectory of the *praxis* toward its conclusion. The possibilities which align and animate the protagonist's tragic *hexis* are likewise dynamized into actual *energeia* and (ultimately) purged in the *telos* of the drama.

I have, up to this point, been careful to emphasize the dispositional component of individual action, as outlined in the

Poetics. In recent years, classicists working with Aristotelian theory have tended to do the opposite, emphasizing the behavioral and situational aspects of concepts such as *hubris* and *hamartia* to compensate for the undue emphasis which had earlier been placed on the deliberative and dispositional aspects. Hence, *hamartia* is now widely agreed to denote an "error" rather than a "flaw." While Aristotle's text provides substantial grounds for this particular distinction, the current stress on physical actuality has prompted some notable excesses [witness Douglas Cairns's critique of N. R. E. Fisher's study of "hybris," on the grounds that it attaches undue importance to the behavioral component of *hubris*]. In spite of my attempts to counter any such tendency to over-compensate for past excesses by re-emphasizing the dispositional in my own readings, I do regard external determinants and actual deeds (*pragmata* within the tragic *praxis*) as being more essential to the tragic process than settled states of character.

A passage appearing later in the Poetics confirms the primacy Aristotle accords to action as an actual exposition of character. Although *hexeis* (dispositions, settled states of character) **do** exist theoretically, as the dispositional components of actual deeds, they remain more or less hypothetical until they have been "bodied forth" (to borrow Whalley's term) by the behavioral component of action--as Aristotle observes, in his discussion of tradition as a determinant in tragedy:

[W]hat is possible is certainly plausible: we are not

actually certain that what has not yet happened *is* possible, but [we are certain] that what has happened obviously is possible, for [(we may say)] it doesn't happen if it can't happen (Poetics 83).

Extending this thread of Aristotle's logic to the subject of decisive action, it follows that only those dispositions which are objectified ἐν τῷ φανερῷ provide definite representations of character.

The purpose of the preceding discussion of tragic *hexis*, with an eye on the larger study, has been twofold: firstly, to sound out Aristotle's concept of the *epieikēs* protagonist in such a way as to display its moral flexibility and capacity to represent character in a state of *praxis*-motivated transition; and, secondly, to create the basis for a classically-informed reading of two particularly apt tragic heroes of the English Renaissance. This model of the dynamic interrelation between character and incident, with actual action as their uniting principle, supports suitably even-handed readings of both Dr. Faustus and Macbeth. These are plays in which unthinkable sacrifices and cruel transactions interact to create tragic spectacle which shocks the audience without excluding them--the issue of how both Faustus and Macbeth appear compulsive and even demonic in their pursuits without ever losing their universal (and ultimately *human*) appeal will, accordingly, figure in the next two sections.

II. *Matter to a Pernicious Error:*
Compulsion and Predestination in Doctor Faustus

i. Preliminary Considerations

In describing what he judged to be the failings of the twelfth century theologian Peter Lombard, Calvin identified this writer's failure "to distinguish necessitie from compulsion" as having given "matter to a pernicious error" (Keefer lxvi.). Calvin's term "pernicious error" provides as good a byword as any for the tragic *hamartia* and his accusation, as a whole, sheds light on the nature of Faustus's particular error. In addition to confounding Hell in Elysium, Marlowe's hero confounds necessity and compulsion in a grandly classical manner; he fails to distinguish between what *he must do* and *what is necessary*, and thus contravenes God's Law to serve his own ambition.

The distinction which Calvin draws between necessity and compulsion is obviously of primary significance to this study, and the tentative explanation I have offered for the source of Faustus's error implies a straightforward acceptance of this principle. As Keefer has demonstrated, however, many of the central precepts of Calvinistic orthodoxy rely on the practice of equivocation. Calvin's construction of necessity and compulsion as distinct determinants may, accordingly, represent a containment move, intended to deflect a common criticism of his doctrine: that recognition of the absolute dominance of God's

will might be understood to absolve human beings of moral accountability for their actions. This point also recommends itself for primary consideration in the mapping out of Faustus's agency in the process of his own damnation. For this reason, Alan Sinfield's observation that the acceptance of Calvinism as a historical context for Doctor Faustus prompts considerations about whether "Marlowe's Faustus is not damned because he is wicked, but wicked because he is damned" (14 [cited in Keefer 200]) informs my own engagement of the issue.

To restate my earlier description of Faustus's *hamartia* in more specific terms: Faustus fails to distinguish between what *he must do* and *what he would have been required to do if he were to have achieved salvation*. In my restatement of the second phrase, I have replaced the present indicative with a doubly-subjunctive conditional phrase to indicate the merely theoretical character of Faustus's alternatives. Any scenario detailing Faustus's potential for repentance and salvation must, for lack of substantiation by actual events in the play, remain theoretical. Similarly, if the dominance of God's intention is deemed "absolute," then Faustus's compulsion and the necessity of his damnation appear to be separate, but not exclusive, categories of divine will.

The fact that no vivid representations of the accessibility of God's grace are offered to Faustus (at least in the A text) lends partial credence to Sinfield's comment, while setting the more vivid, more compelling character of his fall in bold relief.

As I hope to demonstrate, Marlowe's hero finds a more compelling reflection of self in the infernal (and invariably classical) images which he conjures from Hell. From the outset of his career, to its ineluctable end, he strives for resolution of self, a need which entails an ironic dissolution of body and soul.

ii. "Career Decisions" and Other *Problēmata*

One of the central problems confronting an argument which interprets Faustus's tragic career in strongly deterministic terms arises from a consideration of the extent to which the hero's fall is contingent on his early deliberations. Waswo's approach differs from my own in its focus on the deliberative phases in the tragic falls of both Faustus and Macbeth. Waswo's discussion of the care that both Marlowe and Shakespeare take to depict their heroes "in the conscious act of choosing to commit a particular [morally horrifying] action" (63) makes these tragic careers contingent on decisive action (a plot element whose "decisiveness" implicitly frees it from necessity and compulsion). Revealingly, Waswo goes so far as to defend Calvin's argument that "the doctrine of 'predestined' reprobation leaves man free to damn himself;" (81). Although this particular statement finds Waswo arguing in the same syllogistic mode previously employed in Calvin's own writings, his emphasis on deliberation is, admittedly, difficult to refute. As I hope to

demonstrate, through an informed reconsideration of Dr. Faustus, Acts 1 and 2, the early stages of the play depict the hero's progress along the tragic path as progressing *in full career* from the beginning; even Faustus's occasional wavering of purpose does not mark a true divergence from this path.

As before, Whalley's construction of moral dynamism, along with the images he employs to elucidate this aspect of Aristotle's tragic model, shed light on the paradoxes of determinism which characterize Marlowe's tragedy. Fittingly, this extrapolation on ancient theory draws much of its salience from an acknowledgement of paradox:

To achieve the precise end, a precise action is needed. We could think of the tragic action as a sort of trajectory traced by a projectile, implying a certain amplitude, direction, velocity, momentum, target, and that in every moment of flight all these terms are implied. (25)

In emphasizing the importance of the protagonist as a *specific* tragic projectile, Whalley adds that the protagonist "makes choices, determines the flight, is not simply propelled, is not a mere victim" (25). While, to my notion, Whalley's argument allows the protagonist too much in the way of free agency--his claim that the tragic action "can at no point be predicted for certain" (25) belies Aristotle's discussion of tradition at Poetics 9. 15-8--it does provide an acceptably dynamic model for action taking form within action. It follows that an accurate account of Faustus's deliberations (some of which seem to diverge from the critical path leading to his fall) must allow a certain

channel for lateral movement within the predetermined trajectory.

Before preceding further, I should say a little more to place this portion of my discussion in the context of the larger argument. In seeking a comprehensive account of the role of compulsion in tragic *schēmata*, I have already challenged Waswo's rejection of the Aristotelian model. Though, at certain points, I have also taken issue with Whalley's reading of the *Poetics*, I find his reconstruction of tragic determinism more satisfying. My reasons for choosing a classically-based model over Waswo's application of historical context stem from my own perception of basic issues concerning free will and necessity. As mentioned above, Waswo's defence of the doctrine of predestined reprobation (in its attribution of moral responsibility to the sinner) unfairly acquits the God of Calvinist doctrine of ultimate accountability for the sinner's fall. More importantly, it denies the importance of certain localized forms of an all-encompassing divine agenda which prevent the instrumental agents of that agenda from acting in a truly voluntary manner. Admittedly, it would be imprudent to attempt to prove a negative statement to the effect that "Faustus, as a character whose fate is predetermined can perform no genuinely deliberative actions." Such an argument would risk neglecting the very paradoxes of will and necessity which supply tragedy with much of its ironic tension. I do, however, maintain that Faustus's decisions are never wholly (or even substantially) separate from either external / cosmological determinants or his own non-deliberative

sense of urgency.

The most convincing strand of Waswo's argument centres on his exposition of a type of sin (of which there were six varieties) identified by Thomas Aquinas as being "sins against the Holy Ghost." Citing passages in Summa Theologica (II-II. xiv. 1-2), Waswo characterizes sins of this category as being particularly grave, due to their capacity to deprive the sinner of the means to obtain pardon. As he further notes, English Protestants collapsed the sins grouped under Aquinas's doctrine--despair, presumption, impenitence, obstinacy, resisting known truth, and envy of others' spiritual good--into a generalized notion of sinning against conscience(75). This point offers some useful insights into why Faustus, in particular, might not actually be able to repent after he has consigned his soul to Lucifer. The actual signing of the pact, the activation of pernicious error through action, marks a *point of no-return* for Faustus; on this issue Waswo's argument is convincing. Yet, in spite of this, it also seems to ignore the fact that the Faustus's particular "sin against the Holy Ghost" is shown to exist *in potentia* from the beginning of the play, and probably before then. The sheer urgency of this potential--bolstered by compulsive desire and animated by the hero's capability--elevates it to the level of a tragic *dunamis*, whose fulfilment is imminent in the play's tragic design.

A peculiar pattern emerges from an informed reading of the first half of Doctor Faustus (which I hold to be the scenes

leading up to what is traditionally marked as the beginning of Act 3). It begins to take shape when Faustus, whose divinely "conspir'd" fall has already been announced in the Prologue (22), is shown listing out what appears to be a series of career options. One after the other, he considers and then rejects logic, medicine, law, and divinity, in each case offering a disdainful reason for his rejection: logic affords "no greater miracle" than skill in disputing (1.1. 6-10); medicine stops short of offering an escape from mortality (23-6); law is ultimately concerned with "external trash"; and divinity, at least as Faustus portrays it, presents only distancing, disheartening contradictions (39-48).

The sequence of farewells, of course, ends in a confirmation of necromancy as the one profession which offers Faustus any means of transgressing human limitations:

O, what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honor, of omnipotence,
Is promis'd to the studious artisan!
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings
Are but obey'd in their several provinces,
Nor can they raise the wind, or rend the clouds;
But his dominion that exceeds in this
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man!
A sound magician is a mighty god:
Here tire, my brains, to get a deity!

(1.1. 54-64).¹

These lofty statements have in common a disdain for mortal

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Unless otherwise noted, all citations from Doctor Faustus follow Michael Keefer's 1604 (A text) edition. As Keefer argues, the A text invites a strongly deterministic reading more readily than the B text, whose alterations obscure "many of the questions which the A text raises about the nature of the God who presides over Faustus's damnation" (xv).

limits--the very sentiment which had characterized Faustus's earlier rejection of legitimate professions. Assuming that Faustus has considered the career option of conjuring before, the fact that his rejection of the other four professions is, in each case, predicated on a reference to the same principle which now recommends magic is telling. It obliges one to wonder whether the entire speech is not more a rhetorical exercise than a voicing of actual deliberation.

What Marlowe depicts in Faustus's opening soliloquy is not an actual weighing of career decisions, but rather the crystallization of a crucial point in a downward-tending career. Having outgrown the possibilities afforded by traditional occupations, Faustus quite literally has nowhere to go but down. But this observation is beside the point; the larger significance of the scene lies in its effective dramatization of a particular tragic *dunamis* advancing from one discrete stage of its career to another.

No sooner is one potential instance of deliberation discarded than two more leap into view. The first of these *problēmata* (with regard to a strong determinist reading of the opening scenes) comes with the entrance of the Good Angel and the Evil Angel, immediately after Faustus has instructed Wagner to admit Valdes and Cornelius into his study. Addressing Faustus first, the Good Angel seeks to halt his progress into sin, by voicing an interdict:

O Faustus, lay that damned book aside,

And gaze not on it, lest it tempt thy soul
 And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head!
 Read, read the Scripture; that is blasphemy.

(71-4)

This certainly sounds like good advice, and a modern reader with some foreknowledge of the play's conclusion might feel the tension created by the offer of penitence as an alternative to damnation. As Keefer has observed, though, the Good Angel's speech echoes Faustus's own syllogistic rejection, at 1.1. 39-49, of the conditional promises of divine mercy in Romans 6: 23 and 1 John 1: 8-9. Where the New Testament passages balance admonitions to a sinful humanity with offers of divine grace and the possibility of salvation, neither Faustus nor the Good Angel makes any mention of grace or election (Keefer 1-11, and 7,9 n.). The Good Angel's speech then is more a confirmation of Faustus's tragic *hexis* than a interdiction against it. The Evil Angel likewise addresses Faustus's condition (to borrow a term regularly used in meetings of the Society of Friends), echoing his words at 54-64, and prompting the visionary outburst that begins the next soliloquy:

How am I glutted with conceit of this!
 Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
 Resolve me of all ambiguities,
 Perform what desperate enterprise I will? (80-3).

The hero's desire to be *resolved* of all ambiguities carries a double force here. Firstly, it communicates the obvious sense [the word] "resolve" would have had in this context, in Marlowe's time--a desire to be "satisfied" or "answered" (OED 2. XIII. 723-4) of ambiguities in nature, unknowable except through the agency

of spirits. Secondly, and more profoundly, it expresses a need to achieve a resolution of purpose, to be confirmed, as it were, in a mode of activity peculiar to him.

On the meaning of "resolve," and its many cognates in Faustus, more will be said presently; for now it serves to preface Faustus's meeting with Valdes and Cornelius. Here again, we are presented with an apparent exercise of contingency, exerting an oddly non-determinative influence on the protagonist. W. W. Greg dismisses Valdes and Cornelius as two undistinguished conjurers acting effectively as the Devil's decoys (98-9 [cf. Nosworthy 210]). Even though this point glosses over the First Scholar's opinion that the conjurers are "infamous throughout the world" (1.2. 31 [29 in B1]), Greg's identification of their mere instrumentality is worth considering. Undeniably, Valdes and Cornelius nudge Faustus--a professed *corpus mobile* (1.2. 18-9)--further into his career, by instructing him on procedures essential to the necromantic art. The problem that their influence poses to a coherent reading of Faustus's predetermined career once again suggests the paradox of "career decisions" (apparent vacillations of purpose within a predetermined *schēma* of action)--if Faustus is, as I have argued, already locked onto a path of action entailing sin and self-destruction, then why does Marlowe find it necessary to have tempters spurring him on in his purpose? My answer to this, in contrast to Greg's point, is that Valdes and Cornelius do act effectively, but not as "decoys." They work to energize further an already determined

dunamis, by effecting changes on which Faustus's progress into the "damned art" of necromancy is contingent.

Valdes identifies another contingency, by appending the condition "If learned Faustus will be resolute" (1.1. 134) to his catalogue of the privileges Faustus stands to gain as a potential necromancer. The terseness with which Faustus responds to this condition ("Valdes, as resolute am I in this / As thou to live, therefore object it not" [134-5]) confirms his own trust in his resolution. As will be seen, the solidity of this trust, at this point in the action, strengthens Faustus's consistency as the sort of hero described by Aristotle's word *epieikēs*. The use of this term in a discussion of Faustus's character supports my general reading of *epieikēs* as denoting "aptness," while providing scope for an illuminating re-contextualization. Once the tragic "aptness" of Faustus is seen to consist in his "adeptness" as a potential conjurer, the imminence of his transgression and fall becomes clear.

Picking up on Valdes's appeal for "learned" Faustus to be "resolute," Cornelius lists the abilities which are requisite to the profession of conjuring:

He that is grounded in astrology,
 Enrich'd with tongues, well seen in minerals,
 Hath all the principles magic doth require.
(1.1. 139-41).

Bearing in mind that Cornelius must be familiar with his friend's credentials, this description identifies Faustus as a man of great capability (as per Whalley's translation of *epieikēs* [as

"capable"])). Faustus is "adept" in the most archaic sense of the word, *having attained* the means to sound the depths of what he will profess. This acquisition also equips him to be *an* adept in the extended sense conveyed by the Medieval Latin word *adeptus*: a title which, as the OED notes, was "assumed by alchemists that professed to *have attained* the great secret" (OED 2. I. 149-50 [4a, 4b]).

Against the attribution of the word "adept" to Faustus at this point in the play it might be argued that, as a novice alchemist, he could not yet have attained any great secret (much less *the* great secret); where *aptness*, and *capability* suggest potential, *adeptness* involves a learned or acquired skill. If, however, the formulation of the *epieikēs* hero is allowed to encompass both disposition and decision, the distance between potential and concrete is collapsed. The *immanence* of a forceful tragic *dunamis* confers an sense of *imminence* to the deeds which will actualize it.

It should also be said that Faustus's desire to achieve perfect resolution of an imagined better state is rooted in the pursuit of ultimate truth--to be resolved of all ambiguities and, thus, to resolve his own life's project, the consummation of a profoundly transgressive desire. I say "profoundly transgressive" to stress the unlimited nature of Faustus's project. As he stands, virtually at the brink of the abyss in Act I, Scene 3, he reminds himself of the importance of maintaining resolution as the means to achieve his desired end:

Then fear not Faustus, *but be resolute,*
 And try the uttermost magic can perform.
 (12-34 [emphasis added]).

In so doing he also echoes his own words in the opening lines of the first act:

Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin
To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess.
 (1.1. 1-2 [emphasis added]).

In addition to sharing an epigrammatic terseness which makes them both pithy statements of Faustus's design, these passages both convey a sense of an acting subject moving from one discrete stage of activity to another. The irony of both statements stems from the fact that the second stage, toward whose fulfilment Faustus directs his energies, is of a potentially indeterminate nature. The recognition of this irony also looks toward the irony that will accompany the fulfilment of the hero's project: Faustus longs to achieve perfect resolution of self by effecting a process whose end entails an ineluctable dissolution of self.

Commenting on the ironic indeterminacy of this project, Stephen Greenblatt notes that "Faustus, by violence not on others but on himself, seeks to give his life a clear fixed shape...but perhaps the hidden core of what he seeks is the limit of twenty-four years to live, a limit he himself sets and reiterates" (197). Greenblatt qualifies this statement by observing that in Marlowe's world "attempts at boundary and closure produce the opposite effect, reinforcing the condition they are meant to efface," and that Faustus, despite his pleas for oblivion at the play's end, is haunted by the prospect of eternity (198).

Greenblatt equates Faustus's particular desire for resolution with a tendency, common among Marlowe's heroes, to indulge in self-fashioning. His likening of Faustus's project to Tamburlaine's claims to discover a common irony in their attempts to transcend temporality while also achieving "fixed" states of personal being. However, Greenblatt's earlier observation that Faustus, unlike Tamburlaine, achieves resolution through violence against himself brings to light a crucial difference between these two figures--whereas Tamburlaine seeks resolution amid dissolution, the star of his fame fed with a "fresh supply of earthly dregs" (2 Tamburlaine. 3. 2. 3197-98), Faustus seeks resolution entailing dissolution, plotting the projection of self into a temporal vacuum. How he goes about effecting this process is, of course, matter for detailed inquiry and here, as before, I have skirted the error of saying too much too soon. Presently, I will return to the more immediate concerns of this discussion with one eye fixed on the issue of resolution, whose full significance is not unveiled until the end of the play.

The next crucial series of *pragmata*, involved in Faustus's fall, extends from the beginning of Act 1, Scene 3 to the end of Act 2. The issue of Faustus's freedom, as an agent in the process of his rise and fall, resurfaces in his first meeting with Mephastophilis. Although his invocation of infernal powers suggests, to both the audience and himself, that he is entering actively and deliberately into the pact, an early exchange with Mephastophilis complicates the issue of free agency. Upon

hearing that his prospective servant is actually bound to perform "no more" than Lucifer commands (1. 3. 40-2), Faustus asks whether Mephastophilis did not appear by *his* charge, prompting the explanation:

That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*,
For when we hear one wrack the name of God,
Abjure the scriptures and his saviour Christ,
We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul;
Nor will we come unless he use such means
Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd.

(1. 3. 46-51).

As Keefer notes, the scholastics referred to causes *per accidens* as being distinct from efficient causes; whereas an efficient cause was conceived as an agent producing an effect, a cause *per accidens* was "related to the final effect only in the sense of having provided an occasion for the extension of an external agent" (18 n.).

The context of Mephastophilis's speech identifies *him* as the external agent in this case. For this reason, he is also a strong candidate for the efficient cause of Faustus's eventual damnation. But the relationship between cause and effect (or even efficient cause and cause *per accidens*) is more complex than this casual connection suggests. Faustus, it must be remembered, will serve at least two separate agendas with his signing of the pact: he will give scope to his own ambition by acquiring magic powers and, in doing so, will supply Lucifer and his minions with a "glorious soul." The resolve with which he seeks fulfilment of the pact suggests a reprobate's inability to recognize the possibility of attaining God's grace. As he stands, poised to

secure the deal at the beginning of Act 2, Faustus again voices his despair of grace:

Now, Faustus, must thou needs be damn'd,
And canst thou not be sav'd.
What boots it then to think of God or heaven?
Away with such vain fancies, and despair,
Despair in God and trust in Belzebub.
Now go not backward: no Faustus, be resolute.

(2. 1. 1-6).

Here again, despair serves to strengthen "resolve." The momentary wavering of purpose which follows Faustus's speech only prompts him to recant his confused impulse to "turn to God again," with renewed vehemence (9-14).

Subsequently, the curtness with which Faustus dismisses the Good Angel's calls for prayer and repentance underscores his insensitivity to any suggestion that he may be saved. The fact that, at this crucial point in the play, the Angel *does* provide some hope of divine election also raises the issue of how Faustus is able to remain blind to the possibility of salvation. One potential answer to this question appears (disturbingly enough) in Calvin's Institution of the Christian Faith. Toward the end of the work, Calvin declares that God uses reprobates, whom he has "created unto the shame of life, and destruction of death," to serve as "instruments of his wrath, and examples of his severity." He continues:

From them, that they may come to their end, sometime he taketh away the power to hear his word, and sometime by the preaching of it, he more blindeth and amazeth them.

(III. xxiv. 12).

These comments, together with the claim that reprobates are

raised up to set forth the glory of God with their damnation (III. xxiv. 14.), suggest the diffuseness and variousness of *intelligentia* with interest in the state of Faustus's soul. The all encompassing agenda--if we believe that Marlowe is depicting a strictly Calvinistic cosmology--is, of course, that of God himself. That Mephastophilis claims to pursue his own agenda in service of Lucifer's interests need not pose a problem to this reading; in the course of serving as an instrumental agent of Lucifer's will, Mephastophilis might also, unknowingly, act in accordance with what Calvin called "the unsearchable counsel of God" (III. xxiv. 12.).

That the stipulations of God's counsel remain inscrutable to agents and patients alike is also suggested by the efforts of the Good Angel. The earnestness with which the Angel admonishes Faustus disguises the deeper, more troubling possibilities raised by a strict application of Calvinist doctrine. Viewed in this light, the admonitions are neither earnest expressions of God's will nor ineffectual attempts at intercession, but instead represent the means by which Faustus is effectively blinded to God's grace. These perceptions prove damaging to Waswo's claim that Calvin's doctrine of predestined reprobation "leaves man free to damn himself." In spite of Calvin's own argument that the word of God is left open to sinners (to acquit God of ultimate responsibility for their fall [III. xxiv. 14]) the preceding claim that God has intentionally deprived them of the power to hear his word (III. xxiv. 12) retains a residual force.

In the context of Marlowe's play, it also suggests how, in conspiring Faustus's fall, the "melting heavens" may also have contrived his faults.

iii. *Per Inaequalem Motum Respectu Totius*

(Astrology as a Map of Tragic Cosmology)

The above suggestion that Marlowe uses the theological elements of Faustus's action to interrogate Calvinistic orthodoxy follows a strategy proposed by Keefer in the introduction to his A Text edition of the play. Like Waswo, he employs an extended reading of Calvinism as a historical context for the play, engaging the issue of predestined reprobation critically, and to scathing effect. According to Keefer's argument, the sweeping doctrine of Calvinistic orthodoxy is shown to win out in Doctor Faustus, but "does so at the cost of being exposed, in its moment of triumph as intolerable" (xiv). This ideologically pointed reading of Marlowe's depiction of divine will as a cruel, arbitrary determinant has appeal--yet it presents the play's poignancy as being aligned with an attack on Calvinist orthodoxy through subtle polemics (a deceptively radical refashioning of the source work's cautionary tone [xiv]). In addition to performing the function of a vehicle for theological and social critique, however, Doctor Faustus satisfies the more ancient, more essential needs of tragedy; and these needs are not obscured by any acknowledgement of historical context. On the contrary,

Marlowe exploits a contradiction in Calvin's theology, converting equivocation into a type of tragic paradox with strongly classical resonances. Through this process, Calvin's own "concise syllogisms" are appropriated faithfully, but ironically, as the basis for Faustus's *hamartia*. Hence, Faustus's paradoxical state of guilt and innocence, as a compulsive figure acting under the duress of God's "unsearchable counsel," supplies the tragedy with its ironic force.

The first explicit representation of Faustus as both an agent and a patient in the process of his own fall occurs during the actual signing of the pact in 2. 1. After Mephistophilis has helped him bypass the first of two vividly corporeal warnings by dissolving his clotted blood, Faustus punctuates the signing with these words:

Consummatum est: this bill is ended,
And Faustus hath bequeath'd his soul to Lucifer.
(2. 1. 74-5).

As a number of commentators have noticed, this statement and the action it accompanies travesty the crucifixion of Christ (whose final utterance, in Latin renderings of John. 19. 28-30, is *Consummatum est*--"it is done"). Even as he outlines the terms of his own sacrifice, Faustus, through his blasphemous analogy, is using "such means / Whereby he is in danger to be damned" (1. 3. 50-1).

In spite of its parodic nature, however, the likening of Faustus to Christ marks a crucial point of intersection between the classical model of the tragic fall and the cautionary

function of Marlowe's source. As a reprobate, "raised up to set forth [God's] glory" with his damnation (Calvin III. xxiv. 14), he will perform a didactic function similar to that achieved by the earlier parody Christ, Simon Magus. This hero-villain, whose [literal] fall is narrated in the Pseudo Clementine Recognitions, anticipates Faustus in several respects, while also providing a blueprint for his brazenly rebellious career (Keefer xlv.).

Where the Recognitions qualify Simon's Icarian dash with deception and villainy, however, Marlowe's *raising up* of Faustus, as a tribute to God's power, produces an oddly inverted effect. As will be seen, the attribution of a paralyzed self-awareness to the reprobate generates a tragic complexity quite separate from a strictly cautionary function. A contextually-charged *katharsis*, fully commensurate with the classical model, will accompany the final resolution of Faustus's career.

To appreciate the ways in which Doctor Faustus satisfies the Aristotelian formulation of tragedy, an equation of cosmology with dramatic form is needed. On one level, Aristotle's conception of tragic causality tallies closely with Calvin's notion of predestination. Just as Calvin presents all happenings in the cosmos as subject to the "unsearchable counsel" of God, Aristotle makes end-directed action the "soul of tragedy," the ordering principle to which all individual valences of character and *pragmata* are bound (Poetics 1450. 16-20). It follows that all causes in the drama are inscrutable, except by reference to the telos. Essentially, then, Aristotle's teleological principle

localizes a highly-deterministic cosmology to the sphere of dramatic action.

Here, I will stop short of attempting the Herculean task of reconciling the philosophies of Aristotle and Calvin comprehensively. I merely wish to highlight the usefulness of mapping out the Aristotelian formulation as a cosmology radical to tragedy. So conceived, this hermeneutic model helps delineate what I consider to be the radical metaphor for the necessity / compulsion equation in Doctor Faustus: the discussion of the motions of heavenly bodies in Act 2, Scene 3.

By the start of this scene, Faustus has already had a taste of disillusionment, his request for Mephastophilis to fetch him a bride having provoked a rebuke which, for the first time, outlined the limitations of his powers. With a jarring change of disposition, he curses Mephastophilis and voices what appears to be his first earnest desire to repent at 2. 3. 1-3 ("When I behold the heavens then I repent / And curse thee, wicked Mephastophilis, / Because thou hast deprived me of these joys"). At this point, surprisingly, the devil's rationalistic appeals to Faustus do not automatically win him back to determined adherence to the terms of the pact; and the third entrance of the Good and Evil Angels occurs as the hero vacillates further from his established purpose than he has previously done. As in the previous scenes, though, the Evil Angel's influence prevails, leading Faustus to remark:

My heart's so harden'd I cannot repent. (18)

Waswo attributes this statement to the despair of a reprobate who, having committed an unpardonable sin against conscience, literally cannot repent (74-7). This reading implicitly repeats the argument that Faustus's fall, which also depends upon a failure to repent, is contingent on decisive action (namely the action of consigning his soul to Hell). Revealingly though, it is not despair which solidifies the resolve of Faustus after his fall, but a tendency more integral to his character. In reestablishing his resolution to fulfil the terms of the pact, and to bring his vision of an imagined better self to perfection he says:

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death?
And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp
Made music with my Mephastophilis?
Why should I die, then, or basely despair?
I am resolv'd: Faustus shall ne'er repent. (26-32)

Evidently, the images of superlative figures from classical tradition--Homer, the most sacrosanct of poets, and his legendary predecessor whose ravishing music suggests a sort of siren call--have provided Faustus with a source for an inverted, substitute faith which militates against despair. As one who has been blinded to the glory of God's grace, he responds to the self-reflecting lure of figures who address his particular condition. Their "ravishing" music objectifies his desire to be resolved of unknowable questions and, so doing, to resolve himself of all ambiguities.

The equation of resolution with answering reemerges in the

obscurely significant discourse on astrology that follows the above-cited speech. Having renewed his resolve to continue living in all voluptuousness, Faustus questions Mephastophilis on matters of "divine astrology." He first gains answers to simple questions regarding the material composition of the universe and the "double motion" of the planets--the second of which proves enlightening to later revelations. The most revealing segment of the exchange begins when Faustus reiterates his desire to be resolved:

FAUSTUS.

Resolve me then in this one question:
Why are not conjunctions, oppositions,
aspects, eclipses all at one time,
but in some years we have more, in
some less?

MEPHASTOPHILIS.

Per inaequalem motum respectu totius.

FAUSTUS.

Well, I am answered...

(2. 3. 65-9).

At this point, of course, Faustus oversteps the privilege accorded to him by Mephastophilis, by demanding to know "who made the world" (69). The sharpness of Mephastophilis's rebuke and the relapse into doubt that it provokes draw attention away from the poignancy of the exchange which precedes it--this is unfortunate, for Faustus's own career and his compulsive desire to be resolved are mirrored in the earlier discussion of the double motion of planets spheres relative to the *primum mobile*.

In particular the double motion of the planets suggest Faustus's own paradoxical double-predestination. As Keefer notes

(45 n.), the contradiction of double predestination underlies the Good Angel's claim, later in the scene (as it appears in the A Text), that it is "Never too late [to secure salvation] if Faustus *can* repent" (2. 3. 81 [emphasis added]). This statement, whose doubly-conditional phrasing makes it less urgent than Valdes's "If leaned Faustus will be resolute" (1. 1. 134), also makes Faustus's redemption contingent on an action which is in no way immanent in his character. The extent to which double-predestination precludes any actual exercise of free will is illustrated, ironically, by an observation of the Calvinist apologist Philippe Du Plessis-Mornay:

God therefore to show his power in our freedom and liberty hath left our wills to us; and to restrain them from looseness, he hath so ordered them by his wisdom, that he worketh his own will no less by them, than if we had no will at all.

(Mornay 221 [Trans. Sir Philip Sidney 45 n.]).²

By this logic the wills which God leaves to his subjects are "ordered" to such an extent that they only permit the exercise of such actions as are immanent in his own plan (which, implicitly, also dictates what is probable or likely in the actions of the people who unwittingly perform his will).

These considerations return us to the conception of heavenly bodies moving by unequal motion with respect to the whole, as an analogy for Faustus's tragic career. The hero appears to be confined to an orbit (or trajectory) aligned by urgent dispositional qualities which, although essential to his

² Cited in Keefer 41 (n.)

character, are not subject to contrary deliberations. As the "erring stars...All jointly move from east to west in four and twenty hours upon the poles" (2. 3. 44, 47-8), so Faustus will move, westward, over twenty-four years, to his predetermined end in death. Thus, the exchange at 2. 3. 65-8 marks the merging point of Faustus's need to be resolved and the analogy which graphically portrays the nature of tragic resolution. In defiance of Calvin's warning that a failure to distinguish between necessity and compulsion gives "matter to pernicious error," Faustus strives compulsively for a harmonization of these determinants.

One clue as to why the hero's need of resolution is so acute in Doctor Faustus appears in Seneca's verse translation of a proverb coined by Cleanthes:

Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.

Fate gently guides you if you consent; if not,
It drags you.

(Epitulae Morales. 107. 10 [Trans. Rosenmeyer])³

Seneca's writings, it should be said, exerted great influence over the perceptions of neo-stoics writing in Marlowe's time. As Mornay, in particular, was an apologist for both neo-stoicism and Calvinism, insights such as the one above might have informed his own sense of God's plan "restrain[ing] looseness" in the behaviour of mortals. More importantly--if Seneca's citation of Cleanthes is read as a valid literary context for the writings of both Mornay and Marlowe--it adds a sinister overtone to the

³ Cited in Rosenmeyer 71.

nature of this restraint.

Similarly, Mephistophilis's recommendation, in Act 5, Scene 1, that Faustus renew his pact "with unfeigned heart / Lest greater danger do attend [his] drift" (74-5) provides an instance of an external agent performing a constraining function. Mephistophilis constrains Faustus with physical threats, checking his drift by *terms compulsory* and forcing a repetition of an earlier act of consummation. As compellingly emblematic as this act of constraint appears, another more crucial aspect of Faustus's compulsion emerges in the request provoked by the renewal of the pact. Addressing Mephistophilis, he asks:

One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee
To glut the longing of my heart's desire:
That I might have unto my paramour
That heavenly Helen which I saw of late,
Whose sweet embracings may extinguish clean
These thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow,
And keep mine oath I made to Lucifer. (5. 1. 82-8)

The image of Helen's "sweet embracings" purging Faustus of impure thoughts (in this inverted construction of faith) anticipates her comparison, near the end of the ensuing speech, to Jupiter revealing his naked fire to Semele and burning her away (106-7). In each case she takes on the qualities of the purifying fire of divine grace, becoming a false figure of wisdom and salvation. As C. L. Barber has remarked (101-5), Helen's compelling allure appeals to Faustus by providing a vivid substitute for the genuine grace of God (which will remain inaccessible). Yet the falseness of the divine qualities with which Helen is invested

does not prevent her from refining Faustus's compulsion, cementing his resolve once and for all.

From this point on, the irony of Faustus's situation becomes increasingly brutal; in ensuring the smoothness of his journey along his predetermined course, he also ensures his arrival at a markedly ungentle *terminus* (or, to extend this analogy to the tragic context: *telos*). More and more, his desire for resolution entails urgent yearnings for oblivion and, ultimately, dissolution. Interestingly enough, the process described by the term "dissolution" is one of several obsolete meanings of the word "resolution" (OED. XIII. 720-22), and the former term would likely have retained more residual force in Marlowe's day than in our own. Accordingly, the resolve Faustus has achieved in ensuring his own passage will yield him to perpetual violations of physical integrity. He will achieve an ironically settled state in a temporal vacuum--for "no end is limited to damned souls" (5. 3. 96). The clarity with which Faustus foresees the final effect of his compulsion, thus, induces his repeated attempts to will the dissolution of his body and soul. Yet Faustus's calls are in vain: the earth will not swallow him; the sky will not tear him apart and "vomit forth" his limbs into the air; his body will not turn to air or water drops to be "dissolv'd" into the elements (5. 2. 78-82; 83-9; 108-11; and 103). Instead, Lucifer will give infinite scope to the hero's compulsion by claiming his end of the deal at the twelfth hour.

In speculating on the cathartic function that the drama's

telos may have effected for a contemporary audience, I am reminded of the fact that the adjective *teleios* describes both something which has been brought to perfection and also (in the terminology of ancient Greek ritual) a victim made "ready for sacrifice." The gradual resolution of Faustus's character draws its poignancy from its effective representation of tragic possibility. It follows that the hero's own bizarrely representative career exploits the contradiction in Calvin's separation of necessity and compulsion. Faustus acts compulsively, sins necessarily, and is punished accordingly. As far as any of his spectators would have known, however, they were no more entitled to salvation, under Calvin's vision of divine justice, than Faustus was. The terrifying obverse of this insight is that the "unsearchable counsel" of God may already have ordained damnation for every one of them.

**III. Night's Black Agents:
Praxeis Predating the Predatory Hero in Macbeth**

i. Means Whereby He Is in Danger...

Like Doctor Faustus before it, The Tragedy of Macbeth depicts the career of a hero who, through his own selfish actions, sets his soul irreversibly on the path to Hell. Yet, in spite of the fact that each play presents matters (expressive actions; dialogue) overtly concerned with the idea of damnation, Faustus is more explicit in its evocation of the theological contexts which shape this idea. Though Macbeth himself repeatedly acknowledges the prospect of his own damnation as the ultimate result of his *hamartia*, the means through which he will achieve this end--the means "Whereby he is in danger to be damned"-- differ from those of Faustus. Macbeth's sin consists not in a direct abjuration of God, but rather in an act of violence that transgresses an interdict which is absolutely central to Judeo-Christian ethics. Where Faustus chooses compulsively to deprive himself of God's grace, the abjuration-by-extension of Duncan's murder is rooted, most immediately, in violence against another. Where Faustus is a compulsive blasphemer, Macbeth is a compulsive killer.

A parallel reading of Doctor Faustus and Macbeth confirms the centrality of aptness, the quality of being *epieikēs*, as an element which influences the "probable and the necessary" in each

character. Accordingly, the hero's need to achieve resolution of intention and compulsion reemerges in *Macbeth*. I have set aside more specific comparisons of the conceptual framing of resolution in each play as the focus of Chapter 4. The more immediate purpose of this chapter is to construct *Macbeth*'s particular compulsion as a moral dereliction which corresponds to a pagan conception of honour. His *hamartia* combines an error of a pragmatic nature--whose intended results are upset by unseen contingencies in the tragic *praxis*--with a moral "missing of the mark." *Macbeth* merges a pre-Christian conception of *hamartia* with a morally-charged, Christian conception of "sin." As will be seen, however, the essentially violent, ironically heroic nature of *Macbeth*'s action is more central to his character than any concern for morality or conscious commitment to evil.

ii. *The Spear Rages*

In outlining possible definitions for key terms from Aristotle's *Poetics*, I have already made limited reference to the *Iliad* as a literary context for Aristotelian theory. Presently, another series of passages, from a portion of the *Iliad* which Shakespeare would likely have read in translation,⁴ provides

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As Stanley Wells remarks, in a preface to *The Oxford Shakespeare's* anthologized text of *Troilus and Cressida*, (in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*): "...probably Shakespeare read George Chapman's 1598 translation of Books 1-2 and 7-11 [of Homer's *Iliad*]" (715). With one exception, the passages I will cite appear in books 8 through 11.

matter for a classical illumination of Macbeth. Periodic comparisons between his career and the actions of Diomedes, in Books 8 through 11 of the Iliad, will shape this segment of the discussion of heroic compulsion.

In order to appreciate the characteristics which find form in Macbeth's *hamartia*, his status as a warrior aristocrat who embodies the ideals of his peer-group (ultimately to excess) must be acknowledged. Appropriately, the first description of Macbeth, discounting the witches' passing reference to him in 1. 1, stresses his bravery and prowess on the battlefield. In describing the hero's duel against the traitor Macdonald, the wounded Captain lauds:

...brave Macbeth--well he deserves that name--
 Disdaining Fortune with his brandished steel
 Which smoked with bloody execution,
 Like Valour's minion carved out his passage
 Till he faced the slave--
 Which ne'er shook hands nor bade farewell to him,
 Till he unseamed him from the nave to th' chops,
 And fixed his head upon our battlements.

(1. 2. 16-23)⁵

Shakespeare's "muse of fire" is active in the phrasing of this brief yet revealing transposal of epic narrative into dramatic verse. The Captain's description creates an impression of dash and physical violence so vivid that any direct representation of Macbeth's deeds on the stage would likely have paled by comparison. What impresses me about the speech, however, is not so much its buttressing of Macbeth's fame as the sense of

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All citations from The Tragedy of Macbeth are taken from Nicholas Brooke's Oxford Edition (1990).

bloodiness and stark physicality it attaches to the "execution." The most vivid image refers not to the hero or to his victim, but rather to the blood steaming on the instrument of execution, Macbeth's sword. Given the horrific nature of Macdonald's death-wound, it also seems probable that the heft of the weapon--one imagines a two-handed claymore--augmented Macbeth's own strength in the *unseaming* of his foe.

The Captain's words introducing Macbeth in terms of unqualified heroism are, nevertheless, elevated and objectified by a description of brutal violence. A possible analogue for equating a hero's valour with the quality of his weapon appears in Book 8 of the *Iliad*, as Diomedes prepares to counter-attack the Trojan host which is routing his own army. Having just rescued the aged hero Nestor from the onslaught of Hektor's forces, Diomedes tries to bolster his comrade's courage by praising his own valour. At the close of his speech, he exclaims:

...ἐμὸν δόρυ μαίνεται ἐν παλάμῃσιν. (Θ.111).

Lattimore's translation of this line, as "my spear...rages in my hand's grip," (185) favours a strictly literal rendering. Even in this form, the image is striking, seeming to imbue the spear (declined in the nominative rather than in the instrumental dative) with an exaggerated vitality. It is however, the extended, metaphorical meaning of *en palamēsin* ("in [my] hand"), which gives the line its brutal resonance:

...my spear is mad for bloodshed...

Robert Fagles chooses this treatment (235), presumably because the word *palamē* also signifies "force of hand" and, by extension "murder," in Ancient Greek writings (Liddel & Scott. 513). By investing his spear with its own violent *dunamis*, Diomedes effectively makes himself the instrumental agent of the violent action he prepares to perform. Coincidentally, this minion of the war goddess Athene is also "disdaining fortune," at this moment, by attempting singlehandedly to rout an overwhelming force, against the will of Fate and its enforcer Zeus.

As regards these particular passages, the similarities end here: although initially successful, Diomedes's advance is halted by Zeus's intervention and the hero, for all his ferocity, is forced to join the other Achaians in retreat (112-71). Even so, the image of the blood-craving weapon proves illuminating. It is echoed, in a significant context, in Book 16 of the *Iliad* as Achilles muses on the Achaians' misfortune on the battlefield:

οὐ γὰρ Τυδείδῳ Διομήδεος ἐν καλάμῃσι
μαίνεται ἐγγεῖη Δαναῶν ἀπὸ λοιγὸν ἀμύναι·

...the spear rages not now in the hands of the son
of Tydeus,
Diomedes, to beat destruction aside from the Danaans.
(74-5 [Lattimore Trans.]--emphasis added)

By this time, Diomedes (who had performed numerous other feats since Book 8) has been taken out of action by an arrow wound in the foot (A. 375-8, 396-400). The effect of Achilles's vaunt is to stress the abruptly snuffed-out potential of the other hero's advance, by echoing Diomedes's self-proclamation in the negative.

The connection between the two Homeric passages (whose likeness was first noticed by Walter Leaf [340 n.]) will support a striking intertextual connection, in the following survey of Macbeth's imaginative shaping through action.⁶

Returning to the issue of Macbeth's characterization as a celebrated and proficient man of violence, it is worth noting that indications of his potentially murderous nature appear throughout the first act. Even if his rough treatment of Macdonald's corpse is termed "business as usual" for a warrior aristocrat like Macbeth, intimations of treachery underlie Ross's account of how Macbeth had "Confronted" the former Thane of Cawdor "with self-comparisons" (Macbeth. 1. 2. 55-6). In addition to providing an ironic foreshadowing of the hero's later descent into treachery (Brooke 99 n. 55), this reflective confrontation subtly hints at the volatile nature of violence, used in support of any cause, in a society which places a premium on the value of honour. As the portentous events of Act 1 progress, numerous indications of the centrality of violence in this honour-based society emerge.

After observing his companion's startled reaction to the prophecies of the Weird Sisters, a surprised Banquo asks "why do you start, and seem to fear / Things that do seem so fair?" (1.

6

For two reasons, I regard the passages in Iliad 8 and 16 as analogues (rather than as probable sources) for pertinent images in Macbeth: firstly, the enfeebled latinate of Chapman's translation of 8. 111 ("...Hector's self may try / If my lance dote...with defects" [172]) offers only a faint sense of the line's original meaning; secondly, Book 16, in which Achilleus's remark appears, was not among the translated excerpts in Chapman's 1598 Folio.

3. 51-2). The answer to this question, which Macbeth himself is too cautious to give, is that what seems "so fair" to Banquo has already been received as foul by his friend; the possibility of ascending to a throne, currently occupied by another, automatically suggests the violent ousting of Duncan. The difference between Banquo's positive reaction and Macbeth's enrapt recognition of his "black desires" proves significant in more ways than one. These men are of roughly equal station, and for Macbeth to register a recognition so much darker than that of Banquo shows him to have a particularly compulsive attachment to violence.

Once again, a speech of praise, offered by Ross casts grim and ironic light on the basis for Macbeth's honoured status. Preparatory to announcing the king's decree about the suzerainty of Cawdor, he says:

The king hath happily received, Macbeth,
The news of thy success; and when he reads
Thy personal venture in the rebel's fight,
His wonders and his praises do contend
Which should be thine, or his. Silenced with that,
In viewing o'er the rest o'th' self-same day,
He finds thee in the stout Norwegian ranks,
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make
Strange images of death. As thick as hail
Came post with post, and every one did bear
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence
And pour'd them down before him. (1. 3. 89-100)

Nicholas Brooke, expanding on insights offered by Empson, notes the ambiguity of the phrase spanning lines 96-7: Ross's account implies that Macbeth was both *unafraid of those whom he proceeded to kill* and *unafraid of the images which he created by killing*

them (105). The strangeness of these images makes the ambiguity all the more jarring and grotesque, portraying Macbeth as a man who is neither afraid to face his enemies nor disturbed by the sight of their mutilated corpses. This is to be expected from a man of his station; the more penetrating force of the phrase, as regards Macbeth's moral valuation, is to illustrate his willingness to use brutal violence as a means to an end (namely his own honour).

While Macbeth's asides, in scenes 3 and 4, depict a murderous potential grappling with forbearance, it is Lady Macbeth's response to his letter which places this conflict in an ordered perspective. The ambiguity of her concern that his nature "is too full o' th' milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way" (1. 5. 16-17) to the throne is telling. She appears to pit the positive norm of humanity--"kindness" as a conception of uncorrupted human nature--against Macbeth's particular nature.⁷ As the Lady correctly deduces, however, Macbeth "wouldst not play false, / and yet wouldst wrongly win" (20-1); his desire for ill-gotten gains is restrained primarily by his sense of the dishonour that the getting of such gains would incur. This contradiction will soon reemerge in Macbeth's own reflections.

The peculiar character of Macbeth's compulsion comes to light gradually, and amid numerous qualifications. The mere fact

7

Lady Macbeth's instrumentality in persuading Macbeth to merge action with compulsive intent will provide matter for the next chapter.

that Macbeth must be persuaded to resolve himself of his purpose may seem to militate against any notion of his acting compulsively (since "compulsion" implies an urgent sense of purpose which is compelling, and hence "constraining" in itself). Like Faustus, however, Macbeth vacillates within a narrow trajectory of purposes and acts in accordance with certain non-deliberative elements in his disposition. As later passages will demonstrate, the necessity which shapes and coerces developments in the hero's character is partly the forward drive of the tragic *praxis* and partly Macbeth's own notion of what his station (in both society and the natural order of the world) requires of him. Early in Act 1, Scene 7, the issue of exactly which compunctions enforce Macbeth's initial decision to "proceed no further," in the planned killing, arises. At this point, Macbeth has already entertained horrid thoughts of the deed (1. 3. 134-43), tentatively decided to let events proceed without his "stir" (1. 3. 144-5, 147-8), and, a little later, ruminated on the possibility of killing both Duncan and Malcolm to clear his path to the throne (1. 4. 49-54). His curt dismissal of his wife at the end of Scene 5 ("We will speak further" [69]) indicates that he has not yet settled on either option. The soliloquy of 1. 7 continues in this vein, displaying subtler degrees of deliberation than any which are portrayed in Doctor Faustus; and, yet, clear patterns of valuation *do* emerge in his consideration of the proposed killing. In resolving not to murder Duncan, Macbeth repeatedly stresses the prospect of incurring retributive

justice and dishonour as a powerful deterrent against the act.

Before examining the soliloquy in detail, I will take issue with another of Waswo's claims concerning character and motivation in Macbeth. Though Waswo argues convincingly that "the very qualities which constitute Macbeth's greatness as a human being...also constitute the grounds for his destruction," his identification of these qualities with Macbeth's "acute moral awareness" and the "revulsion of his conscience" (70), overlooks both the nature of the "revulsion" and, as a consequence, the grounds for the "greatness."

The hero's awareness and revulsion, while ethical in nature, are not quite "moral" (at least not in the current sense of the word). In his most intensely deliberative moment, Macbeth realises that the "surcease" of Duncan's killing would end not only in his own probable succession to kingship, but also in the loss of God's grace and a resultant jumping of "the life to come" (1. 7. 1-7)--but what is there to separate this "moral" reflection from a purely self-interested concern for the well-being of his soul? At any rate, Macbeth quickly reverts to more plainly practical considerations: "in these cases," he observes, "We still have judgement here, that we but teach / Bloody instructions, which being taught, return / To plague th'inventor" (7-10). Whether Macbeth's notion of "even-handed justice" is understood to reflect fear of punishment, visited on living sinners by God, or retributive killing at the hands of Duncan's allies, his concerns involve personal safety at this point.

The next strand of Macbeth's self-interrogation betrays a concern for the upkeep of his own honour:

He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman, and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. (1. 7. 12-6)

Here, the principle which discourages the deed does not arise from a fear of transgressing behavioral boundaries (in this case, a prohibition against killing), but instead, a fear of failing to live up to the ideal of the honourable retainer. In other words, Macbeth foresees, in his potential crime, a shameful failure to fulfil the terms of his fealty by protecting his liege. This ethical orientation recalls one of the characteristics identified by Piers and Singer as distinguishing the *shame-honour* ethos from its traditional counterpart, the *guilt-innocence* ethos.³ In the short term at least, honourable concerns win out. Macbeth's explanation of his decision to his wife, in lines 32-5 displays his desire to keep the honours, which Duncan has "lately" conferred upon him, unsullied. It is, of course, true that the Macbeth's visions of "deep damnation" and grief over Duncan's murder drowning the wind with tears (20, 25) extend beyond thoughts of personal honour to address more universal concerns. Yet even the moving evocation of pity and "Heaven's cherubim," at

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In their psychoanalytic exploration of shame and guilt, Piers and Singer posit four concise distinctions between these two concepts. The second reads: "Whereas guilt is generated wherever a boundary (set by the superego) is touched or transgressed, shame occurs when a goal (presented by the ego ideal) is not being reached. It thus indicates a real "shortcoming." Guilt anxiety accompanies transgression; shame, failure." (23-4).

the close of the soliloquy, accents guilt with a sense of shame (since the blowing of "the horrid deed in every eye," [24] would bring infamy upon Macbeth).

The motivation for Macbeth's *hamartia* and the nature of the compulsive power which fuels it are characterized more fully in the ensuing exchange with Lady Macbeth. In addition to its imputation of hypocrisy, her question, "Art thou afeard / To be the same in thine own act an valour / As thou art in desire?" (39-41) seems also to ask "Are you afraid to become what you have beheld?" Her (perhaps unwitting) invitation is for Macbeth to make another *strange image of death*, to exercise his proficiency as a killer without the constraint of ethical boundaries. This insight focusses the paradox of Macbeth's compulsion, which is soon to be consummated in the killing of Duncan. This act is, both in its conception and commission, essentially hubristic; but the complex nature of the *hubris* is, revealing. Though roughly commensurate with Douglas Cairns's identification of *hubris* with an overvaluation of one's own honour, entailing dishonour to others (7-32), Macbeth's *hubris* also suggests a more essential conception of "injury." The "imagined better state" (to borrow Crane's term) that he hopes to realize through Duncan's killing is ironically bound to the act of killing. The "surcease," originally conceived as a means to an end, will prove to be a compulsive, self-fulfilling end in its own right.

iii. Shakespeare's Pagans

Before delving further into the nature of the "horrid act" and the compulsive power it energizes, I will return briefly to Waswo's reading of Macbeth. The preceding discussion of his remarks regarding Macbeth's "greatness" has identified a more secular basis for the tragic fall of the hero in Shakespeare's play: in short, that Macbeth's greatness derives from his brilliant, and ultimately excessive, emulation of the honourable ideal held up by his community. His proficiency as a warrior is the most cogent and volatile aspect of this ideal and it ultimately supplants loyalty (another aspect of honour) in Macbeth's conception. Love for his wife and desire of the "solely sovereign sway and masterdom" (1. 5. 69) that they conspire to gain recommend a localization of the *shame culture's* network of obligation to their own household, a shrinking of honour to a strictly familial level. This is the ethical contradiction which underlies the Macbeths' overvaluation of their own honour; but, in one respect, Macbeth will frustrate his wife's expectations, discovering, in the tyrannical exercise of violence, a more immediate means to enact his will with impunity.

Bearing in mind that Macbeth's murderousness does not reach its pitch until late in the play, however, it would be useful, at this point, to review the compulsive power that honour exercises over his career. Waswo registers shock at the "spectacle of Macbeth praising the good in Duncan and then resolving to kill

him" (69), and claims that the spectacle would have been no less shocking for a contemporary audience than for a modern one. To my notion, however, these comments overlook a distinguished tradition of pagan characters--some of them more sympathetic than Macbeth--voicing similar sentiments in other Shakespearean plays.

Consider, for example, the speech delivered by Brutus in Act 2, Scene 1, of Julius Caesar. Like Macbeth, this noble Roman must reconcile his friendship with his intended victim with the end he hopes to effect through the "surcease" of assassinating him. Brutus's insecurity, betrayed by his wish that he could deprive Caesar of his spirit without shedding blood, leads him to rationalize the projected act as the preparation of a "feast fit for the gods" (162-82). Both Macbeth and Brutus underestimate the urgent expressive force that blood will acquire after it has been shed, and both will be marked for death when the allies of their victims rally to oppose them.

As superficially revealing as the link with Brutus's praise of his victim is, an exchange between two less sympathetic pagans, in Troilus and Cressida, casts a more troubling light on the issue:

AENEAS.

Health to you, valiant sir,
During all question of the gentle truce;
But when I meet you armed, as black defiance
As heart can think or courage execute.

DIOMEDES.

The one and other Diomed embraces.
Our bloods are now in calm, and, so long, health!
But when contention and occasion meet,
By Jove, I'll play the hunter for thy life
With all my force, pursuit, and policy.

AENEAS.

And thou shalt hunt a lion that will fly
With his face backward. In humane gentleness,
Welcome to Troy. Now, by Anchises' life,
Welcome indeed! By Venus' hand I swear,
No man alive can love in such a sort
The thing he means to kill more excellently.

DIOMEDES.

We sympathise. Jove, let Aeneas live,
If to my sword his fate be not the glory,
A thousand complete courses of the sun!
But, in mine emulous honour, let him die
With every joint a wound, and that tommorow.

(4. 1. 10-29)

This "hateful love," as Paris terms it (33), is a paradox suitable to a society which values honour more highly than human life. Accordingly, the "emulous honour" which Diomedes stands to gain by killing Aeneas would increase in proportion to the victim's status (which, for the purposes of this exchange, corresponds to the courtly praises the two heroes lavish on one another).

As regards the source of Shakespeare's rendering of Diomedes, the hero is partly the amoral opportunist of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. Beyond this correspondence, there is another context for the intertextual reconstruction of his character--for included in the translated excerpts from Homer's Iliad, published by Chapman in 1598, was a macabre episode centring on the murder of King Rhesos by Diomedes and Odysseus, in Book 10.⁹ The sequence of events, often referred to as the "Doloneia," takes place in the middle of the night, after the

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Suspensions, dating from antiquity, of the spuriousness of Iliad K do not figure in this discussion (since, regardless of the book's authenticity, it was included in Chapman's selected translations).

second day of battle, at which point the Greeks have lost ground to the Trojans and had seen their embassy to Achilles rebuked. Hoping to regain some of their lost momentum, an assembly of kings agrees to send out spies to survey the dispositions of the enemy, across no man's land. Diomedes immediately volunteers to perform the task, identifying his motives in typically blunt terms: he responds to the offer of gifts from his fellow princes, and declares that his "heart" and "proud spirit" urge him to breach the Trojan defences, and infiltrate their camp (K. 220-6).

In spite of the underhandedness of the enterprise, the remainder of Book 10 supports the lofty tone of Diomedes's speech. He and his chosen accomplice, Odysseus, arm themselves and venture into the bloody shambles of corpses and twisted war gear in no man's land (296-8; 469-70). Odysseus's prayer to Athene that the two be allowed to perform some "great deed" to cause the Trojans pain (280-1) proves prophetic, and although the original goal of the mission had been to survey the enemy lines, a darker purpose begins to take shape. It should be mentioned that Book 10 is conspicuous, among the books of the Iliad, for its emphatic presentation of gore; but the deed which culminates the scene is especially unsettling. Having learned the whereabouts of the Thracian King Rhesos's tent, the marauders set upon his companions. The following passage details the killing of twelve Thracian nobles by the Athene-inspired Diomedes and, here, the phrasing of Chapman's translation is worth noting:

Minerva, with the azured eyes, breath'd strength into

her king
 Who fill'd the tent with mixed death. The souls, he
 set on wing,
 Issu'd in groans, and made the air swell into her
 stormy flood.
 Horror and slaughter had one pow'r; the earth did
 blush with blood.
 As when a hungry lion flies, with purpose to devour,
 On flocks unkempt, and on their lives doth freely use
 his pow'r;
 So Tydeus' son assail'd the foe; twelve souls before
 him flew;
 Ulysses waited on his sword, and ever as he slew,
 He drew them by their strengthless heels out of the
 horses' sight,
 That, when they led them forth, they should not with
 affright
 Boggle, nor snore, in treading on the bloody
 carcasses;
 (The Tenth Book of Homer's Iliads. 223. 410-20 [K. 482-93])

Although Chapman's translation weakens and obscures some of the original text's meanings--substituting, for example, "the souls, he set on wing" for the more literal "he began to kill them one after the other" (483 [Trans. Lattimore])--it conveys the general sense of the Greek.¹⁰ In a few places, the translator's poetic flourishes actually overstate the original sense. Literal translations of lines 482-4 describe the groans of the dying Thracians, but provide no sense of the air swelling "into a stormy flood." Similarly, the original text's description of blood reddening the ground (ἐρυθθαίνετο δ' αἷματι γαῖα [484]) is more direct and of more limited scope than Chapman's "the earth did blush with blood" (413). In each case, literal descriptions of suffering and bloodshed are embellished to the point of pathetic

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It should be noted that Chapman (who knew little Greek) was working from Latin translations of Homer, rather than with an original Greek text.

fallacy.

In the broadest contexts of this study, Chapman's embellishments suggest certain associations: the images of souls being set "on wing," the "stormy flood" of groans in the air, and the "blushing" of the blood-soaked earth anticipate some of the fearful reflections that conclude Macbeth's soliloquy in 1. 7 (notably, the images of Duncan's "taking off" and the disclosure of murder drowning the wind with tears from "every eye"). More vivid and true to the source, however, is the simile which likens Diomedes to a rampaging lion, setting upon unguarded flocks. Given that his victims are asleep, Diomedes's ferocious energy, strengthened by Athene's presence, may seem like overkill; but the excessiveness of deed is revealing in itself. The equation of divine inspiration and daemonic power directed against helpless victims adds a dark accent to Diomedes's heroism, as the description of Rhesos's murder further illustrates:

Through four ranks did Diomed the king himself attain,
Who, snoring in his sweetest sleep, was like his
soldiers slain.

An ill dream by Minerva sent that night stood by his
head,

Which was Oenides' royal son, unconquer'd Diomed.

(Chapman 223. 422-25)

Lattimore's translation of the same passage reads:

When the son of Tydeus came to the king, and this was
the thirteenth man, he stripped the sweetness of life
from him

as he lay heavily breathing--since a bad dream stood
by his head

in the night--no dream but [the son of] Oineus's son,
by device of Athene. (494-7)

For all of the episode's murderous import, Diomedes never loses

the daemonic fervour of his battlefield exploits. The lion simile which precedes the actual killing of Rhesos echoes earlier descriptions of the hero--in the then-untranslated Book 5, Diomedes had been likened to both a "winter swollen / river in spate" (87-92) and an enraged lion (136-43)--gradually acquiring the qualities of an elemental force. He is striving in a different element now, and merges, *διαμήτιν Ἀθήνης* ("through the craft / artifice of Athene"), with the imaginative fabric of nightmare.

Whether viewed through the interpretive lens of Chapman's translation or through the more literal renderings of modern translators, the episode provides an illuminating point of reference for the killing of Duncan. Where Diomedes is guided by his patron goddess to set upon sleeping victims, Macbeth is guided toward Duncan by a spectral dagger. In accepting the dagger's direction, he prepares to recreate his earlier deeds in a sinister new light:

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o'th' other senses,
Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still;
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing,
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. (2. 1. 43-50)

The appearance of the "air drawn dagger" (which Lady Macbeth [3. 4. 61-3] will later liken to the *strange image of death* that appears at their feast) again depicts the man as instrumental to the weapon, and the act of violence that weapon symbolizes. The

image also broaches the heart of Macbeth's compulsive and unbreakable attachment to the reality of the *surcease*. In the past he has been accustomed to gaining the ends of honour and privilege through violent (but socially acceptable) means. Now, as he advances to fulfil the deed, an urgent new reality begins to take form. His desire to advance himself, through a violent act whose nature violates the fealty on which his honour had previously been constructed, exposes the honourable ends of his violence as artificial. Essentially, "the compulsive power" of Macbeth's "imagined better self" is violence.

Having said that, the differences between the murders of Duncan and Rhesos are, perhaps, more revealing than the similarities. Far from being a beloved superior, to whom Diomedes owes fealty, Rhesos is a Trojan ally and an enemy of the Greeks. While this fact does not completely strip the episode of its murderous overtones, it marks an illuminating, context-shaping distinction. The very distinctness of the episode in Macbeth from the account of Rhesos's murder underscores and objectifies the nature of Duncan's murder. The recognition of difference also anticipates Macbeth's gradual ethical deterioration in the scenes following the murder. We have already witnessed the hero adopting a more oblique and treacherous mode of advancing himself through violence--a dagger-thrust in the dark is a far cry from "brandished steel" on the battlefield--but subsequent acts of violence will take him progressively further away from the straightforward practice of

killing for honour.

iv. *The Valued File*

No sooner has Macbeth secured his place on the throne than he begins to express the insecurity in his position. Fearing that the Weird Sisters' other prophecies will take form in his ousting, by Banquo and his line, he contrives to have Banquo and his only male heir, Fleance, killed. This plan is more shockingly wanton than the previous one since this time Macbeth acts out of a pained realization that he has defiled his mind, and given his soul "to the common enemy of man" in exchange for a "fruitless crown" (3. 1. 64-8, 60). His jealous rage at the thought that his actions will ultimately serve to make "the seeds of Banquo kings" (69) prompts the invocation: "come Fate, into the list, / And champion me to the utterance" (70-1).

A smoother attempt, by Macbeth, to reconcile his tyrannical urges with the necessary course of events which his actions have set into motion is implied in his instructions to the two murderers he interviews later in 3. 1. In this discourse, the dominant theme is not Fate (what *will* be) but, rather, necessity (what *must* be). Macbeth aligns the two murderers against their victim by convincing them that Banquo's abuses have "held [them] so under fortune," and asks:

Do you find your patience so predominant in your nature, that you can let this go? (86-7)

In discouraging patience, of course, Macbeth is encouraging these men to identify themselves as *agents*--but in this context, the implication of "agency" takes on a special significance, claiming it is better actively to inflict injury than patiently to suffer it. The accompanying challenge to shrug off the "gospelled" value of praying for an enemy, leads the First Murderer to remark "We are men, my liege" (91). This, in turn, prompts an obliquely self-descriptive lecture from Macbeth:

Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men,
As hounds, and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,
Shoughs, water rugs, and demi-wolves are clept
All by the name of dogs; the valued file
Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,
The house-keeper, the hunter, every one
According to the gift which bounteous nature
Hath in him closed--whereby he does receive
Particular addition from the bill
That writed them all alike;--and so of men. (92-101)

The likening of violent men to dogs who, through the gifts of "bounteous nature," use their swiftness and subtlety to violent ends sparks a range of associations with other passages in the play: the wounded captain's comparison of Macbeth and Banquo to "eagles" or "lions" vying with weaker animals on the battlefield (1. 2. 35); Lady Macbeth's conception of the raven croaking "the fatal entrance of Duncan," in 1. 5. (37-8); the wolf which alarums "withered murder" to accompany Macbeth to Duncan's chamber (2. 21. 53-7). Intriguingly, it also recalls Homer's likening of Diomedes and Odysseus to two "jagged-toothed hounds"

(καρχαρόδοντε δὺω κύνε), as the heroes chase down an enemy spy in no man's land, just prior to the murder of Rhesos (*Iliad*. K. 360).

Beyond such thematic connections, which touch on the specific type of character considered here, the speech's metaphor gives coherent form to the system of valuation which has supplanted honour and virtue in Macbeth's thinking. By encouraging his minions to reconcile themselves with their lot, Macbeth is articulating his own need to resolve *himself* of all ambiguities and loose ends in the pursuit of his ideal self-conception. His command that they "resolve [themselves] apart," draws the response--

We are resolved, my lord (139)

--a simple, but deceptively resonant line, which echoes the earlier resolution, "We are men, my liege," while also suggesting Macbeth's own initial statement of resolve:

I am settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

(1. 7. 80-1)

That this remark had originally endorsed Lady Macbeth's demonic re-conception of "valour" as the unrestrained exercise of "desire" proves revealing. It indicates the extent to which Macbeth, in Act 3, has come to indulge a privileging of the power to kill more efficiently. An interesting transformation is also taking place here, since Macbeth is no longer even *bearing the knife* in the "execution" of the act. By projecting his own resolve onto the (literally) corporeal agents he has commissioned to kill Banquo, he distances himself, more thoroughly, from the

"act and valour" of his desire. This is the pattern that characterizes the hero's moral deterioration (or deterioration of *moral fibre*) in Acts 3 and 4. By an ironic turn, Macbeth drifts further away from the actual performance of violent actions, even as he becomes increasingly the implement of his violent desires.

Examined in the broader contexts of this study, the "valued file" also supplies the basis for comparison with Doctor Faustus's conceptual mapping-out of necessity and compulsion. I have already argued that the discourse on astronomy, in Act 2, Scene 3 of Marlowe's play, presents a radical metaphor for Faustus's compulsive career. As a parallel consideration of Macbeth's "valued file" suggests, however, the metaphor of bodies moving *per inaequalem motum respectu totius* is not so radical to Doctor Faustus as to exclude extension to the other play.

Clearly, Macbeth's conception of this valuative scale privileges his own understanding of his station as a proficient killer among less gifted men. His belief that some hounds are, by virtue of native ability, "swifter" than others in the general catalogue transposes the cosmological model of Faustus into a more specifically violent context. It follows that Macbeth, like Faustus, strives to harmonize his own compulsive sense of purpose with his allotted position in the *dog eat dog* world that he himself envisions. His compulsion thus draws an urgent, personal sense of necessity into the sphere of his own ambitions, which otherwise have only his fear of death to order and constrain them.

v. *Praxis and Violent Destiny*

Lest the foregoing remarks be allowed to divert too much attention from the external determinants influencing Macbeth's career, the importance of both Fate and the *praxis* of the drama should be considered (especially as they relate to the play's violent conclusion). Where Faustus appears on stage, fully engaged in the process of his own fall, Macbeth's passage into error and ruin must be occasioned. The *pragma* of the witches' intervention and the confirmation of their first prophecy set the hero's tragic *dunamis* in motion; but it is a more elaborate sequence of cause and effect which brings his tragedy to perfection in the final act. Amid all the reflections, actions, and transactions that progressively shape Macbeth's character, a dynamic sense of urgency--of individual purpose interacting with outside influences--surfaces to account for the play's tragic irony.

As hopelessly complex as considerations regarding fate and free will in tragedy may appear, Aristotle's observation that "we are not actually sure that what has not happened yet is possible" (Poetics 9. 16-19) at least provides an ordered framework for the apprehension of possibility. Thus, whatever one might argue about Macbeth's potential to forebear in the business of Duncan's murder, the actual occurrences of the drama find him fulfilling the fateful predictions of the Weird Sisters. The loose conception of fate implied by the influence of these solicitors

is not, however, any more essential to the tragic *praxis* than the hero's urgent, personal drive.

In fact, the interaction of external determinants and individual drives creates the illusion that Macbeth's actions exert the dominant force in the tragic *praxis*. It is the urgent nature of his motives and deeds that creates an increasingly urgent sense of constraint for the other Scottish nobles. The obvious irony of this tyrannical stranglehold¹¹ on the goings on in his own country is, however, that Macbeth's most brutal acts will most directly facilitate his own violent end. By the time Macbeth orders the attack on Macduff's mansion, he has fully ceded the directness of his earlier, heroic exercise of violence—he now uses indirect means (hired killers) to attack his foe indirectly, through violence against his family. Where Macbeth's intentions had been to impose his violent will with impunity, though, his constraining attack on Macduff yields the opposite effect. Macduff, whose early comments in 4. 3 indicate a reticence to join in the liberation of Scotland, is suddenly galvanized into action when he hears of the massacre of his wife and children (4. 3. 204-5). Once he has overcome the shock at this news, he embarks on a compulsive career of his own, and will soon come to resemble the image of Macbeth in the opening scenes of the play.

¹¹

I use this word deliberately, to play on the etymological link between *anagkē* (necessity / compulsion; or it is necessary) and *agchō* (to choke / strangle).

The antithetical pairing of Macbeth and Macduff becomes clearer as their fateful clash approaches. While Macbeth indulges in the false security offered by "the equivocation of the fiend" (5. 5. 43), Macduff assumes the role of a new, compulsively goal-directed hero and even invests his sword with vitality and purpose:

That way the noise is: tyrant show thy face;
If thou be'st slain, and with no stroke of mine,
My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still--
I cannot strike at wretched kerns, whose arms
Are hired to bear their staves; either thou Macbeth,
Or else my sword with an unbattered edge
I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be,
By this great clatter one of greatest note
Seems bruited. Let me find him, fortune,
And more I beg not. (5. 7. 15-24)

There is something daemonic about these vaunts, recalling Achilles's commands, to other Achaian warriors in Book 22, not to direct their own spears or arrows at Hektor, "for fear the thrower might win the glory, and [Achilleus] himself come second" (205-7). The need for satisfaction which now fuels Macduff's advance is so overwhelming that it seeks to co-opt all other aggressive energies in the battle into his own singular drive.

Macduff's advance is also daemonic in a more literal sense, hinting at a spiritual intelligence (or force), guiding his motion toward the fulfilment of the deed. Evidence that forces beyond Macduff's intentions invest his sword with its fateful purpose appears in the two sword references which bracket his own speech: Young Seward's abortive claim that he will prove Macbeth a liar with his sword (5. 7. 10-11), and Macbeth's resolution to die in battle rather than on his own sword (31-3). Both of these

statements attest to the inadequacy of either blade to accomplish the task Fate has reserved for Macduff's sword; the second segues into a revealing exchange between the two agents vying for supremacy at the play's climax.

Macbeth initially tries to dissuade Macduff from direct combat, on the grounds that his soul is already "too much charged" with the blood of his enemy's kin. The exchange that follows indicates the extent to which *the sword rages, not now, in the hands of Macbeth*:

MACDUFF.

I have no words,
My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain
Than terms can give thee out.

MACBETH.

Thou lovest labour-
As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air
With thy keen sword impress, as make me bleed:
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests,
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield
To one of woman born.

MACDUFF.

Despair thy charm,
And let the angel thou hast served
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripped.

(5. 7. 36-46).

Both Muir and Brooke gloss Macduff's word "angel," as referring to a *fallen angel*, a *devil*, or a *bad angel*, (208 and 166, respectively). Brooke's suggestion that "angel" might refer to "Macbeth's 'bad angel'" introduces the possibility of a spiritual agencies--*daimones*, or *genii*--guiding the actions of the characters, and also recalls the discussion of the unequal motion

of planets in Faustus, 2. 3.¹²

This context permits us to view Macbeth and Macduff as two compulsive agents, operating within the binding necessity of the cosmos, their respective angels moving at different speeds *with respect to the whole*, and also with respect to one another. Taken thus, it is Macduff, and not Banquo, who rebukes Macbeth's "genius" (contrary to the hero's fretting at 3. 1. 54-6); it is now Macbeth who is confronted "with self-comparisons" as the very image of his undefiled heroism arises to cut him down in the final scene. The image of the raging sword, "brandished" in direct confrontation against Macdonald, now appears in the hand of another; and, like Macdonald, Macbeth will presently suffer death and dissolution, with his head to be lopped-off and paraded in victory. This spectacle provides a striking instance of "violent destiny"¹³--driven home by necessity, and yet wholly contingent on the hero's compulsion.

¹²

The more obvious correspondence is, of course, with the Bad (or "Evil") Angel in Doctor Faustus.

¹³

The term "Violent Destiny" was coined by the Renaissance neo-stoic, Justus Lipsius, to account for events which are predestined, and yet too harsh to be commensurate with "God's Providence." As Rosenmeyer (69) observes, "Violent Destiny" was a key ingredient in Senecan drama.

**IV. The Daughters of Leda and Other Fetches:
Poetic Contexts for the Objectification of Compulsion in
Doctor Faustus and Macbeth**

*What happie wonder, what blessed abashment may we
reckon that to bee, that taketh our soules, which come
to have sight of heavenly beauty? what sweet flame?*
(Castiglione. The Fourth Book of the Courtier. [Trans. Hobie])

...I know she's made of smoke; but I have lost my way...
(Tom Waits. "Temptation.")

i. Naming Resolution (*Hexis*, Nexus, and the Sexes)

In Chapters II and III, attempts to isolate the heroic compulsions depicted in Doctor Faustus and Macbeth have involved extended considerations of "resolve" and "resolution." Each play portrays its hero deliberating and acting within a predetermined sphere of cause and effect whose nature is obliquely described in segments of dialogue. In seeking to be resolved of questions regarding the movement of heavenly bodies, Faustus receives a cogent image of his own situation as a moving body, driven by *compulsion*, but constrained by the cosmic force of *necessity* (which encompasses and orders individual compulsions). Macbeth, in articulating his own perception of the killer's station in the "catalogue" of men, also formulates an order of human nature in which his own violent drives figure prominently. In each case, the hero's desire to resolve himself of his particular purpose involves a complex perception of what is necessary, a wishful

drawing-together of urgent, personal drives and the causal forces which are understood to shape human life. Like the predetermined reprobation of Faustus, the fate of Macbeth is apprehended, with imperfect clarity, as a condition whose urgency justifies horrific choices and actions. As wishful, foolish, or self-serving as each character's sense of necessity may be, apprehensions of external determinants hold some sway over their compulsive decisions.

These considerations return us to the central paradox of this study: if, following Aristotle's claim, the events of the tragic plot unfold according to what is "probable or necessary" in character (Poetics 15. 34-8) and "character" itself is formed by plot, then how might compulsion be described as a distinct ingredient in the tragic process? I have already indicated ways in which the compulsions of particular characters mediate between the idea of free will and the constraining forces which oppose it (necessity; Fate; predetermination). As regards the two plays considered here, however, it is not sufficient to study a character's motives, as professed in soliloquies and speeches, in relation to their actions. While both Doctor Faustus and Macbeth depict men who are ultimately subject to the compulsive drives they attempt to master, their decisions are at various points influenced by the persuasions of other figures. Faustus's demonic paramour, Helen, and Macbeth's diabolical queen both play essential roles in the objectification of the two heroes' compulsions by exerting the power of *peitho* (persuasion) to

cement each hero's resolution. Although the nature of Helen's persuasion differs significantly from that of Lady Macbeth, both figures help resolve their male counterparts of ambiguities by presenting them with flattering images of the idealized states toward whose fulfilment they direct their ambitions.

The similarities revealed by a parallel reading of Helen and Lady Macbeth also suggest intertextual connections outside the boundaries of Doctor Faustus and Macbeth. In addition to several contemporary contexts (cultural, theological, and literary), this chain of associations includes central episodes of the Trojan cycle, as depicted in the Homeric poems and their closest derivatives in Attic tragedy. In the expanded intertextual space considered here, the figures of Helen and Lady Macbeth correspond, respectively, to the Helen of Greek saga and her infamous sister Klytaemnestra. Although the first of these two correspondences is by far the richer and more direct of the two, the equation of Lady Macbeth with Klytaemnestra casts an interesting light on the connection between compulsion and persuasion. Although not itself an aspect of compulsion, persuasion has its compulsive aspect (Fagles and Stanford 28).

ii. *Sweet Flame of Perdition*

Given that she does not speak a word of dialogue in the play, the Helen of Doctor Faustus is invested with remarkable significance. In addition to Faustus's sublimely phrased

tributes to her beauty (immensely resonant in themselves), the mere presence of Helen onstage sparks a number of associations which are not explicitly evoked in the play.

As Barber has shown, differences between the poetic descriptions of Helen in Doctor Faustus and her depiction in the English Faust Book support a specific theological context for Faustus's fall. Barber describes the protagonist's sin of despair as a reflection of the "immense distance of Calvin's god from the worshipper" (93). He also identifies Helen as a consoling (but deceptive) substitute for divine grace (99-103). As I have suggested in Chapter 2, Faustus's longings to have "heavenly Helen" satisfy his "heart's desire" (5. 1. 83, 85) and purge him of thoughts which would "dissuade him from his vow" (86-88) betrays a confusion of sexual desire and an inverted spirituality. Lacking divine grace and anticipating greater anguish in his drift from his settled purpose, Faustus seeks a peculiar kind of comfort in Helen's embraces. Yet the nature of the hero's anxiety, as reflected in his interaction with Helen, is more complex than Barber's theological focus implies.

In support of his reading of the union between Faustus and Helen as a "communion" in which "the magical dominion and the pleasures of Dr. Faustus ambiguously mingle the divine and the human" (101), Barber comments on the diminished sense of physicality in Marlowe's account. Where the source work makes Helen a sensual, corporeal presence, describing her anatomy in detail and allowing Faustus to have a child by her (Faust Book

162), Marlowe's Helen is primarily "the face that launch'd a thousand ships" (5. 1. 91). The succubus figure of the source is transformed into an indistinct spiritual presence whose lips provide the most concrete sense of physicality (Barber 101). This is a salient point, and Barber's likening of Helen to a substitute for the unattainable godhead is convincing. Curiously though, he stops short of identifying the obvious literary context for the Faust Book's depiction and the poetic ramifications of Marlowe's innovation.

The Faust Book describes Helen's beauty in recognizably Petrarchan terms:

The lady appeared before them in a most sumptuous gown of purple velvet, richly embroidered. Her hair hanged down loose as fair as beaten gold, and of such length that it reached down to her hams; with amorous coal black eyes, a sweet and pleasant round face, and lips as red as cherry, her cheeks of roseal colour, her mouth small, her neck as white as a swan, tall and slender of personage, and in sum, there was not one imperfect part of her. (English Faust Book 163)

The physical characteristics which the Faust Book attributes to Helen tally closely with the traits that Leonard Forster has indentified as typical of the "codified" Petrarchan beauty of late fifteenth century Italian poetry (9-10). Helen's golden hair, lustrous black eyes, rosy cheeks, and snow-white neck are especially characteristic of a Petrarchan lady. In spite of its apparent sensuality, then, the Faust Book's description of Helen has already partly undermined her physicality by describing her in codified aesthetic terms. This type of aesthetic generalization has in recent years made Petrarchism a favourite

target of feminist critics attempting to label it as a systematic erasure of the female body.¹⁴

It should be noted that the Faust Book describes Helen's hips in explicitly physical terms, adding a voluptuousness to her portrayal. Her "rolling hawk's eye" and "smiling and wanton countenance" also accent her beauty with a lecherous allure that resists the aesthetic slide away from physicality. It is against the "forthright sexual appeal" of these traits that Barber measures Marlowe's praise of Helen's beauty. As Barber remarks (101), the opening words of the Faustus's soliloquy, at 5. 1. 91-110, hint at the fearful power of Helen's beauty:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? (91-2)

Centuries of careless citation have not robbed these lines of their significance. Read in the context of Faustus's speech and with an appreciation of their mythic resonance, they still evoke a sense of compulsive force, of a beauty that compels reckless action. Where, in her own time, Helen's beauty had provoked strife among both mortals and gods (by influencing the outcome of the *Judgement of Paris*, and occasioning the abduction that sparked the Trojan war), it now draws Faustus into a *psychomachia* he cannot win:

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss;
Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies!
Come Helen, come, give me my soul again;
Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,

¹⁴

See Heather Dubrow's appraisal of "Petrarchan problematics" in her recent study, Echoes of Desire (40-1).

And all is dross that is not Helena. (93-7)

This tribute extends Helen's idealization to idolatrous extremes, shrouding her sensual appeal in religious mystery. Although Marlowe's Helen is nearly stripped of physicality, her lips invite a palpable (if not quite physical)¹⁵ consummation--by embracing her, Faustus will realize his vision of attaining unattainable pleasures.

Barber describes the kiss as "a way of reaching the source of [Helen's] power," and notes the likening of Faustus and Helen to Semele and "flaming Jupiter" (104-7). While he touches on the most direct implications of this classical allusion--that Faustus, like Semele will be dissolved or burned away by the union--the pattern of associations that he draws from it centre on its contemporary, theological significance (101-4). To reiterate an earlier point, Faustus cannot touch the face of heaven, "leap up" to his God (5. 2. 70), or benefit from "Christ's blood" streaming in "the firmament" (71), and so blasphemously turns to the unholy spirit of Helen. To focus strictly on the religious implications of Faustus's union with Helen is, however, to risk neglecting the poetic contexts, both contemporary and ancient.

Petrarchism, the most immediate poetic context for Helen's depiction in both the Faust Book and Doctor Faustus, is in one

15

I say "not quite physical" because, by Faustus's account (4. 1. 46), his conjured spirits have not "true substantial bodies" to accommodate physical interaction with the living.

respect commensurate with Barber's theological focus. While the differences in each text's portrayal of Helen are revealing to an extent, one subtle but telling similarity also merits consideration. The Faust Book tells of how, in the twenty-third year of his pact, Faustus contrived to make the "spirit of fair Helena of Greece his own paramour and bedfellow" (172).

Although, unlike Marlowe's Faustus, he has already been shown living "in all manner of voluptuousness," enjoying the favours of countless mistresses, he finds a more compelling match in Helen:

...he fell in love with her and made her his common concubine and bedfellow, for she was so beautiful and delightful a piece that he could not be one hour from her if he should therefore have suffered death, she had so stolen away his heart.

(172 [Chap. 55. 2658-9, 2664-8])

Taken out of context, the theft of Faustus's heart may be dismissed as a common metaphor for romantic attachment. In Petrarchan discourse, however, the idea of a lover losing his heart or soul to a beloved had a darker significance. As Forster explains, the *migrating heart* motif was often used to signify the loss of self-possession brought on by love. The formulaic phrase *dolce nemica* ("sweet adversary") identified the beloved as an antagonist in a game in which souls could be exchanged (through a glance or a kiss) and hearts could be wrenched away and imprisoned in another's breast (13-14). Forster's observation that the theft of the soul reduced the lover to "a mere walking corpse" (13) provides a impressively concrete analogue for the process described in the Faust Book while introducing a cogent

poetic context for the loss of the later Faustus's soul.

When Faustus confronts his *dolce nemica* in Act 5, Scene 1 of Marlowe's play, he has already formally consigned his soul to Hell. At Faustus's own request, Helen is brought forth to cement his resolution, in preparation for the fulfilment of the pact. In resolving him of all contrary inclinations, she will dissolve all possibility of his immortal soul attaining grace, confirming it on an unwavering path to damnation. This is why, in the 1604 text at least, there is no indication that Faustus has any hope of repenting, after he has enjoyed Helen's "sweet embracings";¹⁶ the Good and Evil angels, whose influence had been vaguely-defined to begin with, make no appearance, and the Old Man who had previously exhorted Faustus to repent, now pronounces him "Accursed" and "miserable" (5. 1. 111). Once again, an appreciation of the Petrarchan context sheds light on Helen's compulsive allure. The refining fire of her embrace is partly a blasphemous substitute for the holy spirit; but it also echoes a poetic convention which, although uniting sacred and profane images, was not blasphemous in its inception. In his treatise, The Book of the Courtier, Castiglione has the poet Pietro Bembo praise the "sweet flame" of feminine beauty. Although this metaphor is initially offered in a secular context--Bembo notes the physical mutability of the "most thinne shadowes of beautie"

¹⁶

Greg sees this union as an instance of the sin of "demonality" (intercourse between a human and a demonic spirit), and links the irreversibility of Faustus's damnation, at this point, to the grievousness of that particular sin (105-07).

(319-20)--the flame gradually acquires a religious character. As Bembo says of "originall beautie":

This is the beautie inseperable from the high bountie,
which calleth and draweth to her all things.
(320 [Trans. Hobie])

In this influential passage, the figure of Bembo posits a neo-platonic ideal of beauty which is indistinguishable from divine grace (Forster 27). Later in the speech, he equates the pure love inspired by "originall beautie" with the "holy fire" which "in soules destroyeth and consumeth whatsoever there is mortal in them" (a clear metaphor for pure love of God [320]).

Although Faustus cannot bring himself either to love God or to believe in divine grace, he does perceive pure beauty on a secular level. He has the unique ability to literalize the Petrarchan conceits which supply the metaphors of Bembo's discourse. By having Mephastophilis raise the spirit of Helen and by exploiting the first stipulation of his pact ("that Faustus may be a spirit in form and substance;" [2. 1. 98]), he merges with a paradigm of earthly beauty, an archetypal standard by which all other beauty is judged. The Petrarchan conceit realized most directly by this "supernatural soliciting" is the traditional likening of the lover to a moth drawn irresistibly to a flame. Far from destroying the mortal facets of Faustus's soul with divine love, however, Helen's flame objectifies his appetite, which, by the hero's own admission (2. 1. 11), is the God that *he* serves.

Viewed as distinct agent, Helen presents Faustus with an

image of brilliance which mirrors his greatness and confirms the necessity of his ruin. Even if it is assumed that Faustus himself constructs Helen as his substitute for grace--and this point seems to me unavoidable--she acquires a complex significance that the protagonist does not fully appreciate. Faustus, in fact, erases the female body (or at least the body of a particular female) more thoroughly than a poet making systematic use of codified Petrarchan ideals could do. His praises simultaneously elevate and reduce her to an intangible, immaterial state. In doing so, however, he projects the necessity of his own dissolution, the inevitable outcome of achieving perfect resolve, onto his idealized resolver.

The process by which the idealizing male poet implicates himself in the dematerializing aesthetics of his own praise is a central focus in Heather Dubrow's study, Echoes of Desire. One strand of this argument discourages straightforward condemnation of the Petrarchan manner on the grounds that Petrarch himself had regularly confounded his own identity in the identity of his muse, Laura (40-1). This confounding of subject and object, lover and beloved, is most plainly illustrated by the fact that Petrarch uses the laurel as an emblem for both Laura and himself (41).¹⁷ This digressive look at the roots of Petrarchan idealization might be merely distracting were it not for one striking correspondence in the epilogue of Doctor Faustus:

17

Since it provided both a phonetic reference for Laura's name and an emblem for his own skill as a poet.

Cut is the branch that might have grown full
straight,
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough
That sometime grew within this learned man:
Faustus is gone, regard his hellish fall. (1-4)

R. T. Eriksen has argued that these lines derive from the opening quatrain of one of Petrarch's "In Madonna Laura" sonnets, which reads:

Broken are the high Column and the green laurel
that gave shade to my weary cares; I have lost
what
I do not hope to find again, from Boras to Auster
or from the Indian to the Moorish sea.
(1-4 [Trans. Durling])

Where the "broken column" and the "green laurel" of the second passage elegize two different people (the Cardinal Giovanni Colonna and Laura, respectively [Eriksen 14]), the branch and bough of Marlowe's verses both refer to Faustus. As in the first case (where Laura's laurel may also refer to Petrarch) the "burnt" laurel of Marlowe's elegy for Faustus may have a dual significance. Eriksen claims that the image refers obliquely to Faustus's "deadly mistress," who has "burnt the topless towers of Ilium" and been called upon to sack Wittenberg (15, 23 n.) As sweeping as this claim may be, the equation of the hero's compulsive desire for knowledge (prefigured in the poetic symbol of the laurel) and his ultimate object of desire gives scope to a more penetrating illumination of Helen's power. Before proceeding, however, I will qualify Eriksen's comment on the natural connection between Helen and the burning laurel bough (23 n.). The more elemental symbol of Helen's compulsive essence is

fire itself.

iii. The Compulsive Power of Ruin

The last point leads to a consideration of the earliest literary treatments of the legend of Helen. By Marlowe's time, Helen was already a central figure in European literature. Her paradigmatic qualities had been bolstered by generations of poetic tributes and allusions, of which the earliest are among the most compelling. The first of the great tragic poets, Aischylos, devotes a large portion of the choral odes in the opening scenes of the Agamemnon to an evaluation of Helen's compulsive power, as the cause of the Trojan War. Although the end of the war has just been announced (by a sequence of signal fires) at this point in the play, the image of Helen's beauty retains a residual force in the Argive memory. To the old men of the Chorus, no less than to Faustus, Helen's beauty is the destructive power that "launched a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium"--their most pointed reference to her conveys the double-force of this power:

Who--what power named the name that drove your fate?--
 what hidden brain could divine your future,
 steer that word to the mark,
 to the bride of spears,
 the whirlpool churning armies,
 Oh for all the world a Helen!
 Hell at the prow, hell at the gates

hell on the men of war.¹⁹

(Aischylos. Agamemnon. 681-8 [Trans. Fagles])

Helen, the "bride of spears," is said to have drawn both the Trojans and the Achaians into fatal conflict. Fagles and Stanford define her powerful allure as "*Peitho* (persuasion) in its compulsive aspect, the beautiful, blinding lightning of Helen" (28). In Aischylos's play, the burning of Troy, which is closely linked to Paris's lustful abduction of Helen, also ignites a chain of tragic ironies symbolized by a spreading fire. No sooner has the sack of Troy been proclaimed than a series of watchfires trails back to Greece to announce victory. Responding to these signs, Klytaemnestra begins to light fires of her own, igniting torches and burning sacrificial victims. The men of the chorus remark:

Look...
 ...all the altars are blazing with your gifts!
 Argos blazes! Torches
 race the sunrise up her skies--
 drugged by the lulling holy oils,
 run from the dark vaults of kings. (96, 99-104)

The fire which now illuminates Argos mirrors the destructive fire at Troy while anticipating the strife that the queen will cause upon Agamemnon's return. For reasons discussed below, Klytaemnestra's tacit echoing of Helen's fire is notable in

¹⁹

In rendering the last two lines in English, Fagles translates the Greek word *hele* (implying "to destroy") as "hell" (Fagles and Stanford 29). In spelling out the *omen-nomen* of Helen's name, the old men of his translation are thus made to conjoin a Greek pun on Helen's name with the Old-English / Norse derivative "Hel." This interpolation, which involves a touch of creative license, marks a striking linguistic recontextualization of meaning.

itself. The seat of Achaian power¹⁹ is about to be engulfed by a compulsive force similar to that which had led them to invade, and eventually destroy, the Trojans.

The type of *self-comparison* which confronts the Greeks in the Agamemnon is represented, even more vividly, in the climactic episode of Homer's Iliad. I have already described the dynamic of Achilles's heroic compulsion as a personal sense of necessity which gradually gains coherent form through the interaction of character and plot. The images which punctuate the account of Achilles's most urgently self-defining moment also provide a clear index of compulsion as a central characteristic of tragic poetry.

As he prepares for his final duel with Hektor, Achilles is poised to resolve himself of his own purpose. Driven by his need to avenge Patroklos, he will choose glory and an early death over an undistinguished homecoming (choosing the first of the two alternatives he had listed in Book 9). This is his compulsive purpose, his reason for being and, ultimately, his reason for not being. It is, therefore, appropriate that, as Achilles advances upon Hektor, he sees an image of himself reflected in his victim (since Hektor now wears the divinely-wrought armour which Achilles had loaned to Patroklos). Hektor also sees *himself* mirrored in the figure of his enemy, as his regular epithet *κορυθαίολος* ("of the nodding helmet") suddenly transfers to

¹⁹

Aischylos, unlike Homer, does not locate Agamemnon's palace in Mykenai.

Achilleus in the poet's description (22. 132). That this mirroring effect inspires opposite responses in the two heroes is also telling. Achilleus, who sees in the image of Hektor the prospect of undying glory and the necessity of his own death (Fagles x.), continues to advance on him in a feverish drive to resolve his purpose; but Hektor does not find a compelling reflection of purpose in the image of his enemy and flees from the confrontation. In light of Aristotle's standards for the behaviour of tragic protagonists (in Poetics 15), it is clear that Homer did not make Hektor *epieikēs* in quite the same way he made Achilleus--when both men are confronted with the same terrifying stimulus, only Achilleus perceives an address to his own condition and determines to merge compulsion and necessity by embracing his fate.

A more striking image appears after Achilleus has confirmed his tragic resolution by striking down the reflection of his own brilliance. As Hektor lies dead before Troy, the Trojans who had crowded the walls to watch the duel fall into an ecstasy of lamentation. As the poet tells us:

τῷ δὲ μάλιστα ἄρ' ἔην ἐναλίγκιον, ὥς εἰ ἅπασα
Ἴλιος ὀφρυόεσσα πυρὶ σμύχοιτο κατ' ἄρκης.

It was most like what would have happened, if all
lowering
Ilion had been burning top to bottom in fire.

(22. 410-11)

Here, as in the Agamemnon, a simile involving burning supports a chain of tragic ironies. A compulsive, self-reflecting power similar to Helen's has burned the towers of Ilion, but with grave

consequences for the victors, who will suffer reverberations from their violent acts. In the climactic episode of Book 16, Hektor had destroyed the image of Achilleus by killing Patroklos, who, at the time was wearing Achilleus's armour. Subsequently, by stripping the armour from his victim and donning it himself, Hektor had appropriated that image for his own use, thus priming himself for an ironic *self-comparison* with his enemy. Achilleus, in destroying his "glittering mirror image" (Fagles x.), will contribute a final irony to the tragic sequence by fulfilling the terms of Thetis's prophecies and sealing his own fate.

iv. *Peitho, an Aspect of Compulsion*

I have already touched on the self-destructive implications of the catastrophe in Macbeth in citing the *self-comparisons* between the protagonist and Macduff in the final scene of the play. By presenting Macbeth with an image of his uncorrupted heroism, Macduff focusses the tragic irony of a hero brought to ruin by the same qualities which previously made him great. If, however, the full significance of this irony is to be appreciated, it must be traced back to the point when Macbeth decides to embrace the ruinous image of his own greatness. The persuasions of Lady Macbeth catalyze the hero's compulsive ambitions by convincing him of the necessity of attaining a better state through violence. While, in the preceding chapter, I have stressed the fact that Macbeth's violence is inflicted

primarily on others, a degree of *self-slaughter* figures symbolically in the murder of Duncan. The act which most directly facilitates Macbeth's ascension to the desired state of tyranny also destroys his former, virtuous self.

Here, as with Marlowe, the examination of an important female character as an agent in the protagonist's fall prompts consideration of a classical analogue. Like Helen, the figure of Klytaemnestra has a long and distinguished history in European drama. Brooke lists Seneca's depiction of Klytaemnestra (in his later version of the Agamemnon) as a possible source for Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth; but the direct ancestor of Seneca's Klytaemnestra provides a richer context for reading the compulsive power of Lady Macbeth.

Where the Helen of Aischylos's Agamemnon is "*Peitho* in its compulsive aspect," Klytaemnestra embodies *Peitho* in the form of temptation (Fagles and Stanford 28, 33). Upon receiving her long departed husband, Agamemnon, at the royal palace of Argos, she engages him in a sophisticated battle of wills, masterfully pitting him against his own pride. The red tapestry which she has strewn to the palace steps to welcome him is, it is widely agreed, a symbol of the king's *hubris*. When Agamemnon finally consents to walk upon it (arrogantly disdaining to touch the earth), it marks an overvaluation of his own honour so extreme that it affronts the gods themselves; but he does not consent immediately. Having listened to Klytaemnestra's welcoming speech (782-809) and spied the tapestry, he initially resists the

compliments to his pride as impious:

Never cross my path with robes and draw the
lightning.²⁰
Never--only the gods deserve the pomps of honour
and the stiff brocades of fame. (921-2)

And yet, in spite of his fear of accepting honours which properly belong to the gods, Agamemnon is gradually swayed by Klytaemnestra's persuasion which ends by equating him with the mightiest of divine powers. Encouraging him to revel in affluence and the hard-won honours of his victory she says:

...you return
to the father's hearth, you bring us warmth in winter
like the sun--
And you are Zeus when Zeus
tramples the bitter virgin grape for new wine
and the welcome chill steals through the halls, at
last
the master moves among the shadows of his house,
fulfilled. (968-72)

For all its unctuousness, this speech is punctuated by premonitions of fatality which link Agamemnon's compulsive purpose with an imagined ascension to godhead.

Significantly, the phrase at the end of this portion of the queen's speech describes Agamemnon as *ἀνδρὸς τέλειου* (a man "fulfilled"; "brought to perfection"; or "ripe for sacrifice"). This term is especially resonant, both echoing Agamemnon's prayer

²⁰

This expression of humility--literally, "do not strew my path with shrouds provoking envy"--anticipates a Senecan proverb spoken by the protagonist in *Hercules Furens*: "Raros patitur fulminis ictus / umida vallis" (The verdant valley rarely attracts the thunder's stroke [1132-33--Trans. Rosenmeyer]). In contrast, Klytaemnestra's words of persuasion suggest the roguish sentiment given to Agamemnon's father Atreus in Seneca's *Thyestes*: "quis influentis dona fortunae abnuit?" (Who'd spurn the gifts of accommodating Fortune? [536]). Both of these passages are cited by Rosenmeyer (73, 71).

at 854 ("Victory you have sped my way before, / now speed me to the last") and anticipating the prayer that concludes Klytaemnestra's speech: "Zeus, Zeus, master of fulfilment, now fulfil our prayers-- / speed our rites to fulfilment once for all!" (973-4). The queen's invocation of *Zeus teleios*, the aspect of the god which presides over fulfilment, conceals a horrific double meaning. The *teleios* man whom she has just compared to the mightiest of the gods will soon be sacrificed to that god. Thus, when Agamemnon accepts the divine honours represented by the red tapestries, he blindly accepts the necessity of his own tragic fulfilment and embraces ruin.

The ancient Greek concept of *atê*, which informs my own notion of "ruin" in tragedy, is outlined, in suitably complex terms, by George Thompson:

Atê is Harm or Ruin, or the blind infatuation...that leads man to commit some rash act that causes ruin...When *Atê* is minded to destroy a man, she lays temptation [*Peitho*, Persuasion, Allurement] in his path to induce him to commit some definite and overt act of *hubris*--to play in fact the part of an *agent provocateur*.²¹

While Macbeth offers no definite allegorical figure for ruin--the *atê* of Greek thought was conceived of as a goddess--certain agents do contribute to the provocation of the hero. Most obviously, the witches present a compelling image of Macbeth's potential to gain the kingship. Toward the end of the play, they also enact Hecate's plan to ensure that Macbeth bears "His hopes

²¹ Cited by Fagles and Stanford (295).

'bove wisdom, grace, and fear" (3. 5. 31),²² and that he thus secures a properly ruinous end. Regarding their first temptations to ruin, however, it is clear that their intervention alone does not cement Macbeth's resolution. Instead, it is Lady Macbeth, offering a tempting vision of greatness which obscures the prospect of ruin, who conquers his apprehensions.

At first, the Lady's persuasion is more in the manner of coercion than temptation. Macbeth's decision to "proceed no further" elicits a mocking attack on his manhood, leading to the questions:

Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon "I would"...?
(1. 7. 41-44)

Macbeth's retort, that he dares not do more than "may become a man" (46-7), may be a sensible expression of humility, but the exchange that follows calls into question the extent to which it appeals to his sensibility. At this point, the hero has glimpsed the implications of "the act," and registered disgust at his own desires--to kill Duncan would be to efface a deeply ingrained sense of virtue and loyalty. In filing the dagger of his mind, he will defile the virtuous disposition which has so far restrained the tyrannical use of violence. Even so, Macbeth yields to his wife's persuasion, realising--and I use this word with a double sense--that he *would*, and in fact will, do "more than may become a man" to satisfy his own ends.

²² However, see n. 24 on page 113, below.

What Lady Macbeth does, in fact, is to prime the *dunamis* of Macbeth's compulsive ambition, elevating it to the point that it seems more urgent than other, more restrained *dunamis*. Already, her speeches evoke the seeds of Macbeth's ruin. She presents the "ornament of life" as something equivalent to "the sweet fruition of an earthly crown"; but later events will confirm that this fruition entails the loss of Macbeth's "eternal jewel" (his immortal soul [3. 1. 67]). As regards the ruinous consequences of his act, however, the hero suffers more immediate harms, of which the most crucial attends the actual commission of Duncan's murder. It is the murder itself, and not the persuasive ordering of Macbeth's *proairesis*, that effects this self-destructive result.

Both the "surcease" and the "success" of the act are in essence *tyrannical*: the first effecting Macbeth's unrestrained exercise of violence and the second, his ascension to a position that will allow him to perform other tyrannical acts with impunity. Once the meeting of intention and occasion has brought this compulsive, self-fulfilling drive to fruition, Macbeth destroys his former self--as he himself says, in frenzied recognition of what he has done:

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.
(2.2. 72)

His compulsion, which had previously only existed *in potentia*, now emerges to work violent change on his character, eclipsing all competing notions of what is necessary.

Where Klytaemnestra lures Agamemnon into unwitting connivance in his own ruin, Lady Macbeth nudges Macbeth onto a compulsive path which results, quite immediately, in the destruction of his identity. Moreover--judging by the career of violence that the protagonist embarks on after the murder--she provokes the realization of his compulsion more effectively than she had intended to do. It is the acknowledgement of Macbeth's symbolic *self-slaughter* that brings the irony of his literal slaughter, at the hands of Macduff, crisply into focus. Having succumbed to the temptation of exercising his murderous potential, he murders himself and is, in turn, destroyed by the image of himself as he appeared in the days before his fall: valiant, violent, and heroic.

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iv. Narrowing the Gap

The application of the Helen / Klytaemnestra analogue to a comparative reading of Doctor Faustus and Macbeth highlights both similarities and differences between the plays' protagonists. On one level, the distinction between compulsion and persuasion exposes the interplay between "the probable or the necessary" and the development of plot as a complex and flexible process. In the case of Macbeth's fall, the force of motivation actually progresses *from* probable to necessary as the events of his character-forming career make his violent drives increasingly compulsive. In the case of Faustus, however, the influence of external determinants appears to constrain the hero's decisions long before the resolving presence of Helen comes onto the scene. If, following Keefer's reading, the deterministic implications of Calvinism are accepted as a context for Faustus's fall, he appears less deliberate and more compulsive than his Shakespearean counterpart.

Here, a reconsideration of the moral dynamic which Whalley deems integral to the Aristotelian formulation of tragedy is needed. Where interpretations of each character's *hamartia* as having significance in a religious context may cramp their tragic *dunamis* with a not wholly relevant morality, a cautious application of the classical model affords a more flexible moral framework.

Various attempts have been made to read both Doctor Faustus

and Macbeth within a theologically-based network of similarities. James M. Nosworthy argues that each play depicts "the seduction of a virtuous character through a simple trick, supernaturally operated" (210). In supporting this point, Nosworthy not only places the onus of the heroes' falls entirely (and unfairly) on infernal powers, but also makes extended use of spurious passages. He first cites the speech, from 5. 2 in the 1616 text of Faustus, in which Mephistophilis confesses to having "damned up" Faustus's passage to heaven by leading his eye from the scriptures as he studied (5. 2. 90-3).²³ Then, in an attempt to dismiss the Weird Sisters as mere decoys of "superior" powers--in the manner that Greg (99) dismisses Valdes and Cornelius--Nosworthy cites a segment of Macbeth 3. 5 in which Hecate praises the power of her apparitions to confound the hero "by the strength of their illusions" (23-9).²⁴ Both passages are assumed to display the type of trickery needed to "enkindle what have hitherto been controllable...ambitions" (Nosworthy 210-11). The series of insights Nosworthy draws from this shaky point of departure are of varied strength. The parallel he implicitly draws between Faustus's condemnation of the "bewitching fiend," Mephistophilis (5. 2. 62), and Macbeth's anguished mention of

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This passage does not, of course, appear in the 1604 text. Even if one disregards the current trend to prefer the A text to the B text, it seems to me imprudent to base a major point on a contested passage.

²⁴

The octosyllabic segment which includes this speech is widely believed to have been penned by Middleton (a point which weakens its value as an element attributable to Shakespeare's dramatic intentions).

equivocating and "juggling" fiends (5. 6. 43, 5. 7. 49-50) once again adduces a passage peculiar to the 1616 text of Doctor Faustus.

A more convincing strand of Nosworthy's reading isolates the apparent inability of either Faustus or Macbeth to voice repentance or prayer after each has committed his initial error. When urged, by his scholar friends to "call on God" (5. 2. 26), Faustus replies

O, he stays my tongue! I would lift up my hands, but
see, they hold 'em; they hold 'em.²⁵
(5. 2. 56-7 [in the 1616 text])

This exclamation--also spoken at 5. 2. 30-1 of the 1604 text, with minor variations--is echoed by Macbeth, speaking to his wife, after Duncan's murder:

One cried, "God bless us," and "Amen" the other,
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands;
List'ning their fear, I could not say, "Amen,"
When they did say "God bless us". (2. 2. 25-8)

In attempting to follow the two lodgers' "God bless us!" with "Amen," Macbeth is shocked to find the words sticking in his throat. Nosworthy seems to agree with Waswo in attributing this failure to a hardening of the heart brought on by mortal sin, a view that makes their tragic falls contingent on a deliberate action (213-14). Even viewed through the naïve lens of Nosworthy's claim that the two characters' crimes are alien to their essentially virtuous natures (209-10), the decisiveness of

²⁵

Jump, in his 1616 text, substitutes "...they hold **them**; they hold **them**," for line 57 (142).

each man's crime is clear. In both cases, an action motivated by compulsive ambition brings a compulsively destructive potential to the fore, altering character and confining action to a more rigid course.

However, to place too much emphasis on a single, transgressive act is to neglect the urgency of the potentialities (or tragic *dunameis*) which are evident in both Faustus and Macbeth from their earliest appearances. In his first soliloquy Faustus proclaims a dissatisfaction with mortal limits which points to a reprobate's blindness to divine grace. Macbeth is able to enhance his esteem through brutal acts of violence against his enemies and, ultimately, against his friends. Both of these characters draw *the thunder's stroke*--the onset of compelling lures which align their *dunameis* and influence their falls--because they are willing and able to do what they must not do. Faustus's great intelligence and potential as a conjurer allow him to effect the change which will work such violence on his character and his soul. Macbeth's crime is also facilitated by tragic aptness and opportunity; the capacity for *sang froid* which Lady Macbeth so effectively pits against the hero's conscience is already in place when she persuades him to do the deed.

Conclusion

When the errors and despairing ends of Faustus and Macbeth are viewed in all of their complexity, Aristotle's treatment of character and fate, in relation to the tragic praxis, provides a framework for examining compulsion and necessity. Although the cosmic determinants depicted in Doctor Faustus and Macbeth differ in their general outlines, both can be subordinated to the teleological principle of end-directed action, influencing and influenced by "the probable or the necessary."

For a parallel reading, concerned with free will and determinism in both plays, the classical model is, at least as important as a network of religious contexts. Waswo's reading successfully isolates the contemporary conception of damnation during the period in which Doctor Faustus and Macbeth were produced; but its strict focus excludes other valid perspectives. Keefer's strongly deterministic reading of Doctor Faustus employs the contemporary religious context even more pointedly to show that Marlowe's hero may be driven to his sinful fall by "the unsearchable counsel of God"; yet the rigidity of the contexts for Faustus's particular fall--including biographical, historical, and theological dimensions peculiar to Marlowe's play--discourages extension of this interpretive model to other texts.

In contrast, the formal emphasis of the Aristotelian model subordinates all causes, including the influence of the gods, to

the interests of a well-constructed tragedy, centred on plot and character. In the causal order of tragedy, the *praxis* effects cause by progressing toward a *telos* which will mark the only definite result of its self-contained, forward drive. Let us review Aristotle's general definition of the tragic *praxis*:

A tragedy, then, is a *mimesis* of an action--that is, it is [morally] serious and purposeful, having magnitude; uttered in heightened language and [using] each of its resources...separately in the various sections [of the play], [the action presented] people acting rather than by narration ; <bringing about through [a process of] pity and fear [in the events enacted] the purification of those destructive and painful acts.>

(Poetics 6. 24-9)

Several key terms are included in this definition, notably:

mimesis, *praxis*²⁶, *pity and fear*, *pathēmata* (the plural of *pathos*), and *katharsis*. Of the latter four, *praxis* is the most important. *Katharsis*, while fulfilling a subordinate role in the tragic art, is nonetheless an essential part of Aristotle's formulation. It culminates the process of *pity and fear* by exhausting the destructive potential of the *praxis*, embodied in the sufferings (or *pathēmata*) of the principal characters. In doing so, it also completes a circuit in the *mimetic* representation of tragedy--the material means by which the poet presents the subject of tragedy to his audience. Regardless of

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Praxis is, of course, given a specific character here. Whalley seizes upon the adjective *teleias* to support an interpolated definition: "[*Praxis* is] not just any action, but an action arising from choice, directed toward and implying a *telos*, and to which other subsidiary movements may be attached without deflecting it. It is therefore by its nature complete, purposeful, self-contained, end-implying (*teleios*)" (Whalley 66).

how thoroughly the *katharsis* is understood to be subsumed by the formal requirements of the tragic action, its purifying effect is (in my view) ultimately directed at the audience. It follows that the "purification" of a well-crafted tragedy urges a certain emotional response from the viewer.

Katharsis is the element of Aristotle's formula which most readily invites speculation about how contemporary audiences would have viewed the *praxeis* of Doctor Faustus and Macbeth. In concluding his discussion of the plays, Waswo observes that Faustus and Macbeth are "two great and compelling characters...presented by playwrights who dramatize damnation as moral reality" (99). This comment provokes the insight that, in addition to dramatizing the tragic *dunameis* of individual heroes, Marlowe and Shakespeare dramatized the human potential for evil. Waswo also cites Kenneth Myrick's claim that Shakespeare's audience would have seen themselves reflected in Macbeth's ruinous crime, which, but for the grace of God, could be their own (Myrick 234 [Waswo 98]).

Myrick's point, which is even more true of the crime depicted in Doctor Faustus, prompts a reconsideration of the qualities which make the two heroes ideal for the dramatization of the audience's fears. Whalley identifies Aristotle's term *spoudaios* with an "aristocratic flair for action, and the heroic virtues of excellence, moral gravity, courage, decision, [and] endurance," qualities which he attributes to "men of action in action" (50). These attributes are also relevant to Aristotle's

allusion to the tragic *exemplum*, Achilles, in *Poetics* 15--discussed at length in Chapter I. In Whalley's translation, the *epieikēs* (capable) man is defined as being both *agathos* (able) and *homoion* (human) [*Poetics* 15. 14-5]. Revealingly, the term *agathos* connects with the assertion (first made in 2. 5 and reiterated in 13. 16-17 and 15. 1) that tragedy concerns "people better [*beltiōn*] than us." Bearing in mind that *beltiōn* is the comparative form of the adjective *agathos*, the "aptness" or "capability" of a man like Achilles is marked by a curious double bind--the protagonist must be at once both "better" than his audience and, recalling the literal meaning of *homoion*, "similar" to them.

In the *Iliad*, Homer achieves this effect by portraying a man who is, on the one hand, blessed with endowments far exceeding those of the average person but who, on the other, harbours fears and desires common to all people. For all of his power and excellence, the divinely-born hero is still *but Achilles, and a man*, afflicted by the common limits of mortality. Unlike most people, however, Achilles exploits his prestige to interact with immortals and thus gains a special insight into his own unique situation. When offered the chance to exchange *his* chiefest bliss (in Greek thought: life itself), for a perceived respite from mortality, in the form of immortal fame, he ultimately makes a terrible choice, and with his self-destroying act fuses fear and desire in compellingly emblematic terms.

In much the same way, Marlowe and Shakespeare create

characters who are at once both *greater than* and *representative* of their audience. Both Faustus and Macbeth are *epieikeis* men: the former is a learned and skilled conjurer, the latter a powerful warrior, great in honour and prestige. It is no accident that each hero is introduced to the audience at the precise point that he has reached the upper limits of his station.

The consummate Renaissance man, Faustus, has attained all of the knowledge accessible to him through earthly learning and is frustrated by the impassibility of mortal limits. His special abilities allow him the illusion of bypassing these limits by practicing necromancy. But the real moral impact of "his fiendful fortune" is not specifically to discourage necromancy, but rather to represent the inevitable outcome of a presumptuous mortal practicing "more than heavenly power permits" (Epilogue 5-8). The extension of a specific sin (itself, both fanciful and spectacular) into the general category of "unlawful things" (6) conjoins the tragic *dunamis* of Faustus's fall with a more general human capacity for sin.

Like Faustus, Macbeth is confronted by the temptation to exceed his allotted station, by committing an unspeakable act. The witches' prophecy, in 1. 3, initially reinforces the hero's perception of limits, since at that point "to be King / Stands not within the prospect of belief" (1. 3. 73-74). As the *pragmata* of other revelations contribute "happy prologues to the swelling act" (129), however, the tragic plot begins to evolve in

subtle collusion with Macbeth's compulsive ambition. Then, the calculated nudge of his Lady's persuasions confirms that he is both willing and able to murder his liege and kinsman for his own gain. If Faustus's transgressive quest for forbidden knowledge and power recalls original sin, Macbeth's crime resembles the killing of Abel by Cain. Like countless murders, committed since the beginning of human history, it reflects a curious mixture of viciousness, envy, and love. Although performed by an aristocrat, a man of unusual daring and resolve, it draws its representative value from a pattern all too familiar to Western culture: a shortsighted, self-promoting act of violence causes widespread suffering and, ultimately, ignites an internecine conflict which engulfs the offender, commending "th'ingredience of the poisoned chalice" to his own lips (1. 7. 10-11).

To bring the common nature of the tragic careers of Faustus and Macbeth back into focus, both men compulsively use "such means whereby [they] are in danger to be damned" to fulfil their ends. In doing so, they resolve their purposes, not only fulfilling the projected goals of their actions, but also achieving the self-fulfilment that the tragic *praxis* requires of them. To achieve its proper end, the *praxis* demands a peculiar type of sacrifice--the bringing to perfection of tragic potentialities inherent to its principal characters. Since the type of *katharsis* common to both Doctor Faustus and Macbeth encapsulates a recognition of what *might be*, for the audience, in a representation of what *must be*, for the protagonist, these

potentialities also have to be of a specific character. They must emerge, through the processive interaction of plot and character, as necessary evils.

This is why, in both plays, the cosmic forces which appear to draw all individual drives to predetermined ends are secondary to the fulfilment of *telos* within the tragic plot. While an appreciation of certain theological contexts is needed to grasp the specific nature of the purification that a "Christian tragedy" would have undertaken, *katharsis* is fundamentally a property of action. Similarly, the overarching determinants which help energize and resolve compulsion in Doctor Faustus and Macbeth ("predetermination" and "Fate," respectively) lie outside the formal boundaries of the plot. If, however, the general requirements of plot subsume the more specific influences of cultural and historical contexts, they do not extinguish their relevance. On the contrary, an acknowledgement of such contexts affords a useful sense of the terms in which tragic compulsion was re-conceived in the Renaissance re-invention of a classical form. Doctor Faustus and Macbeth provide especially cogent examples of the *hamartia* of classical tragedy, reconceived in its Christian sense of "sin." By a similar process, both Marlowe and Shakespeare recontextualized necessity and compulsion to strengthen their evocation of mortal sin and damnation (two states which appear to gain strength from one another in the Calvinist conception).

The acknowledgement of certain theological contexts as

providing currency for the Renaissance reconception of tragedy does not, however, account for the interest which *Faustus* and *Macbeth* continue to inspire in readers and critics of the present day. When Waswo identifies the two as "great and compelling characters," he presumably does not mean to restrict their appeal to either Early Modern audiences or modern historicist critics. One possible answer to this problem would be to observe that parallel readings of the two plays have tended to isolate their common interest in the theme of damnation as a unifying theological context.

Alternatively, it could be argued that both Doctor Faustus and Macbeth exploit the dynamic interplay between compulsion and necessity (common in the best tragedies of antiquity) to a particularly satisfying effect. If the soul of tragedy is plot (*muthos*) and the end of action is the *telos*, it could also be said that the end of the *telos* is to *satisfy* (to realize; to complete; to purify). Once a character's compulsive potential has been given coherent form--as, for example in *Faustus's* opening soliloquy--an expectation is established. If, in establishing a processive interaction between compulsion and necessity, the poet is artful enough to allow the protagonist a degree of moral awareness proper to tragedy, a compelling balance may be struck between *agency* and *urgency*. What follows is a process by which the tension between deliberate actions (ever subject to the "probable and the necessary") and the purposeful forward-drive of the *praxis* is resolved.

In Aristotle's formulation, "men in action" are necessarily both capable and fallible. The second trait (*homoion*) serves the double purpose of facilitating *hamartia* and making it comprehensible to the spectators of tragedy. The extension of this principle to Doctor Faustus and Macbeth recasts the "aptness" of the tragic protagonist in a surprising new light: they become ironic *exempla*, raised up, not to set forth God's glory, but to focus the paradox of heroism exercised for an evil cause. Once their compulsive *dunameis* have drawn the lightning of tragic irony, their crimes are repeated with dire insistence, until all the resulting *pathēmata* have dissipated. In each case, the death and dissolution of the protagonist closely accompanies the unravelling of dramatic tension; but the overall effect is to confirm these "men of action" as being "of the action." Even the defiance each man shows in the face of imminent death coheres with the smooth resolution of the *praxis*, displaying, at the height of the catastrophe, the urgent drives which confirm its necessity.

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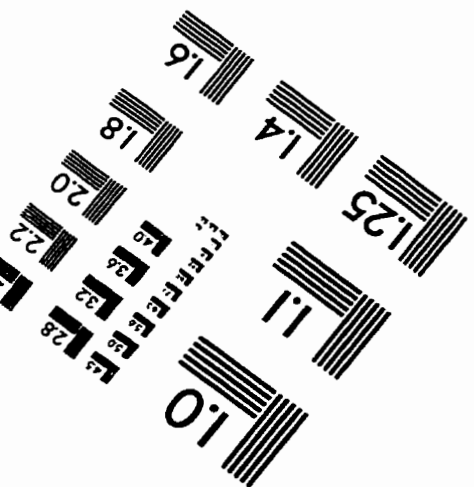
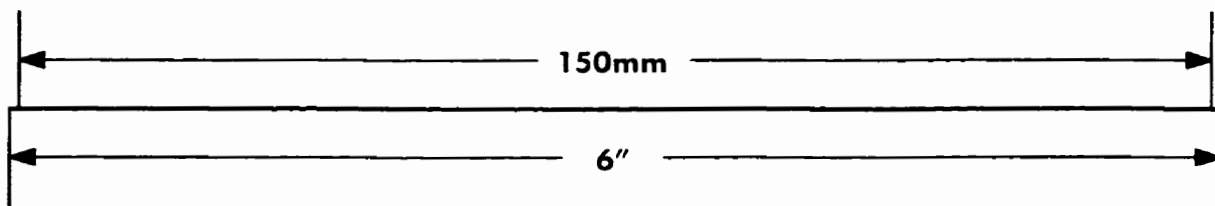
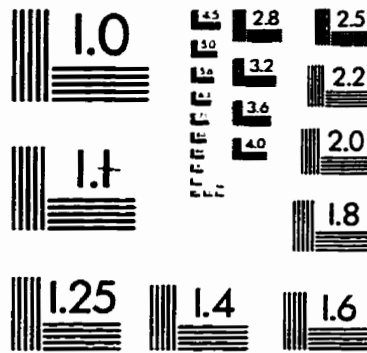
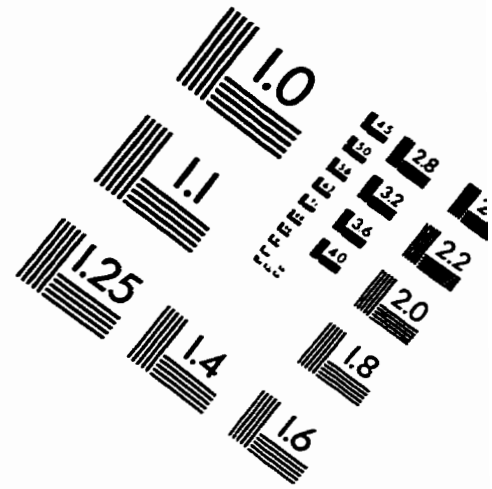
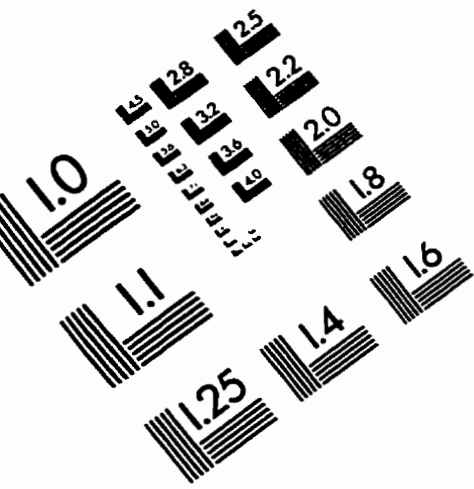
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