

'Hamlet and Doctor Faustus A comparative Analysis of hesitation and ambition in Renaissance Tragic Heroes'

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“هاملت والدكتور فاوستس: تحليل مقارن للتردد والطموح لأبطال المأساة في عصر النهضة”

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to examine the central characters in Christopher Marlowe's tragedy *Dr Faustus* and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, shedding light on two protagonists, Prince Hamlet and Doctor Faustus, as examples of similarity in various aspects, including procrastination, personality, way of thinking, and Renaissance influence on their reasoning and decision-making. This study employed a comparative approach to analyzing both characters, using a psychoanalytic framework to shape the idea of the research, considering various aspects where religion, society, and human anxieties played a pivotal role in structuring the tragic hero's personality. The study began with a summary of the two plays' narratives, then discussed the primary character sketches before analyzing the tragic defect, which leads to a statement regarding the shortcomings, choices, and anxieties of the tragic heroes that ultimately resulted in their untimely demise. This study contributes to English literature by addressing an impressive subject in both plays through analyzing the points of argument in different previous studies regarding the psychology of the playwrights and their hero character in each work. Additionally, it analyses the two most famous tragic heroes, Hamlet and Faustus, together with one paper highlighting the Renaissance influence, including the philosophical and moral insights into human inner struggles. This study argues that Hamlet and Faustus represent a dialectic within the Renaissance psycho-forms on how both hesitation and ambition lead to an identical tragic end. **Keywords:** procrastination, struggle, magic, tragic, renaissance.

المستخلص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الشخصيتين الرئيسيتين في مأساة كريستوفر مارلو الدكتور فاوستس ومأساة وليام شكسبير هاملت، من خلال تسليط الضوء على بطلي المسرحيتين، الأمير هاملت والدكتور فاوستس، بوصفهما مثالين للتشابه في عدة جوانب، منها: التسويف، السمات الشخصية، أسلوب التفكير، وتأثير عصر النهضة في تكوين منطقهم واتخاذ قراراتهم. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج المقارن في تحليل الشخصيتين، مستندة إلى الإطار النفسي-التحليلي في صياغة فكرة البحث، مع مراعاة مختلف الأبعاد التي لعب فيها الدين والمجتمع وهواجس الإنسان دوراً محورياً في تشكيل شخصية البطل المأساوي. وقد استُهلّت الدراسة بعرض موجز لأحداث المسرحيتين، ثم تناولت السمات الأساسية للشخصيات، قبل الانتقال إلى تحليل العيب المأساوي الذي قاد إلى الكشف عن أوجه القصور والاختيارات والهواجس التي واجهت الأبطال المأساويين وانتهت بمصيرهم المحتوم. وتتمثل إسهامات هذا البحث في الأدب الإنكليزي في تناوله موضوعاً بارزاً في كلا العاملين من خلال تحليل نقاط الجدل التي أثارتها الدراسات السابقة فيما يتعلق بالجانب النفسي لكل من المؤلفين وبطليهما. كما يحلّ البحث اثنين من أبرز الأبطال المأساويين، هاملت وفاوستس، معاً في إطار واحد يبرز أثر عصر النهضة، بما يحمله من رؤية فلسفية وأخلاقية عميقة حول الصراعات الداخلية للنفس البشرية. ويناقش البحث بأن الشخصيتين تمثلان جدلية داخل الأطر النفسية-النهضوية في كيفية أن التردد والطموح معاً يقودان إلى النهاية المأساوية ذاتها. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** التسويف، الصراع، السحر، المأساة، عصر النهضة.

1- INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Study Background

Dr. Faustus is a fine tragedy written by Christopher Marlowe in 1594 and published in 1604. The play was written in blank verse and prose, and the new edition includes eighteen scenes. As for Hamlet, the tragedy of the prince of Denmark, it was written by William Shakespeare between 1600 – 1601 and was performed in 1602 in one of the first theatres in England. A tragedy is “an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished... with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, 1996). Tragedies from different points of views can be considered as a very good example that can explain the nature of the hero, because the tragic hero is a rich character with conflicts, soliloquies and hesitation that give the writer a very wide range to explain his own idea as it deserves to be explained. An Aristotelian tragic hero is a central character in a tragedy who is good in nature or devilish, but the downfall of this character comes from ignorance or an error within the psychology of this character. One of the main characteristics of the tragic hero for Aristotle is that it comes from a noble background; it might be highly ranked and respected in its community but suffers misfortune and has a natural imperfection of humankind. The perspective of being noble reflects that such character rarely commits mistakes due to its elevated level of culture and education, but still this idea took another curve in the minds of people and critics of the next generations of playwrights and thinkers. The tragic hero of the Renaissance era is a blend of the classical tragic hero disguised behind Renaissance ideology to create a combination of excellency on one hand and ideological transformation on the other. The belief in human dignity, individual freedom, and moral responsibility are values that Renaissance thinkers reinterpreted in the tragic hero character, giving less importance to the origins of that hero, replacing ideology over nobility, while keeping mostly the same structure of Greek tragedy. The tragic hero is viewed as a free-thinking individual whose downfall came from his own choices; it is not a matter of mere fate and God's decision. While classical tragedies stressed fate, Renaissance tragedies highlighted free will and moral choices. Aristotelian standards influenced Renaissance theories that brought revenge, moral reflection and human passion to life, which made the unique combination of both perspectives. (Aristotle, 1996; Bradley, 1904). The relation between the Renaissance and the Greek tragic hero came from the concept that the tragic hero should be close to his society and at the same time reach a prestigious position in his community, and that is by claim or being born with the attribute. Renaissance tragic hero playwrights kept one of the main standards of the tragic hero according to Aristotle, which is nobility but with a moral defect, and that is clear in Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*. and despite the high rank of Prince Hamlet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the character itself doesn't seem to be committed to the social norms of high standing, which reflects the same social idea about the based society hero that the playwright used in the 16th century.

1.2 Study objective

1.2.1 The Hero Character:

The central figure is vital in tragedy because everyone understands that no tragedy is complete without a man who suffers, dies, or is at least punished. The tragic hero must exhibit all or most of the following requirements and attributes. Including:

- 1- Noble Stature or High Status – The tragic hero is often someone of importance in society, such as a king, noble, or respected figure.
- 2- Hamartia (Fatal Flaw) – They possess a flaw or make an error in judgement that leads to their downfall.
- 3- Peripeteia (Reversal of Fortune) – The hero experiences a significant reversal, moving from an elevated position to a low one.
- 4- Anagnorisis (Recognition) – They gain insight or self-awareness about their flaw and its consequences, usually too late to prevent tragedy.
- 5- Catharsis – Their story elicits sympathy and anxiety in the audience, prompting them to release these emotions.
- 6- Tragic Downfall – The hero's demise is usually unavoidable, caused by a combination of personal flaws and external circumstances. (Aristotle, 1996)

The Renaissance reshaped the idea of the tragic hero by emphasizing humanism, reason, and ambition. Unlike the mediaeval, which focuses on divine order and morality, Renaissance tragedy highlights human potential and intellectual striving but also the dangers of pride, excessive knowledge, and rejection of divine authority. Playwrights like Shakespeare and Marlowe adapted Aristotelian principles to Renaissance contexts, creating tragic figures like Hamlet, Faustus, and Macbeth, who struggle not only with fate but also with their own inner conflicts shaped by Renaissance thought (Abrams, 2014; Kermode, 2000).

The tragic hero in Renaissance drama emphasized many personal traits of Renaissance society, like ambition, reason and unrestrainedness of divine laws, which can be considered major elements of humanism and psychoanalytic theories. (Aristotle, 1996)The concept of the tragic hero comes from Aristotle's poetics, which included specific terms like 'hamartia' and 'catharsis'. Renaissance playwrights like Shakespeare and Marlowe adapted these terms in their own way to represent mainly morality and Renaissance philosophy, blending ancient and modern points of view. (Abrams, M.H. , 2014)The inner conflict of the tragic hero served in many plays, like Macbeth (1606), Hamlet (1600), King Lear by William Shakespeare, Tamburlaine the Great (1584), and Faustus (1604) by Christopher Marlowe, as a warning against pride, ambition, and moral blindness, and it is clear through the fall of the tragic hero in these works. (Bradly, A.C. 1904)The purpose of this study is to compare Hamlet and Doctor Faustus as Renaissance tragic heroes who reflect two sides of humanism: Hamlet, paralyzed by hesitation and moral doubt, and Faustus, consumed by boundless ambition and intellectual pride. By analyzing their shared characteristics—such as procrastination, moral struggle, and defiance of divine law—this research highlights how Renaissance ideals influenced their reasoning and decision-making, leading to their tragic downfall.

1.3 Problem Statement:

The title of this study references the study's subject, which is an investigation of hero characters in tragedies. The study concentrated on two great tragedies: Hamlet and Dr. Faustus. They are two works of English literature that have had a considerable impact on readers and critics of English literature. This study contends that, despite their differences in context, Hamlet and Faustus reflect two aspects of Renaissance humanism, one characterized by hesitancy and the other by ambition. Faustus represents the Renaissance mindset of limitless human achievements, and Hamlet represents the Renaissance conscience and highlights the unawareness of moral responsibility and uncertainty of truth. Together those characters exposed the paradox of Renaissance humanism. Renaissance dramatic works show the ambition of extending human control over his life with the fear of losing faith and moral restraint, and that is the problem that this paper discussed.

1.4 Previous Studies

Previous comparative studies on *Hamlet* and *Doctor Faustus*—such as Stroup (1971) on Christian tragedy, where Hamlet and Faustus are two diverse types of Christian theology. Sin, damnation and moral responsibility played a key role in this study, but still the study missed bringing attention to the other dimensions of psychology, politics and social categories of dramatic work; besides that, it is not highlighting the external pressure on the heroic character from the side of its conscience and society. Fatima & Shafiq (2024), on hyperbole analyzed the use and effect of hyperbole in both plays, which explained how hyperbole can shape readers' perceptions according to Goffman's (1974) framing theory, but the study fell short in psychology, and moral conflict appeared within the plays. The focus of their study is more about language and effect than on the external and moral decline Staber (2012), on soliloquies, examined how Marlowe's Dr. Faustus and Shakespeare's Hamlet function to reveal the inner thoughts, state of mind and developments of the heroic character. What Staber falls short on is the limited engagement with external or social context, where external pressures, whether social, political or religious, are present in both works; belief systems and Christian societal norms are parts of the study shortage. These studies have advanced our understanding of their theological and linguistic strategies. However, there remains a gap in scholarship regarding how Renaissance thought fundamentally shaped each protagonist's reasoning and decision-making. Few studies rigorously connect their shared traits—procrastination, ambition, moral reasoning—to broader Renaissance ideologies. This study seeks to fill these gaps by examining how both characters embody Renaissance cognitive patterns through their actions and thoughts, thereby offering a richer, more integrated view of the tragic hero in early modern English drama. This study, therefore, examines Hamlet and Faustus not only as tragic figures but also as reflections of Renaissance cognitive and moral tensions, a perspective underexplored in existing research.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on one major literary theory—psychoanalytic theory, besides Renaissance humanism—to examine the tragic figures of Hamlet and Doctor Faustus. Each of these concepts provides a lens for understanding the protagonists' inner conflicts, motivations, and eventual downfall. Psychoanalytic criticism, grounded in Freudian thought, emphasizes the role of the unconscious, repression, guilt, desire, and hesitation in shaping human behaviour. Applied to *Hamlet*, this theory highlights the prince's profound psychological struggle. Hamlet is torn between his unconscious desires for revenge and his paralyzing hesitation, which arises from guilt and fear of moral consequences. His soliloquies reflect repression and internal conflict, revealing

how his indecision is less a matter of external obstacles and more a psychological inability to reconcile desire with conscience. In this sense, psychoanalysis illuminates the psychological depth of Hamlet's character and explains his tragic paralysis. Renaissance humanism emphasized reason, knowledge, ambition, and the rejection of divine authority. It celebrated human potential while questioning traditional religious boundaries. In *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus embodies this intellectual spirit taken to its extreme. Dissatisfied with conventional sciences, he seeks limitless knowledge and power through necromancy, disregarding divine law and spiritual consequences. His ambition and intellectual pride illustrate the humanist belief in self-determination but also expose its dangers when unchecked. Faustus represents the Renaissance scholar who overreaches, convinced that human reason can transcend divine authority—only to face tragic ruin. While Hamlet is best understood through the psychoanalytic lens of guilt, repression, and hesitation, Faustus is most effectively examined through Renaissance humanism, with its focus on ambition and the rejection of divine law. Yet both characters ultimately embody aspects of each perspective: Hamlet, though hesitant, still challenges divine order by contemplating revenge, while Faustus, though ambitious, experiences moments of guilt and represses fear of damnation. Together, these frameworks explain how Renaissance tragic heroes are shaped by a tension between psychological conflict and intellectual overreaching, leading inevitably to their downfall.

2- Discussion:

2.1 Hamlet: psychological conflict and Hesitation

Hamlet was likely written around 1600–1601 and first published in quarto editions beginning in 1603, with the authoritative First Folio version appearing in 1623 (Shakespeare, 1623/1997). Set in Denmark, the play dramatizes the young prince's struggle after the murder of his father by his uncle Claudius, who has seized the throne and married Hamlet's mother. The central theme of *Hamlet* lies in the psychological depth of the tragic hero, whose defining traits are hesitation, repression, and guilt. Hamlet is unable to act decisively, continually delaying revenge despite being certain of Claudius's guilt. As A.C. Bradley (2009) notes, Hamlet's tragedy derives from his "excessive reflection" that paralyzes his will. Psychoanalytic critics, such as Ernest Jones (1954), emphasize the unconscious elements of Hamlet's delay, linking it to repressed guilt and unresolved desire. His soliloquies reflect this conflict between moral conscience and unconscious impulses, positioning him as a quintessential psychoanalytic subject. This hesitation, while intellectually rich, becomes his tragic flaw, leading to his downfall. Hamlet's character is best illuminated through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, which emphasizes the role of the unconscious, repression, guilt, and hesitation in human behaviour. His inability to act decisively stems from a complex psychological conflict rather than mere rational deliberation. Freud (1955) famously interpreted Hamlet's delay as rooted in repressed Oedipal guilt, suggesting that Hamlet hesitates to kill Claudius because Claudius has enacted Hamlet's own unconscious wish: the removal of the father and possession of the mother. Ernest Jones (1954) expands on this view, arguing that Hamlet's hesitation is an unconscious resistance to confronting his own desires. Human dignity and potential are also embodied in Hamlet's character, which are prominent ideas in humanism that represent the Renaissance society. The idea of killing his uncle came from his belief that this is a moral choice more than a religious choice in big disregard of the consequences of it, leading to an inner struggle between faith, religion (mediaeval beliefs) of certainty, and the new concept of humanism of free will. On the other hand, in the same lane of revenge, Hamlet's individual beliefs led him to the conviction that he is the best to know his own salvation and that others have lived their own lives, ignoring his suffering. Hamlet has a complicated character that no one could analyze; sometimes he is very witty and delivers wise speeches, and other times he behaves strangely to obtain information about his father's death that will help him solve the mystery. What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form, in moving how express and admirable; in action, how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 2.2.327-332. Many soliloquies demonstrated that Hamlet understood the internal conflict surrounding life and its various aspects, as well as how life is a big lie and people have no faith or loyalty. The external conflict has been settled on Hamlet's rash decisions, and he is now focused on the main thing: he is thinking about revenge. As a result, we can conclude that Hamlet did not love life, that it did not matter if he died, and that he no longer believed in life. Hamlet's disastrous flaw is that he is a man of words, as he confesses in one of his soliloquies, and he cannot take a firm move towards what he wanted, as well as his wit, which led him to the argument about the nature of life and the creation of human beings and how he is like God. He took people as an example for his argument but not himself, because he thought that people are only living their lives, but he is living and examining life at the

same time and constantly criticizing him. To be or not to be—that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles And, by opposing, end them. (Shakespeare 3.1.64-68) Hamlet's soliloquies, especially "To be or not to be", reveal his repressed desires and paralyzing guilt, as he contemplates existence and the morality of action versus inaction. As Bradley (2009) notes, his excessive self-reflection leads to a paralysis of will, turning thought into a destructive force. Thus, Hamlet embodies the psychoanalytic tragic hero whose downfall lies not in external obstacles but in inner psychological repression. Rather than that, and like Faustus, he stands in front of life concepts and divinity, thinking about taking revenge on his uncle, even though killing people is a sin for which the punishment is hell, but he insisted on having his revenge, disregarding the law of religion and life. The same mistakes were committed by both Faustus and Hamlet, and the irony is in the fact that both did not know that they were going on the wrong path towards their tragic ends, or they had an idea about that, but they disregarded it depending on their knowledge and logic. Hamlet's character does not represent itself, but it does represent the entire society's hesitation and uncertainty about moving forward, as seen in Danish society at the time when people used their tongues more than their muscles. They face their problems and have a solution, but fears and doubts prevent them from acting.

2.2 Dr. Faustus: ambition and intellectual overreaching

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* was first performed around 1592 and appeared in print in two main versions: the shorter A-text (1604) and the longer B-text (1616) (Bevington & Rasmussen, 1995). The play reflects Renaissance intellectual culture, dramatizing the ambition of a scholar who seeks knowledge and power beyond human limits. Faustus embodies the spirit of Renaissance humanism, driven by reason, ambition, and rejection of divine authority. As Stephen Greenblatt (1980) argues, Faustus represents the Renaissance will to power and intellectual overreaching, yet he also dramatizes its spiritual dangers. Unlike Hamlet, Faustus does not hesitate but instead disregards consequences, pursuing his desires with reckless confidence until it is too late for repentance. Harry Levin (1952) observes that Faustus's tragedy lies not only in his pact with the devil but also in his refusal to accept the limits of human knowledge. His downfall illustrates the dangers of unchecked human ambition in the Renaissance context. Faustus is a German scholar who gained all sorts of knowledge and received the title of a doctor in a short period of time. The problem with this character is that he is not satisfied with the traditional knowledge that he has, justifying his dissatisfaction by the limitation of normal sciences. In the opening scene of the play, Faustus justified that by mentioning five sciences where he located the limitations of each one. His rejection of traditional forms of knowledge led him to the conviction that he must learn a new sort of knowledge that can get him out of his current position. Critics and readers stated that the character of Faustus is a blend between a mediaeval and a Renaissance man. Where the Middle Ages society considered that God has placed each being in its perfect position and if anyone wants to reach further than what is designed for him, he will be committing the sin of pride. On the other hand, Renaissance society believed that humans can do more than expected by excessive knowledge and self-dependence. Faustus became the victim of both, first by studying theology and gaining the title of doctor in that, and second when he convinced himself that he could reach whatever through his pact with the devil. 'Philosophy is odious and obscure, both law and physic are for petty wits; Divinity is basest of the three, Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile. 'Tis magic, magic that hath ravished me.' (Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, 106-110, 2005). Through this speech, Faustus matched the idea of a Renaissance humanist, where he rejected classical knowledge and embraced an unlimited type of forbidden knowledge, drawing the line that leads to the idea which claims that humans can shape their own destiny through reason and education. Reflecting human potential but leading to a destructive end. "Now Faustus, must thou needs be damned, And canst thou not be saved. What boots it then to think of God or heaven?" Had I as many souls as there be stars, I'd give them all for Mephistopheles. By him I'll be great emperor of the world. (Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, 2005). Faustus disregards the consequences of his bargain with Mephistopheles, motivated by the belief that reason and will outmatch divine law. Levin (1952) describes Faustus as "the overreacher" whose tragedy is sealed not by hesitation, but by reckless overconfidence. Unlike Hamlet, Faustus does not wrestle with unconscious repression but actively asserts his autonomy against divine authority—only to discover, too late, the futility of his rebellion. Here, Faustus broke the traditional idea of the mediaeval period, where people accepted divine authority; he challenged the boundaries of human and divine laws. From a Freudian perspective, Faustus reflects the ego's inflation, which is the desire to transcend a human limit and rival the divine father (God). This represents the oedipal wish to replace the father and seize ultimate control. "a sound magician is a mighty God."

(1.1.63)Faustus's internal and external struggle showed up in the context that he is suffering from the egoistic desire for knowledge and power and the religious restriction of religious consciousness; his mind became a self-destruction machine, as the reasoning ability that he used through his journey in black magic led him away from salvation. Why then belike we must sin, And so consequently die. Ay, we must die an everlasting death. What doctrine call you this? *Che sara, sara*What will be, shall be! Divinity, adieu! These metaphysics of magicians, And necromantic books are heavenly(Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, 44-50, 2005)Doctor Faustus exemplifies the Renaissance humanist spirit: the pursuit of limitless knowledge, ambition, and the rejection of divine authority. Marlowe's protagonist is the archetype of the overreacher—an individual who seeks to transcend human limitations by mastering forbidden knowledge. Greenblatt (1980) interprets Faustus as a figure of Renaissance self-fashioning, embodying both the aspiration and the peril of defining identity through intellectual ambition. Faustus' character does not discuss a specific person but rather a universal issue, namely the desire for unlimited knowledge. He did not represent himself, but all humanity; he believed that he could deceive Lucifer to get what he desired without punishment and that he could break the laws of divinity. When I behold the heavens, then I repent, And curse thee, wicked Mephistopheles, Because thou hast deprived me of those joys.(Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, 177-179, 2005).Faustus' only mistake was not his contract with Lucifer, but his dissatisfaction with human limits, which began his tragedy when he insisted on having the damned twenty-four years, bargaining for his own soul to gain limitless powers; his firm decision to have black magic was his first step into hell and the beginning of his end.

2.3 The Joint Characteristics of Hamlet and Faustus

By placing Hamlet and Faustus side by side, we see two distinct yet complementary models of the tragic hero of the Renaissance. Hamlet's downfall arises from inner paralysis—a psychoanalytic tragedy of hesitation and repression. Faustus's downfall arises from the outward, overconfident humanist tragedy of ambition and disregard for limits. Both characters reflect central Renaissance concerns: the exploration of human potential, the questioning of authority, and the consequences of exceeding boundaries. As Kirschbaum (1955) observes, the tragedies of Shakespeare and Marlowe dramatize “the dual nature of Renaissance man—hesitant before his desires, yet reckless in his ambitions.” These plays thus illustrate the tension between the psychoanalytic depth of the inner self and the Renaissance drive toward intellectual mastery. Hamlet and Faustus, though shaped by different contexts, display several shared characteristics as Renaissance tragic heroes. Their similarities can be summarized as follows:

1. Rash and Impulsive Actions

- Faustus signs his contract with Lucifer without fully considering the consequences.
- Hamlet kills Polonius without verifying his identity, an act that intensifies his tragic downfall.

Humanists emphasized the use of reason and moral judgement as the highest faculties of humankind (derived from classical Stoic and Christian humanist ideas). Rashness represents a fall from the rational self-control celebrated by humanism. According to Pico Della Mirandola, in *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486), humans are rational beings capable of self-determination; rashness is the misuse of that freedom.

2. Failure to Consider Consequences

- Faustus ignores repeated warnings about the eternal cost of his bargain.
- Hamlet hesitates in his revenge yet acts recklessly at critical moments, overlooking the broader consequences for himself and others.

the power of knowledge and inquiry yet insisted that wisdom must be guided by ethical restraint. The Renaissance ideal was the “*virtuous scholar*” who balances intellect with moral integrity. Thomas More, in *Utopia* (1516), warned that knowledge without virtue leads to corruption.

3. Awareness of Sin and the Afterlife

- Faustus convinces himself that there is no life after death, despite his theological knowledge.
- Hamlet, though aware of divine law, proceeds with revenge, justifying his actions through flawed reasoning about universal sin.

Renaissance humanists tried to reconcile classical rationalism with Christian theology. The era's thinkers often wrestled with questions about the soul, sin, and salvation, considering human freedom. Pico Della Mirandola proposed that man's dignity lies in his ability to ascend or fall through his choices.

4. Blind Spots and Limited Vision

- Faustus focuses only on temporary power and pleasure, blinding himself to eternal damnation.

- Hamlet sees only his personal duty of revenge, ignoring the divine prohibition against murder and the broader implications for Denmark.

Humanism celebrated the expansion of human knowledge (science, art, exploration), but thinkers cautioned against the illusion that human reason could rival divine wisdom. Francis Bacon (early 17th century) advocated empirical inquiry but warned that pride blinds the intellect.

5. Disregard for Others

- Faustus, though less destructive to those around him, still disregards divine authority and moral responsibility.

- Hamlet's actions directly affect others, leading to the deaths of Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, and Laertes, as well as the collapse of the Danish kingdom.

Humanism emphasizes civic virtue and moral responsibility toward the community. The individual was seen as part of a larger social and divine order. Disregarding others reflects the corruption of that harmony. Machiavelli, in *The Prince* (1513), offered a pragmatic but morally detached view of power—contrasting with moral humanists like Erasmus, who insisted rulers must serve the common good.

6. Uncertainty and Dissatisfaction

- Faustus is never satisfied with the knowledge he attains, continually craving more. That reflects dissatisfaction with his position in life and raises the discussion about gaining a higher place than the one designed for him as a human. Pico Della Mirandola in *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486) declares that man is uniquely free to “fashion himself” into a higher or lower being. Faustus embodies this freedom but misuses it—he seeks to ascend beyond the human condition into the divine realm, thus corrupting the very essence of Renaissance humanism. From a Freudian perspective, Faustus's endless craving can be read as the dominance of the ID—the instinctual drive for gratification—over the superego (moral conscience). His intellect becomes a tool for pleasure rather than moral elevation.

- Hamlet remains dissatisfied with life itself, torn between reflection and action, and paralyzed by indecision. Like always, Hamlet raises the idea of people not caring for each other, taking him to decide his own fate. Michel de Montaigne, in *Essays* (1580), embodies Renaissance scepticism. He viewed man as uncertain, divided, and forever questioning himself—precisely Hamlet's condition. Hamlet's hesitation and introspection reflect Montaigne's belief that true wisdom lies in acknowledging human limitation and doubt. Humanistic psychologists such as Abraham Maslow later argued that man's dissatisfaction stems from “unmet higher needs” (self-actualisation). Hamlet's reflective nature and moral consciousness elevate him beyond ordinary existence, yet his environment denies him fulfilment, producing existential despair. Taken together, these traits reveal that Hamlet and Faustus embody two complementary models of Renaissance tragedy. Hamlet's downfall emerges from inward hesitation and repression, whereas Faustus's tragedy arises from outward ambition and defiance. Both figures illuminate the human struggle between inner restraint and external aspiration, suggesting that Renaissance drama was deeply concerned with the limits of human agency—whether constrained by psychological conflict or unchecked desire.

3. Conclusion:

This study has examined *Hamlet* and *Doctor Faustus* as central examples of Renaissance tragedy, focusing on how their protagonists embody different forms of the tragic hero. Hamlet's hesitation, repression, and inner conflict illustrate the psychological dimension of tragedy, while Faustus's ambition, disregard for consequences, and rejection of divine authority reflect the intellectual overreach of Renaissance humanism.

Together, these plays remain canonical tragedies in English literature, offering insight into both the inward and outward struggles of the Renaissance individual. Both the protagonists were students at Wittenberg University, and they had the same logic to follow in life. As we can notice from their soliloquies in the text of the plays, they shared the same point of view about many things related to life after death and the same aspect and logic concerning their complex matter of getting what they want. The significance of this comparison lies in its ability to highlight how different theoretical frameworks—psychoanalysis for Hamlet and Renaissance humanism for Faustus—can illuminate the tragic flaws of their protagonists. By examining how unconscious desire leads to paralysis in Hamlet and how intellectual pride leads to destruction in Faustus, the study demonstrates how Renaissance tragedy articulated the tensions between knowledge, morality, and human limitation. The implications of this research extend to future comparative studies of Renaissance drama, particularly those seeking to bridge psychological and cultural approaches. Such studies can further explore how other tragic figures, whether Shakespearean or Marlovian, reflect broader debates about human agency, divine authority,

and the risks of ambition. In doing so, comparative frameworks not only enrich the understanding of individual plays but also deepen appreciation of Renaissance tragedy. This study examined two faces of the same coin, which is the Renaissance mind. Hamlet represents the scholar, thinker and prince who turns knowledge into self-examination and moral doubts. Faustus, on the other hand, represents the excessively proud seeker of infinite knowledge who turns learning towards mastery over nature and divine knowledge. This comparison exposes the Renaissance's central conflict between reason and faith, the relation to God, and the tragic outcome of that. The Renaissance was not just an era of success and progress in literature, but it was also an era of psychological and spiritual crisis. Both Hamlet and Faustus were examples of self-aware, questioning and divided characters, divided into passion and reason, which reflects the inner consciousness as a literary theme and the tragic move from fate and God towards the human mind itself. Through what has been presented earlier, readers, researchers and even learners of English literature can grasp the information that the psychological analysis of this period is not just a matter of an individual, but it is a matter of a historical and social context. Besides, they understand their own world and start to raise questions about their limits and conscious conflicts. "I'll burn my books!" Faustus comments while being dragged to hell, "to be or not to be", and Hamlet comments while struggling for his revenge, creating two halves of Renaissance spirits putting psychology, philosophy and theology together in one frame and showing how the Renaissance produced a modern idea of a man responsible for his own fall.

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