

Deadly Sin of Pride in *Dr. Faustus* and *Hamlet*

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Faustus (Marlowe 1996) is the play written by Christopher Marlowe which was first published in 1604. The play provides a fascinating insight into an imaginary situation when human beings sell their soul for the sake of power and knowledge. The author presents the act of selling a soul as a heavy sin that leads one to suffering. Marlowe's work has attributes of works of literature that belong to the given period, which makes studying it especially interesting. Particularly, the author makes use of the chorus similarly to other examples of Elizabethan plays; the chorus introduces the characters and concludes the play. The chorus does not interact with any other characters present in the play. The notions of piety and sin are also in the center of the author's attention, which can be explained by the role of religion in the lives of people of the 16th-17th centuries. This paper aims at comparing the deadly sin of pride of Dr. Faustus with the sin of pride of William Shakespeare's legendary Hamlet from the work of the same name.

DR. FAUSTUS

In Marlowe's play, Dr. Faustus comes of age and gets the Doctor's degree; he is a genius who can do extraordinary things using the power of his intellect. However, feeling disappointment about all "ordinary" disciplines, he turns his attention towards black magic to obtain powers in order to become the most powerful human being. Faustus is carried away by studying magic feeling the desire to become a demi-God and thus plunges into the deadly sin of pride. He intends to use his extraordinary

knowledge to conquer the whole world; however, being just an ordinary human, he overestimated his power. The sin of pride even provokes Faustus to ignore the angel who advises him to abandon his dangerous lessons. Heedless of all warnings, Faustus continues his pursuit of power ignoring the fact that the sin of pride has completely taken his mind over.

Faustus repudiates God and asks the evil spirits for magic books aspiring to expand his knowledge. He ignores the warnings of the good spirits and chooses the wrong path being blinded with his pride. Faustus fails to realize that the sin of pride is gradually poisoning his whole personality destroying everything good and encouraging the evil that smolders in his heart. In Christianity, it is firmly believed that a downfall of a man starts with the sin of pride, and Faustus's case is not an exception. Faustus makes a bargain with the devil exchanging his soul for the sacred knowledge that is not available to any other person in the world. After his death, Faustus is taken by the demons to hell.

HAMLET

Shakespeare is considered to be the genius of the world literature and one of the pillars of British literature tradition. Nowadays his plays are still understood and admired by readers. The questions arisen in Shakespeare's works do not seem outdated; they still excite contemporary people's minds. In this sense, *Hamlet* is the work that awakens readers' strongest emotions: the tragic life of Hamlet, the protagonist of the play, does not leave anyone indifferent. Hamlet's impulsive nature makes his life full of doubts and sufferings. The character fails to act when it is necessary; he is not able to make

decisions and follow them. The plot of the play is based upon revenge: Hamlet takes revenge of his father's death. Revenge is shown as a very powerful feeling which has a destructive nature though; taking revenge is never traceless for the destiny of a person.

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As in the case of Faustus, Hamlet also suffers from the sin of pride. Hamlet is not able to suppress this destructive feeling, which leads him to the downfall. Hamlet kills several characters in the play, which shows to what extent the evil has poisoned his soul. He thinks that he is powerful and invincible while the rest of the people are inferior and do not deserve his mercy. "Wretched, rash, intruding fool" (Shakespeare and Edwards 187), these are the words of Hamlet after he accidentally kills Polonius. Despite the mistake he makes, he stays indifferent and does not repent of the sin he commits, which shows his cruel nature. In the end of the play, Hamlet is killed, which can be interpreted as the punishment for his sins.

The characters of Hamlet and Faustus have much in common; however, their sin of pride is the most evident similarity. Both protagonists suffer from unrestrained pride and cannot overcome this destructive feature. As a result, they both are punished for their sinful deeds. The ending of both stories makes readers think over the destructive effect of excessive pride and inspires them to purify their souls of this deadly sin.

Works Cited

Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus*. London: Nick Hern Books, 1996.

Shakespeare, William, and Philip Edwards. *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.