

## محاضرة رقم 6

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<b>Comparison Between Classical Tragedy and <i>Doctor Faustus</i></b>	عنوان المحاضرة باللغة الانجليزية
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### Comparison Between Classical Tragedy and *Doctor Faustus* in Terms of Themes, Setting, and Characters

#### Introduction

Classical tragedy, as epitomized by the works of Aristotle, Sophocles, Euripides, and Shakespeare, has traditionally been defined by a set of formal conventions and thematic concerns. These include a tragic hero with a fatal flaw, catharsis experienced by the audience, and a plot that evokes pity and fear. Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (circa 1592) is frequently analyzed alongside classical tragedies, though it both aligns with and diverges from these traditional elements. This paper explores the similarities and differences between classical tragedy and *Doctor Faustus* focusing on their themes, settings, characters, and dramatic structures.

#### Themes

### 1. **Tragic Hero and Hubris**

At the core of both classical tragedies and *Doctor Faustus* lies the tragic hero, whose downfall results from a fatal flaw. In classical tragedy, this flaw often takes the form of hubris or excessive pride leading to a reversal of fortune. Faustus similarly exemplifies hubris through his insatiable desire for knowledge and power beyond human limits, which ultimately leads to his damnation.

### 2. **Fate and Free Will**

Classical tragedies typically emphasize the inevitability of fate, where characters are caught in destinies they cannot escape. In *Doctor Faustus*, the tension between fate and free will is prominent; Faustus actively chooses to make a pact with the devil, embodying Renaissance humanism's emphasis on individual agency, but he remains unable to repent, sealing his tragic fate.

### 3. **Sin, Morality, and Damnation**

While classical tragedies often revolve around moral order and social justice, *Doctor Faustus* foregrounds Christian theology—sin, repentance, and eternal damnation. This religious framework adds a spiritual dimension to the play's exploration of knowledge, ambition, and human limitation.

### 4. **Quest for Knowledge and Power**

Faustus's pursuit of forbidden knowledge contrasts with many classical tragic heroes whose quests are often for power or revenge. His ambition reflects Renaissance ideals but also serves as a cautionary tale about overreaching and the consequences of defying divine law.

## **Setting**

- Classical tragedies generally unfold in mythic or ancient settings—palaces, cities, or battlefields tied to heroic narratives. These settings symbolize the grandeur and moral weight of the stories.

- *Doctor Faustus* is set in Renaissance Germany, grounding the play in a more contemporary, realistic world while incorporating supernatural elements. This blending highlights the tension between humanism and medieval religious beliefs.

## Characters

- Classical tragic heroes, such as Oedipus or King Lear, are noble figures whose fall brings about catharsis. They often have a clearly defined social status and moral stature.
- Faustus, though a scholar rather than a monarch, is a figure of intellectual nobility. His downfall serves a similar cathartic purpose but is framed within the conflict between Renaissance humanism and Christian dogma.
- The presence of supernatural characters—Mephistopheles and Lucifer—introduces a moral and metaphysical dimension absent in most classical tragedies, emphasizing the battle for Faustus's soul.

## Dramatic Structure and Style

- Classical tragedies commonly follow Aristotle's unities of time, place, and action, with a chorus providing commentary.
- *Doctor Faustus* employs a five-act structure typical of Elizabethan drama, with allegorical figures like the Good Angel and Evil Angel serving as moral guides rather than a chorus.
- The language in *Doctor Faustus* combines poetic grandeur with didacticism, differing from the more restrained diction of classical tragedies.

## Conclusion

*Doctor Faustus* both inherits and innovates upon classical tragedy. By integrating Renaissance humanism, Christian theology, and supernatural

elements, it expands the thematic and structural scope of tragedy. The play bridges classical conventions and early modern drama, offering a rich exploration of ambition, morality, and fate that continues to captivate audiences and scholars alike.

## **References**

- Marlowe, C. (c. 1592). *Doctor Faustus*.
- Aristotle. (350 B.C.E.). *Poetics*.
- Holderness, G. (1992). *The Shakespeare Myth*. Manchester University Press.