Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

English Language and Literature Programme

SELF-FASHIONING: A REBELLIOUS ACT IN RENAISSANCE ENGLISH DRAMA

Merve AFACAN

Ph.D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2024

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Merve AFACAN tarafından hazırlanan "Self-Fashioning: A Rebellious Act in Renaissance English Drama" başlıklı bu çalışma, 03 Haziran 2024 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Doktora Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ABSTRACT

AFACAN, Merve. *Self-Fashioning: A Rebellious Act in Renaissance English Drama*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2024.

Under the influence of Renaissance Humanism, the concept of the "ideal-self" was shaped in the light of the classics**,** and individual glory took on a new meaning among both the literati and the readers/ playgoers of the time. As the Renaissance signifies a period of change from dogmatic to secular knowledge, from women's social role to domestic spheres and patriarchal society, from feudalism to proto-capitalist society, the change in relation to cultural upheavals observed in the age influenced playwrights. Literary characters who are the representatives of that change self-confidently express themselves. This dissertation explores the concept of self-fashioned overreachers in Renaissance drama, particularly focusing on William Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1597), Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1616) and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623). Drawing upon Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning, this study examines how these protagonists actively construct their identities and destinies inevitably transgressing societal and moral boundaries. Richard III's approach to self-fashioning driven by his political ambitions, involves manipulation and strategically employs cunning and deceit as a means to seize the English throne. In contrast, Doctor Faustus stands out as an intellectual overreacher with his relentless quest for supernatural power and knowledge by using his scholarly prowess to challenge the limits of human capability and divine order. On the other hand, the Duchess represents a personal and emotional dimension of self-fashioning. Her defiance against patriarchal constraints and pursuit of personal autonomy challenge the gender norms of her time. Each character's distinctive strategy of self-fashioning not only underscores their individual agency but also reflects the broader cultural and existential anxieties of the Renaissance era. This dissertation argues that through these characters, Renaissance drama offers a profound exploration of the human desire for power, knowledge and autonomy along with the ethical complexities involved in the process of self-fashioning.

Key Words

Stephen Greenblatt, Self-Fashioning Theory, *Richard III* (1597), *Doctor Faustus* (1616), *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623)

ÖZET

AFACAN, Merve. *Rönesans İngiliz Tiyatrosunda Öz-Biçimlendirmenin Başkaldırı Unsuru Olarak Sergilenmesi*, Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2024.

Rönesans Hümanizminin etkisi altında, "ideal benlik" kavramı klasiklerin etkisinde şekillenmiş ve bireysel zafer, hem dönemin edebiyatçıları hem de okuyucu/tiyatro seyircileri arasında yeni bir anlam kazanmıştır. Rönesans, köktenci bilgiden seküler bilgiye, kadınların sosyal rolünden ev içi ve ataerkil topluma, feodalizmden proto-kapitalist topluma geçiş dönemi olduğu için, dönemin kültürel değişimleri oyun yazarlarını etkilemiştir. Bu değişimin temsilcileri, kendilerini özgüvenle ifade eden edebi karakterlerdir. Bu tez, Rönesans dramında kendi benliklerini yaratan aşırı hırslı karakterleri, özellikle William Shakespeare'in *III. Richard* (1597), Christopher Marlowe'un *Doktor Faustus* (1616) ve John Webster'ın *Malfi Düşesi* (1623) eserlerine odaklanarak araştırmaktadır. Stephen Greenblatt'ın öz-biçimlendirme teorisinden yararlanarak, bu çalışma bu karakterlerin nasıl aktif bir şekilde kimliklerini ve kaderlerini inşa ettiklerini ve kaçınılmaz olarak toplumsal ve ahlaki sınırları aştıklarını incelemektedir. III. Richard'ın öz-biçimlendirme yaklaşımı, siyasi hırsı tarafından yönlendirilir ve İngiliz tahtını ele geçirmek için kurnazlık ve aldatmayı stratejik bir şekilde kullanır. Buna karşılık, Doctor Faustus, doğaüstü güç ve bilgiye olan durdurulamaz arayışıyla insan yeteneğinin ve ilahi düzenin sınırlarını zorlamak için bilimsel yeteneklerini kullanan bir entelektüel olarak öne çıkar. Öte yandan, Düşes, kendi öz-biçimlendirme süresinde kişisel ve duygusal bir boyutu ortaya koyar. Ataerkil sınırlara karşı başkaldırısı ve kişisel özerklik arayışı, döneminin cinsiyet normlarını sorgular. Her karakterin kendine özgü öz-biçimlendirme stratejisi, sadece bireysel etkinliklerini/iradelerini değil, aynı zamanda Rönesans döneminin daha geniş kültürel ve varoluşsal kaygılarını da yansıtır. Bu tez, bu karakterler aracılığıyla Rönesans oyunlarının kişinin kendini şekillendirme sürecindeki etik karmaşıklıklarla birlikte, güç, bilgi ve özerklik için insanın hırslı doğasını bir başkaldırı unsuru olarak sunduğunu savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Stephen Greenblatt, Öz-Biçimlendirme Teorisi, *Doktor Faustus* (1616), *III. Richard* (1623), *Malfi Düşesi* (1623)

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INTRODUCTION

In the early sixteenth century, English language and culture did not have universally a high profile. They gained strength as England became the most powerful nation on account of the radical changes in political, religious and commercial fields. By the middle of the century, "Englishmen's determination to acquire a share of the discovery of the New World labelled" the period and turned the nation into "the centre of the commerce and religion geographically" (Pinto 37). Meanwhile, the most important catalyst in the way people adapted themselves to the ongoing unstable world was Henry VIII's venture into designating himself as the head of the Church of England. This significant move largely influenced the public's acknowledgment of their place within the social structures. Henry VIII's decision to break away from the Roman Catholic Church was motivated by a variety of factors, including his desire for a male heir, his frustration with the Pope's refusal to grant him an annulment from his first marriage, and his desire for greater control over the English Church. These individually oriented factors found their correspondence in the English society at large. Henry VIII's legal separation from the Roman Catholic Church and his self-appointment as the leader of the Church of England in the 1530s defined the psychological and social presence of individuals. The establishment of the Church of England as a separate entity from the Catholic Church led to the development of a new culture in England, one that was characterised by a greater emphasis on individual interpretation of the scriptures and a rejection of the Catholic Church's authority. As a result, the reality and diversity of Early Modern religious life became discernible (Kinney 41-42). As Henry VIII became the sole power-holder uniting church and state together in himself as a mortal human being, he inevitably became the representation of the inseparability of culture and power in Tudor England (Greenblatt, *Norton Anthology* 485).

Henry VIII's establishment of the English Church had a significant impact on the establishment of a new cultural identity in England which also paved the way for the development of a new cultural and religious identity: the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a cultural movement that took place throughout Europe during the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it was marked by a renewed interest in classical literature, art

and philosophy and characterised by the celebration of the ideals of Humanism, individualism and intellectual freedom. The Renaissance was unrivalled as a period when "intellectuals emerged from the church into an independent lay status, they had to reconceive their relation to power and particularly to the increasing power of the royal courts" (Greenblatt, *Renaissance* 36). As the Renaissance signifies a period of change from dogmatic to secular knowledge and a shift in women's social roles from domestic spheres within a patriarchal society to a more liberated state, it also marks a transition from a feudalist system to a proto-capitalist society. This transition involved a move away from the feudal system characterised by a rigid hierarchy and a land-based economy towards an economy that featured trade, private ownership and the accumulation of capital. During this time, the foundations of modern capitalist systems started to take shape. This multifaceted change deeply influenced playwrights who in turn, reflected these societal transformations through their literary characters. These characters, acting as representatives of the era's dynamic shifts, self-confidently express themselves as "constructions of language rather than creators and participants in discourse, and human agency is actually subsumed by discourse" (Wieland 2). This vivid representation in literature underscores the profound impact of the Renaissance on both individual identity and societal structures that illustrate how these changes influenced not just social roles but also the way individuals perceived and articulated their place in the world. Focusing on William Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1597), Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*[1] (1616) and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623), this dissertation investigates the social production and representation of literary figures as fashioned-selves and overreachers in Renaissance drama through the lense of Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory. This study highlights the complex interplay between individual agency, cultural norms and historical circumstances that shape the creation of these ambitious and overreaching figures of dramatic literature by examining the ways in which these characters construct and manipulate their own identities in connection with the societal and political factors of their respective plays. Among all the tragedies of the period, these three plays are purposefully chosen as they demonstrate characters who actively shape their public image and grapple with questions of identity. Richard III

[1] The B-version of the text is used throughout the dissertation. Published in 1616, this later version is preferred as it provides a revision of and expansion on the previous one.

manipulates others to see him as a just king, Faustus bargains with the devil to achieve power and knowledge and the Duchess of Malfi defies her brothers's expectations in order to pursue love and happiness. Additionally, while the protagonists of these plays reflect the era's emphasis on self-invention and individuality which challenge the established social order, they all experience significant internal conflicts as they hover between their self-constructed identities and the expectations placed upon them. This internal struggle is the mutual aspect that exemplifies the core aspect of Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning.

England became a centre for artistic and intellectual activity, through the agency of poets, playwrights and philosophers flourishing under the patronage of the Tudor court. The Tudor monarchs were renowned for their patronage of the arts, and their support helped to foster a vibrant cultural scene in England. With the superb human figure at the centre, Tudor England continued to dominate English life under the reign of Elizabeth I. Elizabeth I was "a learned lady with a thorough knowledge of Greek and Latin literature, and a power of expressing herself forcibly and fluently in Latin, Italian, French and English" (Pinto 32). Accordingly, she and her court "became the focus of the English imagination as well as the centre of political life" (Pinto 34). Elizabethans developed a reformist social vision, and shaped their literature as a culturally conscious one as they "were turning away from the prescriptive and idealised picture of the early and mid-Tudor periods to a more descriptive one" (Beier 57).

Unlike its medieval equivalents which were essentially religious in origin, frequently centered on biblical stories, and produced as a part of religious celebrations, English drama saw a golden period throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. In this period, writers created an incredible variety of works that addressed political, historical, romantic and human nature-related issues. Harold Bloom states that "the first impact of Elizabethan drama on readers and spectators in the present is likely to be one of recognition—a recognition of the present in the past; [he] hope[s] to complement that by a recognition of the past in the present, as when [they] register the contradiction the detail of the past imposes on the limiting certainties and unnoticed presuppositions of the present" (374). This observation points out the dynamic interplay between past and present in literature, a theme also reflected in the works of the era. In addition to emphasising individualism,

innovation and the exploration of the human condition, Renaissance drama placed a similar emphasis on the revival of classical themes and forms. These shared characteristics all contributed to the exceptional flourishing of the arts during these interrelated periods by providing a complex patchwork of past and present influences.

Fostering a cultural and intellectual awakening that significantly influenced art, literature and education, the Renaissance did not stand for merely a result or beginning of many discourses but as a milestone in human history in terms of the awareness and enlightenment that it initiated and flourished during the Tudor England. French historian and a prominent figure in the development of the field of cultural history, Jules Michelet, saw the Renaissance as a time of great intellectual and artistic achievement marked by the rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman culture and the emergence of new modes of thought and expression. He believed that the Renaissance represented a fundamental shift in human consciousness as individuals began to see themselves as autonomous beings who are capable of shaping their own destiny. Michelet's definition of the Renaissance drove forward the transformative nature of the period and the emergence of new forms of individual and cultural expression. According to Bush, in his publication of *History of France in the Sixteenth Century* (1855), Michelet's portrayal of history is one that highlights not merely a collection of facts, but instead "the record of the soul and original thought, of fruitful enterprise, heroic action, heroic creation. These qualities the Renaissance displayed on every level of human culture and achievement" (18). Renaissance England is portrayed as a society in which individualism and rivalry are at utmost importance than "the discourse of status, hierarchy, and interdependence of an earlier era" (Kinney 64). The Renaissance was unrivalled for it was a period in which "intellectuals emerged from the church into an independent lay status, they had to reconceive their relation to power and particularly to the increasing power of the royal courts" (Greenblatt, *Renaissance* 36). This transformation necessitated a re-evaluation of their relationship with power structures particularly in the context of the growing influence of royal courts.

The medieval age was described as "[t]he bizarre, monstrous, and prodigiously artificial Middle Ages [which had] broke[n] down with the discovery of the world and the discovery of man" and served as a beginning to the transformative period of the

Renaissance (Bush 18). The Renaissance, is renowned for being exclusive "on every level of human culture and achievement" in its emphasis on a distinct departure from the earlier times (18). Through this remarkable rebirth, there was a renewed interest in classical art, literature, and the ideas of ancient Greece and Rome; public and individual consciousness were re-defined and the re-discovery of the excellence of man laid the foundations of modern philosophy. With the rediscovery of ancient literature during the Renaissance, the prevalent philosophy of life reinforced secular and individual values that were incompatible with the Christian faith. Thus, the Renaissance should not be identified merely as a period witnessing the revival of the classics, but also as a philosophy that has cleared the way for a modern one to flourish. Douglas Bush calls the Renaissance as "an age of realistic revolt" (16). The reason behind referring to the period as such lies in its significance as being an undeniable transition from medievalism to modernity. Bush further elaborates on this significant ideological shift by referring to

> the Michelet-Burckhardt conception of the Renaissance, which has been so congenial to the modern mind, while it was, to be sure, based on historical research, was also largely predetermined by the philosophic outlook of its authors. It was, in short, a conception engendered by modern secular liberalism, by the nineteenth-century faith in rationalistic enlightenment and progress. […] Hence anything in the way of revolt was a step toward the Renaissance and, ultimately, toward the triumphant freedom of the nineteenth century. (32)

In addition to its influence on literature, "[t]he victory of Copernican cosmology, the success of mechanical philosophy and the rejection of ancient authority by some influential philosophers[,] […] the discovery of a new hemisphere by Europeans, the religious revolutions of Protestant and Catholic reformations, and the rise of absolutism and a centralising state" are the milestones leading up to the emergence of the modern world, characterised by scientific breakthroughs, global exploration, religious pluralism, and the consolidation of political power (Hankins 3).

These facts underscore the significance of the Renaissance as an essential stepping stone in the evolution of Western culture and thought towards a more human-centric, intellectually curious, and innovative approach, laying the groundwork for the profound advancements that would follow in the subsequent periods. Not only Henry VIII's declaration of himself as the head of the Anglican Church founded the centralist position

of the nation in the international arena, but also the Reformation which paved the way for the secularisation of people indicated the inherent tendency to discover their own capacity. This focus on human potential bridged the gap between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age by laying the foundation for a new era of scientific, intellectual, and artistic progress. The Reformation significantly reduces the influence of the Church on the individual. Navigating between the traditional medieval view of the self and evolving modern identity, individuals of the era developed a heightened self-consciousness. This self-awareness "was linked both to the increasing power of humans over natural events, and to the rise to power of new social classes such as courtiers and the urban middle classes based around the state and commercial centers" (Burkitt, "The Shifting" 16). The drive to actualise one's inherent capacity shifted the meaning of moderation, which traditionally represented congenial fellowship and communal accord, away from a spiritual ideal. In contrast, this impetus "gave rise to incongruous religious politics" within the context of modern society (Kinney 45).

This newly established religious politics, Protestantism, was grounded in a whole new aspect of the rejection of papal authority, the widespread use of English in religious services and thus a much more personalised relation with God. Therefore, with the doctrines of Protestantism that Henry VIII advocated, a new vision of humanity and the universe embraced all levels of society. Identification of a religion with a human being did not mean that God was humanised but it did suggest "that the most noble part of human nature [was] the divine element of the soul" (Pincombe 7). Man's appreciation of his existence and authority and evaluation of himself as closer to God as opposed to the medieval teachings were revolutionary. This emphasis on individualism and personal development was a step towards modernism from the more collective, community-focused approach of the medieval period.

These religious and cultural changes that Protestantism generated had much in common with the dominating philosophical and intellectual movement during the Renaissance and Reformation, that is Humanism. As was the case with Protestantism, Humanism emerged as a response to the perceived corruption and excesses of the dominant institutions of its time. It emphasised the importance of individual agency and personal responsibility. The Italian poet and scholar, Francesco Petrarch is considered as one of the founders of the

Humanist movement. Humanism emphasised the study of classical literature and culture as a means of developing a more complete and virtuous understanding of human nature. Humanists believed in the inherent worth and dignity of the individual and encouraged the development of personal virtues such as critical thinking, creativity, and moral courage. This mindset led man to consider himself as the centre of the universe. Humanism, which can be briefly defined as "a scholarly, literary, and educational ideal based on the study of classical antiquity" focuses on the potential for individual achievement and the importance of rational thinking (Kristeller, "Studies" 22). Petrarch's definition of Humanism posits the existential value of individual human beings and their inherent potential for greatness, as well as their capacity for reason and self-reflection. He believed that the study of the classics would provide a path towards greater knowledge and wisdom, and that could help individuals to lead more fulfilling and virtuous lives. In literary spheres, the unity of God and man was achieved through Humanist ideology in the works of Erasmus and Thomas More who "tried to combine their Christian faith with their humanist learning" (20). To clarify Christian Humanism, Douglas Bush, whose argument on Humanism is its being fundamentally medieval and Christian, foregrounds John of Salisbury's writings as the basis of the union of religion and the ethical values of the ancients (68). John of Salisbury's Humanism, as Bush states, corresponds to "a way of life and thought which keeps man in union with God and above the biological level that renders a holistic aspect to mankind. It opposes both the irreligious scientific rationalism which would separate man from the divine, and the ethical or unethical naturalism which would link him with the beasts" (54-55).

The term "Humanist" first appeared in the late fifteenth century in Italy, during the Renaissance. It was initially used to describe scholars who focused on the study of classical literature and culture, and who sought to apply the wisdom and insights of the ancient world to contemporary life. The word *umanista* (the Italian word for humanist) was coined by the Italian poet and scholar Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his famous *Oration on the Dignity of Man* which was delivered in 1486. The term gained popularity throughout Europe, and by the sixteenth century, it had become a widely recognised label for scholars and intellectuals who espoused a human-centered worldview to advocate the importance of individualism, reason and critical thinking. Though the intellectual

underpinnings of Humanism, an earthly philosophy of life, had persisted for an extended period solely as a theoretical idea, it was not until "the obsolete term 'humanitian' was first used even earlier in 1577" that this concept began to materialise in a more concrete form (Pincombe 5). Subsequently, the definition of the word appeared in a Caroline poet, Robert Aylett's work *Peace with her Four Guarders* (1622) that presented an allegorical account of the four cardinal virtues of justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude who served as guardians for the titular character, Peace. Aylett's definition of Humanism is rooted in the classical idea of *paideia*, which emphasises the importance of education and culture in shaping the individual. Aylett sees Humanism as a means of promoting the cultivation of virtue and wisdom, which he believes are essential for the development of a just and civilised society. Pincombe aligns Humanism with humanity in terms of its core principles and values, and marks "how different human beings [are] from brute creation, rather than by how similar it [is] to divine being" (7). Mike Pincombe discusses the duality of human nature by referring to the literary work of Robert Aylett. Referring to Aylett's work, Pincombe agrees with him that Humanism "explores human nature in its complex relation to 'divinity' and 'brutality'" (7). Throughout the work, Aylett emphasises the importance of reason and rationality in guiding human conduct, as well as the need for individuals to cultivate moral and intellectual virtues in order to live a fulfilling and meaningful life. Additionally, the work embodies many of the core ideals and values of Humanism, including a commitment to reason, learning, and ethical living and "sums up the Elizabethan lexical and cultural situation so neatly that it will serve very well as a point of departure" from the medieval scholasticism (Pincombe 5).

Humanist culture did not produce a new philosophy to replace scholasticism. Scholasticism continued to exist. Humanists questioned the intellectual conception of human nature that had been dominated by scholasticism but distinctively "favored upward social mobility for the educated, even at the expense of birth" (Beier 58). Under these prevailing circumstances, Humanism for Tudors was an intellectual, cultural and utilitarian concept. The objective of Humanism was to cultivate the society through "training in virtue and good letters; the practical aim was training for the active Christian life, especially public life" (Bush 78). Humanistic works that are worth mentioning as an important part of Humanist literary production are Latin translations from Greek. Access

to the history of ancient Greek philosophy has been achieved through these works. Kristeller groups the literary works of the period

> under three main headings: the scholastic, the humanistic and the vernacular. The scholastic literature was aimed to be read by the specialists of the field while the humanistic literature was offered to the professional humanists and to the readers with humanist education. On the other hand, the vernacular literature – which was imaginative and reflective – appealed particularly to laymen who were eager to inform themselves about philosophical concerns of the time without any professional university training or humanistic education. (*Medieval Aspects* 24)

The ancients laid the foundations for the remarkable development of the absolute, secular modern state, and even more for the natural sciences.

Throughout the medieval ages, literature existed only for scholars and for a specific purpose. But the literature produced during the Renaissance began to appeal to all segments of society. Stephen Greenblatt, in his essay on the history of literature, identifies literacy and the literature of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era as a status signifier. Literacy became sufficient proof in itself of a certain position within a social system (Greenblatt**,** "What Is" 467). Renaissance literati made use of the classics as a means to establish classical wisdom. The classic writers wrote predominantly on public affairs, education and religion. English Humanists benefitted from classical learning as a cultural resource to produce literary works in order to raise "citizens and statesmen, not scholars" (Bush 79). The Humanist mindset and the motivation for literary production can also be interpreted as an attempt to "catch up with the classics" (91). That is why, Renaissance literati tried to imitate the ancients in terms of the subject matter of their literary works. The literature of the period aimed to give rise to a high opinion of individualism, and as the English court became the dominant measure in many spheres and

> Tudor courtiers were torn between the need to protect themselves and the equally pressing need to display themselves. For lessons in the art of intrigue, many no doubt turned to Machiavelli's notorious *Il Principe* (*The Prince*), with its cool guidance on how power may be gained and kept. For advice on the cultivation and display of the self, they could resort to the still more influential *Il Cortegiano* (*The Courtier*) by Count Baldassare Castiglione. (Greenblatt, *Norton Anthology* 487)

Machiavelli's perspective, unique among other writers of the Renaissance, proposes reality as a type of performance which regards representation as a deliberate form of calculated role-playing. His approach to the world of the Renaissance suggests that any means employed to attain a just end is legitimate; this view sheds light on the era's complex moral and philosophical landscape. As Shuger puts it, "[t]he majority of Renaissance mirrors – or rather, mirror-metaphors – do reflect a face, but not the face of the person in front of the mirror" (2). This statement underlines the idea that the Renaissance perspective, much like a mirror, often involved a reflective process that revealed more about the broader societal values and beliefs than the individual's own identity. Besides, the use of the mirror as a metaphor in Renaissance literature is often employed to represent an allegorical reflection of the human soul or the moral character of a person, rather than a literal reflection of the physical appearance of the individual looking into it. In the Renaissance, mirrors were seen not simply as reflecting the physical appearance of the person standing in front of them, but rather as revealing a symbolic representation of their inner self. This insight underscores the symbolic significance of mirrors in Renaissance literature and their use as a tool for introspection and self-discovery. According to Harman, the process of forming an identity in literary texts provides a reflection of the actual life in addition to "value not the self who fashions, but rather the self *behind* that self—the one who knows that self-fashioning is illusory" (64, emphasis in original).

Italian Humanism is regarded as the fountainhead of all Renaissance Humanism. However, it is important to note that the Italian Renaissance did not occur in isolation, the exchange of ideas and cultural diffusion across Europe played a crucial role in shaping the development of Renaissance Humanism across the continent. The foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Europe was based on the principles and values of Italian Humanism which

> has been considered the fountainhead of all Renaissance humanism, and the full development of humanism in the other European countries has been usually attributed to the late fifteenth or to the sixteenth century when the movement in Italy herself had supposedly reached the end of its course. (Kristeller, "Studies" 8-9)

Nevertheless, Kristeller's argument underscores the significance of Italian Humanism as a driving force behind the broader Renaissance movement in Europe. Renaissance Humanism represents a secular mode of thought, as it fosters a contemporary intellectual response aimed at instigating transformative change. When an individual questions his purpose of existence as being both a social and strong-willed person, his inconsistent and hermeneutical attitude towards the shifting concept of the self runs counter to the medieval discourse on humankind. Due to Renaissance Humanism, "[t]he growing secularization of society, with the concomitant loss of religious power and of the influence of religious teaching over the interpretation of experience" has led individuals to experience the world and define their place in it in a novel way (Burkitt, "The Shifting" 11).

Under the influence of Protestantism and Humanism, Tudor courtiers tried to push further the already settled limits to experience upward social mobility in order to be close both to the King and God. These enthusiasts were likely to accept and adapt themselves to the new norms of the commercial society and "turned, in particular, to a much different social configuration, that of a society of orders or ranks, which placed greater emphasis on political power, social mobility, and conflicts between orders" (Beier 57). Through the awareness of his potentials, man gained self-confidence in pushing his capabilities to their limits. However, the utmost controlling aspect for the one who is in the process of discovering his potentials is the social and cultural structures that an individual belongs to. The new way of apprehension of man as a naturally superior being marks an awareness of his potentials beyond being just an ineffectual enlightenment. As Antoniades states, "[t]he move inward, then, is only a way to move outward, and an exploration of one's individual self serves only to map on a microcosmic level the terrain of the most macroscopic form, mode, and definition of existence" (47). Believing that he is the measure of all domains of knowledge, the Renaissance man trusted his potential and capability; his desire for self-fulfillment turned out to be the major goal to be achieved rather than being just a fantasy chased desperately. Despite the economic and social deprivations, man chose to protect his own interests by acting rationally. To be logical is to be powerful for the Renaissance man. However, the transition from traditional society to a relatively active society may cause destabilisation of established authority. The

change in the social agenda and power-relations has direct influence on the concept and definition of the self.

The change in the direction of self-evaluation and self-representation during the Renaissance distinguishes individualism as a Renaissance concept and marks it as a revolt. The classics had encouraged individualism which the medieval church had suppressed. In other words, while the medieval mindset represents a form of religious conservatism, Renaissance Humanism is "a broad idea of secular learning and secular thought based on the classics, independent of (not contrary to) both theology and the sciences" (Kristeller, "Studies" 22). Greenblatt defines the shift from the medieval ages to Renaissance as a natural historical process in which "the relation between intellectuals and power is re-defined, in which the old forms have decayed and new forms have yet to be developed" (*Renaissance* 36).

The Renaissance did not initiate cultural dynamism in Western society; rather, it marked a shift in the trajectory of an advanced civilisation that had already been in existence for several centuries. This period was characterised by the disintegration of the preceding discourse and its subsequent replacement with new modes of thinking and expression. Accordingly, Renaissance Humanism in England appears to be not a philosophical but a literary movement in regards to the literary circles's aim to produce works that would meet the standards of the classics**.** William Caxton's introduction of the art of printing from movable metal type contributed to the increase in literacy in the fifteenth century. This invention led people to access the Bible more readily (Greenblatt, *Norton Anthology* 485, Wieland 16). As opposed to the rigidity of Christian hierarchical structure, the concept of the Great Chain of Being was communicated effectively to the lower levels of the social ladder and resonated especially among the literary circles. Literature in the Renaissance, especially the texts written by

> people closer to or more dependent upon centers of power, and patronage and censorship suggest that it [is] taken seriously as an element in the construction of ideology. Criticism has traditionally regarded such matters as peripheral – the circumstances that the text transcends in order to justify its consideration as literature. It is the program of Greenblatt's 'cultural anthropology' to reverse this tradition by attending precisely to the relationships between writing and the structures of power in society. (Sinfield 324)

Whereas, for Pincombe, Renaissance Humanism is predominantly a literary movement as it involves "both 'literature' and 'learning' […] [that are] synonymous in Elizabethan England" (10). Whereas, it is noteworthy to state that

> the term 'humanism' has acquired in contemporary English and French usage a peculiar meaning which is hardly applicable to Renaissance humanism: it tends to designate any kind of philosophical attitude which emphasizes human values. Renaissance scholars acquainted with the sources of the period will not easily be misled into confusing Renaissance humanism with modern humanism, yet they may very well be tempted to utilize the modern concept of humanism for certain overtones in their discussions of Renaissance humanism, and this tendency seems to be justified by the sources themselves. (Kristeller, "Studies" 9-10, emphasis in original)

As a result of the change in the social agenda, Renaissance Humanists viewed earthly life as a valuable and meaningful experience in its own right rather than solely as a preparation for the afterlife. They believed that by engaging fully with the world around them and pursuing their own interests and passions, individuals could create a meaningful and fulfilling existence for themselves while contributing to the greater good of society. In this sense, Macpherson's conceptual framework of "possessive individualism" holds critical significance in characterising seventeenth-century England, a context marked by the predominance of commercial interests. Macpherson's model of possessive individualism is a theoretical framework that explains the emergence of individualism as a dominant ideology in modern capitalist societies. According to Macpherson, possessive individualism is characterised by the belief that individuals have a natural right to own and control private property, and that economic self-interest should guide social and political decision-making. This model emphasises the role of economic and legal institutions in shaping individualist values and practices and highlights the ways in which capitalism transforms social relations and modes of governance.

In Renaissance Humanism, the concept of the "ideal-self" is shaped under the influence of the classics, and individual glory takes on a new meaning among both the intellectuals and the consumers of the time. Accepted as the foundation of modern subjectivity,

> discovery of *res cogitans*, the indubitable thinking thing that is in some ways the self, is the result of a relentless skeptical program that calls everything into question – history, science, analytical reasoning, personhood, and world – everything, that is, but the thinking thing that is impelled to doubt but cannot doubt itself while doubting. (Caldwell 1)

Furthermore, from the modernist perspective, Humanism is defined as the glorification of human nature and the exaltation of these world-oriented goals rather than the otherworld-oriented values that dominated life in the Middle Ages. The emphasis on humanity and its potential served as the foundation for the humanist philosophy, which is widely recognised as the fundamental idea of the Renaissance. In the context of Humanism, an individual develops their own ethical code which "emphasize[s] the human relevance of certain problems, and [is] inclined to praise the dignity and excellence of man" (Kristeller, "Studies" 10). Among twentieth-century scholars, Paul Oskar Kristeller opposes defining Humanism as a philosophical competitor of scholasticism. According to him, Humanism is not a philosophy. The assertion that Humanism is not a philosophy may be grounded in the understanding that it does not consistently provide a comprehensive and systematic framework for distinguishing between phenomena and abstract ideas which is a hallmark of refined philosophical thought. He explains the mutual points shared by almost all Renaissance Humanists as "a belief in the recent or impending rebirth of learning and literature; and also an emphatic and genuine concern with man, and with human, that is, primarily moral problems" ("Studies" 17). The statement encapsulates the core tenets of Renaissance Humanism, emphasising the movement's anticipation of a scholarly Renaissance and its focus on addressing human-centric moral issues that reflect the intellectual depth and rigor characteristic of the period.

To make the concept of "self" more accurate and historically specific, Selleck puts forward an alternative terminology in substitution of self-fashioning, that is, "coining the self". The term underscores the complex interplay between culture and individual agency in the construction of identity and recognises that self "can be traced to a particular moment of linguistic and cultural change – in this case, early modern England. It is also to characterize selfhood as a matter of convention, as something that has *currency* and that *circulates* in a particular time and space" (Selleck 1, emphasis in original). The cultural relevance and circulation of selfhood underscore the influence of a historical and cultural context on the formation and interpretation of the self. This insight highlights the

significance of understanding the cultural and historical background in which an individual or a group exists to comprehend their sense of selfhood and the broader societal forces that shape it. By rendering self as an earthbound experience or idea, Selleck

> suggests further that the product (the "self") has some socially recognized *value*, some consequence in the world, though in a subtle way that value will only be in reference to something beyond itself, to something it is good *for*. All of these resonances are in play as seventeenth-century English culture begins to develop the reified terms for selfhood that we inherit (*self*, *character*, *identity*, and so on). (1, emphasis in original)

To comprehend the cultural underpinnings of Renaissance Humanism, it is essential to acknowledge that the civilisation of the Renaissance is an outgrowth of the advanced medieval civilisation and has retained its hallmark as "belonging neither to the medieval nor the modern period, but rather to a boundary era that was 'liminal' and conflicted in ideologies" (Beier 51, emphasis in original). It is a time of flux, where new ideas and values are emerging, while older, established systems of belief and social norms are breaking down. Therefore, the Renaissance is considered liminal because it is a period of transition marked by both continuity and change, as well as a time of cultural and intellectual exploration and experimentation. In the medieval ages, within the protective environment provided by their traditions and literature, people were not "exposed to" loneliness, meaninglessness and alienation experienced by the people of the Early Modern period. Rather, they were accustomed to the protection of their traditions by giving up their freedom, and the social environment in which they lived was still unfavourable for the realisation of individual autonomy and the pursuit of personal aspirations beyond established norms.

This constrained pursuit of individualism within a rigid social structure is echoed in the realm of literature**.** Hence, any given literary text performs as "political speech-acts" (Stevens 493). For instance, Elizabethan and Jacobean drama were intentionally aimed to approach "political thought indirectly, enigmatically, or even frivolously" (Kinney 29). The fact that man is a political being is not his own choice. The models of society he has tried so far constitute his attempts to find solutions to the contradictions created by his desire to be free and his encroachment on addiction. This controversy in the human self-image has a direct effect on the individual's self-assessment and their attitude towards the

society. To be the object of one's own observation is the proposal of Descartes who "imagined two attitudes as two separate attributes: the material body which formed the object of observation, and a more ephemeral, spiritual essence which composed the subjective observer – the 'I' of thought" (Burkitt, "The Shifting" 17, emphasis in original).

During the Renaissance, humanistic literature was primarily targeted towards a sophisticated society that placed a premium on classical-humanistic education for the betterment of the individuals's moral and intellectual development. Moreover, the literary achievements of the Renaissance enjoyed widespread popularity among readers who possessed a humanistic education as they "occup[ied] a special position, since they were so to speak not only ancient but also contemporary" (Kristeller, "Studies" 16). This period witnessed the rise of the individualistic heroes whose inner struggles and motivations became the subject of literary works that projected the broader cultural shift towards valuing the individual over the collective. Regardless of the intense influence society had on individuals, the events in their own personal lives always remained a priority. Moreover, no matter how society transformed, individuals continued to behave according to the innate requirements of human nature. In light of these, "the pluralism of representations that followed the demise of the old view, however hostile in regard to those represented as marginal" was interpreted as the modern view that was also closely associated with the whole civilisation of Renaissance Europe (Beier 64).

The advent of individualism, an influential movement that would redefine the intellectual, artistic and social landscapes of the time, signaled a significant cultural transformation. Under the influence of classical learning, scientific and social developments, the conceptual emphasis on selfhood paved the way for individuals to push their limits. To define these limitations, humanists put the ecclesiastical view of man displayed in the literature of the past centuries aside and turned their faces towards the writings of the ancients in which the "conception of citizenship eventually led to the evolution of an ascending conception of political power" (Witt 688). Individualism as a newly introduced current of thought was revealed "against the bondage and the uniform solidarity of the medieval religious, moral, and social order, the assertion of critical reason against authority, of the senses against ascetism, of the claims of earth against those of heaven"

(Bush 19). Also, the loss of the traditional religious perspective towards life converted the spiritual and intellectual orientation of modern literature and made "mundane and human motives seem, in comparison, such a small pinched thing" (Bush 99).

Even if literary works do not portray the absolute reality**,** they offer both "advise [*sic*] on behaviour and ways of performing. *The Prince* offers advise directly to those in power. […] Machiavelli also emphasize[s] the importance of *virtu*, the inner strength of a ruler, as an essential trait for princes to possess" (Wieland 7-8). In a similar manner, Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1528) is a guidebook "for performing at court[;] the book claim[s] that a courtier's purpose is to give good and honest advise [*sic*] to the prince, but courtiers who [have] followed that course [are] likely to provoke a monarch's resentment" (Wieland 9). As stated earlier, although humanistic literature exhibits a preference for idealism and actively fosters a sense of optimism towards human potential with respect to one's potential for upward social mobility, it

> does not necessarily guarantee that the virtues underlying such behavior will be internalized by the practitioners. One of the central claims of *The Courtier* is that virtuous behavior, thought to be inherent in aristocrats, could be developed by base-born courtiers through study and practice. So, through education in courtly conduct, humanists could advance themselves by displaying conduct appropriate to nobility. (10)

Humanism, as an intellectual movement that emphasises the importance of individual agency, examines the subjugation of humanity and offers insights into the performance of identity. The sixteenth-century individual who developed an increased consciousness about shaping their own identity recognised that self-formation was a manageable skill. Undoubtedly, that circumstance would foster an atmosphere of conflict and strife, as the cultural forces that wield power have a significant influence on the development of selfhood which in turn responds to these forces. This tension is the primary focus of Greenblatt's work. The main reason why Greenblatt takes the sixteenth century as the focus of his theory is the period's being the first in England in which the consciousness of identity formation was introduced and intensely experienced for the first time and "there was a large-scale sense of human identity as open to both social and individual shaping" in his terms: "fashioning" (Strier 384).

The Renaissance is a significant era for individuals who seek to redefine their identities through self-actualisation. This period is characterised by a desire for self-discovery and a willingness to challenge the established norms of society in order to explore new intellectual horizons, foster critical thinking and ultimately promote human flourishing. Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory is a valuable tool to generate a novel insight into the Renaissance, as it provides a framework for understanding how individuals in this period craft their identities through various social and cultural practices. By focusing on the motivations and strategies that individuals use to fashion themselves in the light of Renaissance developments, Greenblatt's theory sheds light on the complex interplay between culture and individual agency during this transformative period of literary history.

Stephen Greenblatt introduces his prominent theory of self-fashioning in his book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), and identifies the application of his theory to particular literary works from the Renaissance. He defines the term as "the achievement of a less tangible shape: a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" that defines an individual's presence and influence within their society (2). Accordingly, self-fashioning refers to the drives and aspirations of a person in the process of creating a self and also acknowledges the process as identity formation. The concern with the concept of

> the self has provided an opportunity for re-examining the relation between the individual and society, an opportunity to detail the myriad ways in which individuals are constituted as identities or subjects who interact in a socially structured world of people, relationships and institutions. (Elliott 13)

Additionally, Greenblatt states that "family, state, and religious institutions impose a more rigid and far-reaching discipline" on the identity formation (*Renaissance* 1). These institutions believe it is crucial to exercise control over individual identity through the application of this discipline, consequently affecting the larger social fabric. For this reason, individual identity "is not an interior possession, but communal, a question of property rights, a place-holder in a web of legal and social determinations" and should not be evaluated apart from social, political and dogmatic institutions (Kerrigan 116).

Greenblatt in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* refers to two fundamental issues: power and selfhood. Self-fashioning displays self not as a self-enclosed performance, but as an outward oriented response to power that "is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, *The History* 93). Greenblatt applies Michel Foucault's ideas on power to Early Modern literary texts. Power for Foucault

> must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or even reverses them, as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (*The History* 92-93)

Furthermore, under the influence of Foucault's work on the death of the author which disregards the author's background or agency as soon as the writing process ends, self-fashioning announces the undeniable interrelation between the society's agency and the text. In his article, Strier claims that Greenblatt follows Foucault's work, "What Is an Author?" for its idea of "seeing cultures as unified wholes [...] and to see works of art as both reflections of and reflections on social practices" (384) which proposes a symbiotic relationship between cultural components and artistic creations emphasising the interdependent nature of these aspects in informing and critiquing societal norms and practices. Tallman aims to prove Foucault's influence on Greenblatt as a historian and identifies his own theory with Foucault's

> discussion of sexuality in the Western world, *The History of Sexuality*, he asserted that self-fashioning was a response to a crisis in culture, which was for him also a crisis of the subject. For Foucault, self-constitution and cultivation were what stood against the normalising machine of modern technologies. Both self-constitution and cultivation are processes of becoming through self-fashioning. Within every cultural crisis the desire to reconstruct life anew is as much a reconstruction of the social body as it is a reconstitution of the physical body. (par. 6)

However, Greenblatt is unique in the sense that he combines the disciplines and ideas that represent the identity of the writers. He suggests that it is possible to gain insight into the social and political upheavals of the time through literature which is "a part of a complex,

demanding, and immensely stimulating exploration of possibilities" (Sinfield 328). Greenblatt talks about a reciprocal relationship between culture and literature. He believes that culture has a fundamental effect on literature; in other words, "all the world is *potentially* a stage rather than an actual one, for it provides all the material – and the possible agency – for drama but lacks the uncluttered sequentiality necessary to produce developing meaning and significance" (Kinney 2, emphasis in original). Greenblatt's analogy of the theatre with the world-as-stage is driven from "Foucault's concept of the theatricality of Early Modern punishment, focusing on the English examinations and executions for heresy as occasions for 'fashioning' the victim's 'self' in the eyes of both victim and tormentors" (Hillman 74, emphasis in original). This analogy also underscores the intricate power dynamics and societal perceptions at play during these public acts of punishment in Early Modern England that illustrate how these intense experiences could serve as significant moments of self-definition, not only for the victims but also for the onlookers as they bore witness to these extreme manifestations of authority and control. In this context of societal and cultural influence, Greenblatt's perspective becomes particularly relevant. According to Greenblatt, the role of authors in literary texts is insignificant when compared with the surrounding social conditions that the text is born into and represents the profound impact of societal forces on both literature and individual identity.

Greenblatt's thesis puts forward a revolutionary way of perceiving literature. It is revolutionary in the sense that it provides an analysis of identity formation by means of literary texts. Thus, the ensuing historical inquiry is perceived as an integral component of an innovative literary critique that establishes connections between literary works and the wider spheres of society and culture. Within the same framework, Doris Adler states that "[t]he primary attraction of Greenblatt's book, one suspects, is the promise of method rather than matter, the poststructuralist approach to Tudor literature rather than either the revelations or illuminations provided by that approach" (Sinfield 350).

Greenblatt puts emphasis on literature's "deep functional utility" by drawing attention to its "implication in institutional structures" ("What Is" 462). Hence, from a modernist point of view, Pecora argues that Greenblatt structures the "repressively tolerant Renaissance" by reading it as "a historical conceptualization that was all the more apt,

[…] in ‘containing’ socially ‘subversive’ tendencies” (“What Is” 507, emphasis in original). Greenblatt acknowledges Burckhardt’s perception of the individual and the state as both the object and the producer of art and carries the concept a century ahead. This art, in other words, is the “self that gets fashioned, molded, formed, shaped, invented, or discovered, as if it were a creation of sculptors, painters and poets” (Berger 285). Where Greenblatt differs in his work from Burckhardt is the degree of the social determinants’s effect on selfhood which is claimed to have a much more powerful influence on individuals in Greenblatt’s work. His work is a much more socially concerned one. His text “examines the way in which power operated in society, and the effect it had on the individual” (Haydon 9). Self-fashioning, being a socially and politically oriented theory, creates “an intellectual climate in which literary criticism could become more open to the influence of the social sciences” (Stevens 493). Barbara Leah Harman’s critique highlights Douglas Bush and Barbara Lewalski as literary critics who, unlike Greenblatt, approach Renaissance studies through a historical lens. Harman’s statement emphasises the importance of understanding different approaches to literary criticism and the ways in which they shape our understanding of literature and its historical context. In Harman’s words, as “an interpretive method […] and commitment to, the interpretation of what we usually refer to as ‘background materials’: biographical data, source works, cultural and historical events, behavioral styles, customs, practices”, New Historicism offers a comprehensive approach to literary analysis that seeks to understand texts through the lens of their cultural and historical contexts (53).

Social aspects condition the motives behind the process of fashioning. Being aware of their directive influence, Greenblatt considers the literary works mentioned as conscious responses to authorities. He applies an interdisciplinary perspective in relation to the interpretation of the texts that act “simultaneously as a body of citable authoritative interpretations, as a model for critical activity by others, and as a target for critique and clarification of theoretical goals and principles” (Davis 11). Greenblatt repositions Renaissance English literature within the framework of its historical milieu, considering the power dynamics and communal structures, as opposed to exclusively scrutinising the inherent ideologies within the literary texts. By focusing on the ways in which literature both reflects and shapes cultural and political dynamics, his approach offers a nuanced

understanding of the role of literature in society. Greenblatt works as a historian, a cultural anthropologist and a psychoanalyst to investigate Renaissance ideals and their effects on an individual on the grounds that

> [h]e not only describes the cultural model of Shakespeare's day in terms that are equally applicable to the present but also searches out the determinism inherent in that power-centered discourse and presents the individual struggle and achievement in the face of such forces, and forces comparison with the present. (Adler 352)

Greenblatt's theory specifies that "the culture and history are deeply entwined and act upon each other in complex and subtle ways" (Haydon n.p.). The growing philosophical and rhetorical interest in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance had a significant impact on the literature of the time, specifically in relation to the reader. This implies that literature was seen not only as a means of artistic expression but also as a tool for engaging with and shaping the philosophical and rhetorical debates of the era. In other words, literary works were not created solely for aesthetic purposes but also played a role in shaping the intellectual and cultural climate of the period. Careful examination of self-conscious characters is the key in the process of literary production as

> self-fashioning works in practice requires the reader to focus on a character that is self-conscious figure in the literary work, to pay attention to what dilemmas, doubts, and beliefs the character expresses, and as an observer what view, whether that of an insider or that of a skeptical bystander, he/she offers or questions. (Khodaparasti 60)

In terms of characterisation, self-fashioning invites an exploration of the intricate internal processes and struggles that a character undergoes while constructing their identity. Analysing how characters navigate complex emotional landscapes, grapple with societal expectations and seek authenticity can enrich our understanding of their self-fashioning journey. Furthermore, this approach allows readers to gain deeper insight into the characters' perspectives and motivations and sheds light on their ultimate choices and actions within the narrative.

Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning, an intellectual approach originating within the framework of New Historicism, emphasises the importance of the traditional historical context over other evaluative criteria in literary analysis. History emerges as a political

practice; self-fashioning is a politically conscious theory. It marks the beginning of the contextualisation and politicisation of a literary text. So, Greenblatt's critical reading specifies every literary text as inherently political so that each of which points out specific aspects such as

> a shift from the Church to the Book to the absolutist state, […] [and] a shift from celebration to rebellion to subversive submission. Similarly, [he posits] a direction enacted by the works of literature in relation to society: a shift from absorption by communality, religious faith, or diplomacy toward the establishment of literary creation as a profession in its own right. (*Renaissance* 8)

New Historicism refrains from prioritising specific methodological propositions; consequently, this theoretical approach can be perceived as an exploration of historical possibilities and contingencies. On the other hand, New Historicism "has turned not to history as practiced in academic departments of that discipline, but rather to a post-structuralist mode of dealing with the past" highlighting the break with conventional historical methodologies in favour of a more critical and interpretive lens to look at historical contexts and thus integrates social anthropology to have a more comprehensive perspective towards the texts (Jelavich 364). In Greenblatt's work which serves as the core text of New Historicism, the aim is to "seek at once to restore 'the past' to a place of honor and to reconceive entirely our understanding of history's relationship to great texts," highlighting the importance of re-evaluating historical contexts and their intricate connections to significant literary works (Harman 52, emphasis in original).

Greenblatt's initial investigation into the dynamic interplay between power and self-representation is conducted through his book *Self-Fashioning*, a work that he views as instrumental in the development of his own scholarly perspective (ix). This theory implies an endless exchange of cultural, textual and political forces of an intertwined and complex nature. This view leads us to question the relationship between the actual and the fictional. For classical historians, the author's authority is unquestionable and the great works of great writers are the product of their genius. However, New Historians share the opinion that under the influence of Foucault, authorial authority is the product of a certain network of discourses. New Historicism emerged at the very beginning of the 1980s as a manifestation of the anxiety to relate to literature itself and other discourses that had constantly been moving, expanding and changing boundaries within the cultural

sphere; New Historicism proposes that there is no other way to understand literature. New Historicism, as the name suggests, emphasises the historical moment in which the text under study is produced. There is a constant dialogue between the historical circumstances of the moment in question and the literary text. This dialogue continues to take place at the historical moment when the text is interpreted and translated. New Historicism seeks to show at which point the traditional conception of history blocked criticism, and pursues a new concept of history to overcome these blockages. For Greenblatt, both history and literature have lost their traditional immunity and even the differences between the two have disappeared.

New Historicism looks at the context of the written text, the society in which it is produced and its culture in which it finds the meaning. The disappearance of the idea that the text belongs directly to the author also makes it an object that has different functions in different discourses throughout the course of history. Approaches that reveal literature as the reflection of the reality of life and presuppose it is a product of a certain moral upbringing are also ideas criticised by New Historicism. As Foucault puts it,

> [i]n fact, the approach used by Blanchot and Barthes tended to a desacralization of literature, by breaking the links that placed it in a position of absolute expression. This rupture implied that the next movement would be to desacralize absolutely and to try to see how, in the general mass of what was said, it was possible at a given moment, in a particular mode, for that particular region of language to be constituted. It must not be asked to bear the decisions of a culture, but rather how it comes about that a culture decided to give it this very special, very strange position. ("The Functions" 4)

With the influence of the politically oppositional atmosphere of the period, New Historicism is a school that internalises the questions that Foucault raises. The relationship between the material world and the text has been weakened especially with the rise of post-structuralist theory. In the New Historicist approach, the concept of history is used instead of culture. The domain of symbols responsible for generating the contextually rich world of meaning from which a text emerges can be aptly characterised as culture itself. Accordingly, on the grounds on which the text is regarded as a historical anecdote does not give an undamaged reality of the knowledge of the fact; on the contrary, it only says something about the one who establishes the narrative. With this feature, this approach forms the basis of modern historiography using post-structuralist theories.

Contextualisation of a text emerges with New Criticism. In the context of this theory, a literary text exists on its own terms and should be evaluated merely as an aesthetical piece and it is not the only criteria that should be taken into consideration in the process of evaluation. New Criticism is in favour of not including the influence of the author and society on the text in the criticism, but taking the text as the only element of it. Hence, a text disengaged from its context is considered to possess intrinsic literary value; this assumption fosters the development of aesthetic superiority rooted in technical accomplishments over time and, furthermore, establishes a canon predicated on aesthetic achievement.

Greenblatt challenges New Criticism, as he states that a literary text cannot be separated from the social and political context with which the literary persona is engaged. Greenblatt asks the question whether an individual can create a persona for himself or is it the outside norms that decide upon one's identity. So, self-fashioning was claimed to be offering a new methodology to approach the Renaissance literary texts. Here arises the problem with "the conceptualization of selfhood [which] is squarely pitched between those who deny the agency of human subjects and argue in favour of the person's determination by social structures, on the one hand, and those who celebrate the authenticity and creativity of the self, on the other" (Elliott 13). The question of what makes the self is the main question of Greenblatt's theory which "gives culture a dynamic nature, the concept of self can be formulated with regard to how individuals deal with opposing ideas. Any new mobility presupposes constraints, and any alternative ideas, views, or theories are accompanied by opposing concentrated efforts" (Khodaparasti 55). The creation of the self within the framework of a dynamic society, where people are continually juggling divergent ideas, is a key component of Greenblatt's theory. Constraints and resistance to novel viewpoints draw attention to the tensions present throughout the process of self-fashioning. This investigation into the nature of the self offers insightful information regarding the difficulties involved in constructing a personal identity within changing cultural contexts. Greenblatt talks about a dialectical perception: the contradiction is benefitted by perceiving alternative intellectual, social and psychological structures. For him, literature functions as the manifestation of the codes, the expression of the codes and the reflection of the codes (*Renaissance* 3-4).

In advocating the interpretation of texts based on their contextual background, Greenblatt and Bush encourage a structuralist approach which emphasises the importance of underlying frameworks in textual analysis. Especially Greenblatt, in Harman's words, "is concerned with the implication of artistic representation as a distinct human activity" examining how this particular form of expression interacts with and influences individuals, culture, and society. (5). In addition to the influence of literary texts upon the culture, Kinney gives credit to the historians who also portray "a more nuanced picture of society" (52) that refers to a deeper, more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the complexities and intricacies within a social context referring to various perspectives and acknowledging the multifaceted nature of human interactions and experiences. Apart from this, the representations of social categories are fluid "as groups engaged in trade, manufacturing, and the professions [are] increasingly significant" (52). In this view, literature is regarded as a disengaged entity that gains meaning only when it lays bare a significant historical fact or cultural accumulation. Literature is not solely a means of reflecting historical events or cultural phenomena, but rather an art form that has the capacity to capture the human experience in all its nuances and complexities. Additionally, literature can also serve as a means of critiquing and challenging dominant ideologies and power structures that are shaping and influencing cultural and historical developments.

An individual shapes the culture that they are shaped by. Not any individual can be considered independently of the culture in which they are located. Stephen Greenblatt's analysis concentrates on the workings of power relations, their negotiation through the system of symbols and the impact of the resulting situations on other social phenomena and perceptions. Selfhood is the product of the social conventions which also alludes to

> the experience of an *other*. Thus what's at stake in Renaissance representations of selfhood goes beyond subjectivity, raising problems about *others* that can't be dispelled […] until the "self" is coined as the reification of subjective interiority, creating a free-standing *term* that can subsume specific contexts within a singular experience or perspective. (Selleck 5-6, emphasis in original)

Greenblatt highlights human beings as "cultural artifacts" (*Renaissance* 3) just like the literary works as they appear in "by reference to two types of externals: on the one hand, one opted for submission to some absolute authority (political and religious), while on

the other, one defined oneself against a putatively hostile "Other" (again political or religious)" (Jelavich 370, emphasis in original). Before the completion of Greenblatt's book, the postmodern view on the deconstruction of the self and "the metamorphosis of individual into cultural artifact" was represented as an ongoing concern (Pecora 505). Literary works had to focus on the framework of power relations even as they reshaped history and culture. Because this spiral of relations is the main executor of these two areas, this analysis conceptualises Greenblatt's work as a manifestation of the formation of individual subjectivity. Within this conceptualisation, he questions how freely the system of symbols that surrounds the subject allows him to create himself and tries to understand whether there is a subjectivity outside all these.

Greenblatt's theory is not concerned with the extent of an individual's freedom, but rather with the concept of a constructed self and the deliberate representation of this self. This is emphasised by Greenblatt's use of methodological rigor and caution in his analysis with regards to his "two traditional, and related, notions: 1) that there *are* distinctive selves, and 2) that there is something special about *literary* discourse both because it makes this fact visible and because it is often itself the means by which selves make their resistance felt" (Harman 63-64, emphasis in original). This sentence highlights two key ideas that are central to Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory. Firstly, it suggests that Greenblatt acknowledges the existence of distinctive selves, despite his emphasis on the performative aspects of identity. This implies that Greenblatt stresses the importance of individual agency and the ways in which individuals shape their own identities while also recognising the influence of social and cultural factors. Secondly, the statement emphasises the significance of literary discourse in both revealing and shaping the construction of selfhood. In other words, literary works not only reflect the cultural and historical context in which they were produced, but also offer a means by which individuals can express and resist dominant cultural narratives or power structures.

The concept of self has shifted within certain schools of thought from the traditional image of an isolated individual to a concept which foregrounds the social nature of a person. This shift has been twofold: one treats self as a philosophical image while the other challenges this idea by claiming self as the object of culture and history (Burkitt, "The Shifting" 7). The communicative process of creating knowledge serves as a unifying

factor between these two perspectives on the formation of self. As, Burkitt states, all the theorists of the field including Peter Ludwig Berger and Thomas Luckmann, prioritise interaction and communication above everything else in the process of identity formation. The critics share "the basic constructionist notion that discourse, human reality, including social life, is the product of conversation or and this also determines the powers of humans as individual persons" ("The Shifting" 7). Self-actualisation should not be confused with the attainment of a predetermined level of success that conforms to societal norms or standards. The process of self-actualisation begins with the individual rather than being initiated by society. The conditions in which the human being is located include hostile reactions that may come from the environment or the value judgments of the society that may restrict the individual. In order to be able to react effectively to the environment, a person must be able to make the necessary changes in an appropriate way. Hence, self-actualisation is described as being able to show the courage to risk life and to be free from vicious circles.

Literature functions as a complex exploration of thematic and stylistic elements where "self-fashioning does not advocate examining a body of work as a biographical product, solely based on an author's life" but displays "how the social shifts in governing institutions—the church, sovereign powers, family and the economy – influence writers to mold for themselves a guise and place that reflects the observations they have made about their culture" (Juarez 1). In this sense, according to Greene, Greenblatt's book is a dark one "relentlessly de-mystifying not only Tudor power structures but also common assumptions about identity and autonomy. The term *self* acquires a certain significant ambiguity, straddling history and artifice" (185, emphasis in original) as it signifies a pivotal moment in the analysis of Early Modern literary criticism. The aim is to represent the ideal which an individual purposefully determines their image of the self and acts it out. The literary persona cannot be unique in any sense and it is necessary to consider sociological factors that shape and influence the construction of a literary character or persona. Paul Stevens states that he dedicates his essay "to analyze perceptions of inauthenticity, and to show how the critical agon they reveal articulates a stubbornly old-fashioned, modernist sense of self" (494). In his explanatory assessment on Greenblatt's work, Stevens refers to the perceptions of Greenblatt's inauthenticity by claiming the

driving force behind the latter's theory of self as "his long standing but increasingly self-conscious and artful struggle to achieve precisely what these perceptions cast in doubt authenticity of identity" (494) despite the inherent challenges posed by the fluctuating perceptions and uncertainties that surround the notion of selfhood.

In Early Modern England, a new type of relationship is set between the individual and society centered on authority and the individual. The concept of self-fashioning challenges the notion of art as a timeless entity by suggesting that all texts are products of their time, thus rejecting the idea of art as being free from temporal constraints. As the theory develops, the individual is subjected to the regulations of the state apparatuses and may choose to either comply with or resist them. The social function of literature is to "mark divisions, to facilitate the assignment or jurisdictions, to help determine or rather to help formalize and justify" the directive influence of literary texts upon the culture (Greenblatt, "What Is" 469). Greenblatt's concern with power forms the core matter of the criticism that "is an analysis of the role of the self as agent, or victim, of culture, a vision of the self as limited by, or excessive in relationship to, the culture, as either enabled or disabled by the pressure – what Greenblatt often calls the 'power' – of cultural forces" (Harman 53).

Self-fashioning theory was considered radical at the time in the sense that the interrelation between repressive power and radical selfhood signified the clash between conservative and liberal values. Selleck argues that representations of selfhood require constitutive otherness to be read by English writers as interpersonal and as a "part of a wider process, in which the boundaries between what is self and what is other are often unclear or in flux" (2). In some societies with conservative and unchanging views, people who insist on continuing the normal process of individuation of a person may remain unsocial. Such a society has an unhealthy structure according to contemporary criteria as

> [j]ustifiably or not, the modern Western focus on the self has been linked to ills that range from social fragmentation and inequality through imperialism to ecological destruction; to reject or displace it can be a way to stand against the hazards it may let loose. But demoting the self can serve quite different ends, and one of these […] has been to intend a mode of self-existence far more powerful and unrestricted than the one it sets out to dismiss. (Seigel 4)

According to the theory, self is fashioned whether as a resistance or submission to the power structures. Fashioning of the self demands an awareness by an individual about their own being "so as to examine, judge, and sometimes regulate or revise it" (Seigel 6). The active agent of the process is through "its own realization, establishing order among its attitudes and beliefs, and giving direction to its actions" (6). However, societies which do not allow individuals to transform their creative powers into action, eventually become the scene of turmoil and undergo structural changes. The act of fashioning of the self works as a reaction to the existing cultural norms. The application of Greenblatt's theory provides information about the insight of the time and the literary representations of the possibility of any resistance to power as

> [t]he subject is seen not as a creator, but rather creature of language; language precedes every individual, and provides him or her with a false sense of presence and psychic unity. To speak about oneself is thus, in reality, to speak about language. With such 'insights,' it is hardly surprising that deconstruction is radically ahistorical; social context, individual agency, and authorial intention are irrelevant to a project concerned with interrogating language itself. (Jelavich 362)

It should be taken for granted that a person who is going through a rigid and oppressive or rapid change will fail in their efforts to integrate the individualisation process that leads to "troubled but dynamic personalities, who constantly [strive] to suppress the alien forces within that subverted the values to which they [hope] to subscribe" (Jelavich 371).

Early Modern England saw a breakthrough in identity formation. The self has become a construction in response to authorities. Individuals who aim to take a firm stand in the present system, have become active participants in the society. Writing literary works as a way of constructing a new type of self by means of self-fashioning turns out to be "an artfully manipulative process in which a new identity is presented to the world; this new identity can be either the persona of the author as a living being or the characters that speak to members of a given society through a work of literature" (Juarez 2). By employing fictional personas, writing provides a vehicle for expressing the self's submission to or defiance of authority, which may not be immediately evident in the literary work. In relation to the facets of self-fashioning, Dalia R. Juarez draws attention to the fact that

> while the primary focus of the self-fashioning approach is to examine and broaden our scope of understanding of a specific time and place, this learning doesn't simply manifest itself through one main character that readers can assume is the author. The concept of self-fashioning allows us to discuss writing in a very prismatic manner. (3)

In other words, authorities become the agency through which individuals define themselves. Behaving in defiance of societal norms can be inferred as an addictive tendency that is "shaped and defined against the backdrop of such political and public forces; yet the fabrication of the self, psychologically and emotionally, is rightly understood to involve something more subjective, particularly in the ways in which desire, emotion and feeling influence the conscious and unconscious experience of sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity" (Elliott 14). Since a dependent person may have a slight chance to learn to be autonomous, developing an opposing reaction is interpreted as individualisation which may not always be an authentic expression of one's true self, but rather a reaction to external circumstances. The self is explained by Anthony Elliott as

> deeply ambiguous. On the one hand individualization is portrayed as pertaining to the self, as a matter of subjective value and the personal sphere. In this sense, individualization essentially involves the project of self-transformation. This is a world of people confronting themselves, reorganizing their professional lives, reassembling their personal commitments or remaking daily life as a do-it-yourself biography. (165)

However, it is important to note that individualisation is a complex and multifaceted process that involves not only the rejection of authority but also the development of a unique sense of self and identity. Therefore, while reactive responses may play a role in the process of individualisation, it is not the only factor at work as it is essential to consider the broader cultural, social and psychological factors that contribute to the development of individuality.

The concept of activity necessitates systematic stability. This context refers to the dynamic and evolving nature of human beings, their interactions with the external world and their inherent capacity for agency and change. Without systematic stability, human activity would lack direction and purpose and result in chaos and confusion. Therefore, the relationship between activity and systematic stability is critical for understanding

human behaviour and the ways in which individuals engage with their world. In other words, the individual recognises that their being is a process that interacts with both their internal state and the external environment. In this light, as opposed to the acceptance of an individual as an isolated entity, social constructionism emphasises the need to deconstruct prevailing theories of the self and proposes an alternative linguistic model that reads Renaissance selfhood "as who one is *to others*, or *as an other* – or even *in* or *through* an other" (Selleck 11, emphasis in original). In the light of the social constructionist movement, Burkitt defines the individual as a "construction of various discourses in society, which produce both the image and the capacities of such a subject" ("The Shifting" 9). To further the argument that an individual is the ideological product of society, Burkitt refers back to Derrida's theory addressing "all identities are given through the basic frameworks provided by language and […] [m]eaning is not something which is given; it exists only within language, and is made possible by the rules that allow the language to be written and spoken" (10). In this sense, accepting language as the absolute symbolic structure in defining oneself during the process of fashioning, Preston explains the essence of the fashioning process as "redescribing oneself, continually reevaluating and modifying one's 'final vocabulary'" (16). So, literature is embedded within symbolic structures which "art and human beings as constructions are created within" (Khodaparasti 56).

In addition to this multidimensional approach "within the pale of religion itself, in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the conditions which engendered and fostered Christian Humanism have greatly changed. Universality and unity have given place to multiplicity and conflict" (Bush 84). The influence of religious texts and the literature of the Renaissance on the religious temperament functioned as prominent casual factors shaping the Early Modern culture and society. Within the spheres of the literary preoccupations of Humanism which represent authors as moral teachers, the inner turmoil of a "divided-self" is portrayed as the fusion of classical culture and Christianity which "proves difficult to sustain; the more one examines the relationship of verities and falsehoods, the more they become implicated in each other" (Jelavich 362). Renaissance writers offer a world of tragic contrasts through which man is represented as the combination of an angel and a beast as "they themselves commonly stand in the centre,

not on or beyond the margins, of the normal and ethical" (Bush 97). The individual may experience constant anger towards the authority they perceive as a blocking institution. However, given that absolute obedience to authority, as well as reactive responses in relation to it, can limit human progress and such responses may escalate into aggressive or even destructive behaviours.

Individuation means the uniqueness and uniqueness of one person from others. If humanity attempts to reach perfection, it needs to realise its own natural divinity. However, for various reasons, the bestial nature of a human being is frequently seen in adverse light and made explicit in Renaissance literature. The dominant practice of the period which is the imitation of classical models and ideals, reflects not only the essence of an individual but also establishes a mode of power. This power "exists when people are prevailed upon to conduct themselves according to conventions, doctrines, rules, and principles in which they do not even believe. In fact, power lies in the capacity of a system to what extent it can make people of a given culture involved in the power structure by assuming a role and playing a part in it" (Khodaparasti 66). As Christian faith designates humans as containing both divinity and bestiality in themselves, the soul of man is the battlefield where good and evil are in constant fight. This double perspective regarding man gave literature its interrelated nature within the historical context and authorial biography.

In each social group, a generation systematically conveys its culture to the next generation. So, the members of the same generation develop common characteristics; and thus, the basic personality types of that group are formed. In this vein, personal identity functions as

> a crucial interface between the private organism and society. The identity represents an important man by which the psychical being takes its place in society so as to communicate and interact with other people. […] It is no more correct to say that the individual is passively created by society than it is to regard society as a mere outcome of the choices and actions of autonomous, self-determined individuals; self and society shape each other. (Baumeister 191)

Contemporary societies, on the other hand, give priority to being aware of man's existence and acting in line with their own inner life. To put it differently, a person's true

identity is determined not by what events they have experienced, but by how those events are experienced by the person. Some people who are worried about being assimilated within the value judgments of society go so far in their effort to fashion themselves that they lose the opportunity to identify with the culture to which they belong. It is only when a person's integration is accepted by other people that they acquire a truly constructive quality and such a person would not experience feelings of guilt and loneliness because of being individuated.

The expectation of being valued and a certain way of treatment from others form the backbone of the social relations. One's concern with their social image and its validation by the society they live in has an utmost deterministic impact on a person so much that "[s]ometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain" (Goffman 2). As the interaction among the participants advances, an individual is forced to come up with responsive actions that are bound to alter in reaction to external factors or the fellow participants. Goffman marks that "when an individual appears before others, he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation" (8). The pressures on social configuration**,** as Beier states, began in the early Tudor Era; among the leading ones are depicted as "the growing acceptance of individualism, and specifically the principle of careers open to talent, which was espoused by humanistically trained writers and which challenged the old notion of fixed hierarchies based upon birth" (57). This shift in societal values marked a significant departure from the previously rigid hierarchies that were anchored in one's birth and social standing.

Following this non-conformist model of self-made individualism, "the perception of rising social polarization in England" is considered as the pressure that has paved the way to the distrust among community members at the time (Beier 53). Another pressure may be specified as the probable fluctuation in the fortune of a member in the realm of possibility in Tudor England through which new meanings are set for people to define and "adjust themselves to suit politics, modes of dress and tastes. Once an author has created a self for his culture, he can express his new dressing to the world; one mode of expression used by sixteenth century men was literature" (Juarez 2).

In his works *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) and *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988), Greenblatt endeavors to illustrate his methodological perspective in the domain of literary criticism by centering his attention on English literature of the Renaissance Era. Greenblatt presents 'fashioning' as a Renaissance concept on the grounds of creating an awareness among people regarding their own capacity in the socio-cultural context; at the same time the concept can also be read as the "predicament of the individual who strives to fashion his or her self in such a society" (Sinfield 325). Since self-fashioning is inherently linked to the sociocultural milieu, the individual is regarded as a product of the cultural environment of their time. Given the undeniable interdependence among individuals, it is imperative to acknowledge the role of other societal actors to recognise the individual as an agent of culture. In this dissertation, the focus is on the cultural production of literary characters and what they aim to achieve as their fashioned-selves. This dissertation examines the cultural production of literary characters as fashioned-selves and overreachers in Renaissance drama, with a specific focus on William Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1597), Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1616) and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623), through the lens of Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory. By analysing the ways in which the protagonists in these plays construct and manipulate their own identities in relation to the social and political contexts of their respective plays, this study takes the intricate interplay between individual agency, cultural norms and historical circumstances that shape the creation of these captivating and ambitious figures of literature as its main concern. Subsequent chapters will primarily concentrate on the protagonists with a particular emphasis on their drives to fashion themselves as overreachers.

The change in the direction of self-evaluation and self-representation during and after the Renaissance marks an effectual change in literary spheres in terms of characterisation. In Harman's point of view,

> Greenblatt describes these practices as forms at once of self-destruction and self-creation. They are self-destroying because the characters who engage in them quite literally risk their lives, but they are also self-creating because in their reckless resistance to authority, their joyful anarchism, they resist the dominant ideology into which they are, otherwise, absorbed against their wills. (60)

This implication renders literature as a means of instruction that is needed for salvation. When the dramatic works in the scope of this dissertation are taken into consideration, the theme of overreaching will not be criticised but justified as a fact that highly motivates the characters' aim within the bounds of their times. Moreover, a more extensive evaluation on the basis of selfhood is associated with Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory during which characters' psychology will be intentionally foregrounded in these dramatic works. Furthermore, as fashioning of the self is aligned with representation, the performance of the characters will be put forward in the following chapters as "fashioned" selves who create their own personas in accordance with their potentials.

In these intentionally selected literary works, this study will deal with self-fashioned protagonists as social entities who form distinctive but rebellious selves for themselves in the sense that they do not confront mainstream ideology but aspire to surpass the limits assigned to them by society. Additionally, Greenblatt's theory "occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss" in relation to their social or political positions to achieve their aims (Greenblatt, *Renaissance* 9).

Self-fashioning is specified as a critical theory based on the uniqueness of the individual; however, in the hands of these aformentioned playwrights, the theory does not praise one's uniqueness but suggests how harmful fashioning might be both for the society and the individual. Therefore, it happens that people who pursue self-fashioning are unable to exercise the rights granted to them within the limits of common sense and that they are unable to come up with constructive, creative and realistic proposals by simply opposing existing institutions. The dramatic texts, namely, *Richard* III, *Doctor Faustus* and *The Duchess of Malfi,* are purposefully chosen for their representation of peripheral figures that overlap with the dominant social and political structures of their times. The representation of the marginal is one of the modern aspects of English drama that can be traced back to the Renaissance and these texts can be inferred as the first steps towards modernisation in terms of the discovery of human subjection. Nevertheless, characters

challenge the community in their own ways. To further support Greenblatt's comment, self-fashioned characters will be studied as ambitious overreachers who are concerned with their specific benefits.

In conclusion, the present dissertation builds upon Stephen Greenblatt's influential theory of self-fashioning by extending its scope beyond the confines of the sixteenth century into the seventeenth-century dramatic landscape. In doing so, the primary objective of this dissertation is to examine the applicability and relevance of Greenblatt's theory to the central characters in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. The analysis endeavors to demonstrate that the protagonists in these canonical works not only embody the principles of Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory but also reveal the self-destructiveness inherent in the process of self-fashioning. Therefore, this research aims to elaborate on the dynamics of character evolution within these foundational sixteenth and seventeenth-century plays. This study is hopefully will be an initial one in its examination of these three plays together within the framework of Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory.

In the first chapter, attention will be directed towards the examination of political and economic institutional critique in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. The play explores how Shakespeare's portrayal of historical events and characters reflect and challenge the political and social structures of his time. Centered on the titular character, Richard III will be portrayed as a subversive figure in the context of his political status. A thorough analysis will be undertaken to assess the conflict between Richard's personal ambitions and his obligations as a monarch with the aim of shedding light on the processes contributing to his identity formation. In this exploration, emphasis will be placed on Richard III's self-fashioning and the ways in which the character navigates and reconciles the diverse facets of his complex persona. Furthermore, the implications of Richard III's intricate character development on the overarching themes and narrative of the play will be investigated to elucidate the significance of his identity struggles within the larger socio-political landscape.

In the subsequent chapter, a thorough examination of Christopher Marlowe's play, *Doctor Faustus*, will be conducted by focusing on its critique of contemporary religious

and educational institutions. The protagonist, Faustus, embodies the Renaissance man as an intellectual who has developed his intellect independently. Remarkably, Faustus distinguishes himself as a secular individual with secular education, akin to Marlowe's own experience as a member of the University Wits. Unlike his contemporaries, Faustus's self-fashioned persona aspires to transcend the constraints of mortality, ultimately courting his own demise by challenging Christian orthodoxy.

In the third chapter, the Duchess, in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, will be read as a woman striving to establish an autonomous female identity mainly through her second marriage as opposed to the oppressive forces of the patriarchy and her family. This analysis will also highlight how her actions and decisions in the play challenge the traditional gender roles and expectations of her time. Throughout this chapter, the impact of the Renaissance on women's personal liberties will be explored and elucidated through the protagonist's quest for freedom which ultimately situates her as a marginalised figure in defiance of prevailing social norms. The Duchess emerges as a rebellious figure who, regrettably, succumbs to failure at the play's ending. Moreover, this chapter will delve into a critical examination of social and gender inequalities as well as the corruption of the familial and patriarchal institutions. To achieve this, theoretical discussions on gender performativity and the impositions of patriarchy on gender identities will be employed, shedding light on the ways in which these forces interact to constrain the Duchess's self-fashioning and shape her tragic fate.

CHAPTER 1
"AND SEEM A SAINT, WHEN MOST I *PLAY* THE DEVIL."[2]: RICHARD III AS A SELF-FASHIONED OVERREACHER

Acknowledged as one of the leading pivotal figures in literature and "the first universal author replacing the Bible in the secularized consciousness", William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born as the third of eight children of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden (Bloom 10). His parents were residents in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, England. John Shakespeare was a prominent local figure with a respectable status as a glover, a leatherworker and a trader in wool who also served as an official ale taster (Honigmann 1; Potter 3-12). Alongside his mentioned occupations, he was actively involved in local politics and civic duties and served in municipal positions that are equivalent of a modern-day mayor. John Shakespeare's political position was significant for the time bestowing a certain level of status to his family. The Shakespeare family was a respectable middle-class family partly due to his mother's lineage. Mary Arden was a member of the gentry class and inherited some of her family's property that helped her own growing family's financial stability. As the eldest surviving son, William, received a good education at King's New School in Stratford that provided a comprehensive education in Latin literature and the classics and was inevitably influential in cultivating his literary skills (Potter 3-12; Honigmann 2). Growing up, William Shakespeare most likely had considerable theatrical experience, "since Stratford was large enough to be a venue for traveling players" (Potter 14). By his teenage years, he "might not only have seen visiting players, but also have acted in classical or neoclassical plays" (Potter 35). Furthermore, he also had a strong inclination towards writing plays since "an author can give himself large parts in his own plays" that would allow him to take on significant roles in the productions he crafted (35). In addition to his baptism record from the parish register of the Church of England, the second official document pertaining to Shakespeare's early life is his marriage certificate. In 1582, at the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway with whom he had three children (Potter 55).

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[2] (I. iii. 338, emphasis added).

As an actor, Shakespeare "traveled with a company of players, or several companies in succession, probably coming to London for a short season each year and returning to Stratford when the tour ended" (Potter 60). In the meantime, the decline in the family's fortunes had a direct negative effect on their social standing that led William Shakespeare to pursue a career in London's theatrical world. In addition to the financial concerns, Shakespeare's move from Stratford to London was driven by a combination of personal ambition and the vibrant theatrical landscape of the capital. London, as the cultural and financial centre of England during the Elizabethan Era, offered unparalleled opportunities for playwrights and actors in its flourishing theatre industry. Seeking to advance his career, Shakespeare was drawn to the city where he could improve his craft and gain recognition in the competitive world of sixteenth-century English theatre (Potter 10). Upon reaching London, Shakespeare observed the challenges facing writers in that era first hand and "learn[ed] from the experience of seeing that plays in performance, and to improve even plays that had already been successful, [was] part of what made Shakespeare Shakespeare" (Potter 72). This immersion in the bustling theatrical scene of London not only enriched Shakespeare's understanding of dramatic art but also refined his innate ability to adapt and refine his works in response to the dynamic tastes of Elizabethan reader/playgoer. "Political debate took place constantly in and around Shakespeare's London" especially in the realm of public performances (Hadfield 20). These performances included court entertainments and masques and were not just mere spectacles of flattery as commonly thought but often appeared to be "aggressively polemical, trying to influence the behaviour of the monarch, and not simply excuses for lavish sycophancy" that positioned them as crucial platforms for political expression and persuasion aiming at impacting royal decisions and policies (21). In this period, a crucial discussion raised by these performances "centered on the question of the monarch's status and right to rule" that significantly influenced the themes and political undercurrents in Shakespeare's plays which contextually revolve around the contemporary discourse on monarchy and governance (Hadfield 23). In such a troubled environment, Shakespeare emerged as an actor and a principal writer for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, in London, by the early 1590s.

William Shakespeare's contributions to English literature are monumental and manifold. Most importantly, his linguistic creativity revealing itself in his introduction of countless original words, phrases and idioms that are still in use have enriched the English language and enhanced its expressiveness. Secondly, he was innovative in his use of verse**,** prose and thematic depth. He also made use of the iambic pentameter rhyme scheme in his sonnets but followed the abab cdcd efef gg scheme so as to create melodious and memorable verse that structurally differentiated his work from the Petrarchan sonnet. Thematically, on the other hand, Shakespeare sought to transcend the simplicity of romantic love and provided a deeper exploration of human relationships and their resilience in the face of challenges as observed in the line in Sonnet 116: "Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments;" (Shakespeare 1-2). He achieves this kind of melodious and memorable lines through his linguistic mastery and wordplay. He attributes words that inhabit multiple layers of meaning to create depth, humour and have affective impact on the reader/ playgoer. In his works, his linguistic mastery and wordplay stand out as devices that enrich the narrative, character development and thematic expression. Besides, instead of taking advantage of the conventional poetic narration, he puts forward a more realistic description of his beloved by challenging the traditional motifs in Sonnet 130: "My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun" (Shakespeare 1). In the line, he emphasises the uniqueness of his mistress's beauty skillfully choosing and arranging words while maintaining a powerful imagery and emotion at the same time. In addition to wordplay, he uses both verse and prose in his plays. While many of his lower-class characters speak in prose, Shakespeare's noble characters often use verse but they also switch to prose during moments of madness, introspection or comic relief as seen in *Hamlet*. This is acknowledged as a technique Shakespeare uses to convey changes in mental state or to highlight a lighter more informal tone even among high-status characters. Taking Shakespeare's innovative and creative approach to literature into consideration, his gift to manipulate language and infuse it with multiple meanings and exceptional emotional standpoint is one of the reasons his works have remained relevant and acknowledged for centuries after they were written.

His oeuvre comprises 39 plays, 154 sonnets and two long narrative poems that are known for their exceptional poetic language, complex characters and exploration of human

nature. His eminence also is "located in a diversity of persons: No one, before or since Shakespeare, made so many separate selves" (Bloom 1). The portrayal of human nature and personality has always held the highest value in literature. The reader/ playgoer is often drawn to and connect with literature through its characters and their personal journeys. This connection is captured in the notion which expresses that "[l]iterary and dramatic character is an imitation of human character" a concept based on the belief that the lively characterisation in drama is as reflective of individuals's natures (Bloom 5). This understanding reflects the idea which notes that characters in literature and drama are crafted to mirror the complexities and nuances of real human behaviour and personality. Also it should be noted that the concept of personality, as we understand it today, is often credited as "a Shakespearean invention, and is not only Shakespeare's greatest originality but also the authentic cause of his perpetual pervasiveness" (Bloom 4). This idea suggests that Shakespeare's profound depiction of complex, multifaceted characters is one of his remarkable contributions to literature. In Parvini's words, Shakespeare "always foregrounds the individual (and their moral choices) over the group, yet authority and loyalty – as defined by individual rather than group relations – are of central importance in his moral compass" (303). This focus on the individual's moral choices within Shakespeare's narratives not only elevates the personal journey but also incorporates it into the fabric of broader societal themes that both challenge and engage with the moral and ethical underpinnings of the time.

In the Elizabethan period, characterised by a focus on political elements, the surge in popularity of history plays "during the late 1580s and 1590s has been attributed in part to a developing sense of English national identity" a sentiment that arose amid the rising threats from Catholic Spain (Connolly 4). The plays often revisited England's past triumphs over the French and the rise of the Tudor dynasty and "in each case these narratives served to reinforce the sense of nationalism by underlining England's status as a providential nation" thus highlighting the nation's historical victories and providential destiny with intent to reinforce a collective sense of pride and identity among the English people (Connolly 4). Among these, William Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1597) is a quintessential Elizabethan play that distinguishes itself from its contemporaries with its unique portrayal of the protagonist as a self-fashioned character. The consequences of

Richard III's overreaching ambition and self-fashioning extend beyond his tragic demise and are evident throughout the narrative. *Richard III* serves as an interesting example because while it is classified as a history play it also has many elements of tragedy. The protagonist is driven by ambition and manipulation to secure the throne indicating the tragic hero's moral ambiguity and eventual downfall. His relentless pursuit of power culminates in his defeat and death at the Battle of Bosworth Field echoing the tragic notion of a fall from grace. However, unlike traditional tragedies that centre on personal themes, *Richard III* places its narrative within the broader context of English history specifying the consequences of Richard's actions on the nation and its lineage. Shakespeare's *Richard III* has established "a man both physically and morally deformed, a consummate dissembler hell-bent on attaining the throne at whatever cost in human life" (Logan xv). This portrayal offers a rich exploration of moral and psychological dilemmas primarily initiated by his overreaching ambition. This chapter delves into Richard III's corrupt nature and the repercussions of his unchecked ambition through an examination of his self-fashioned character through the lens of Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning.

Written in late 1592, *Richard III* was not published until 1597. In this year it was published by Andrew Wise as the First Quarto edition – known as Q1 – and labelled as a tragedy consisting of "the lines as recollected by actors who had performed them" and with a note of his colleagues that goes "only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was our Shakesepare" (Boyce 499; Honigmann 1; Potter 166; Dover Wilson ix). Charles Boyce notes the differences among the following Quarto editions and concludes that all the following seven subsequent editions are "derived from its predecessor, adding progressively greater numbers of errors; they all derive ultimately from Q1. Q1 differs considerably from the version of the play that appeared in the First Folio in 1623," "but here it is grouped with the history plays that Shakespeare wrote during his extensive career" (Boyce 499; Connolly 2). The Folio text (F1) is more respected among the others on the grounds that "[n]ot only does it contain some 200 lines missing from Q1, but its lines are more metrical, its grammar better, and its poetry more impressive" (Boyce 499). Furthermore, Marjorie Garber offers a comprehensive analysis of Shakespeare's plays in terms of their thematic richness and structural innovations.

Garber underlines Shakespeare's convenience in transcending the thematic and aesthetic conventions of the literature of his time by combining psychological, philosophical and moral complexities which render his works both timeless and universal. Garber claims that Shakespeare's

> plays should be valued for their ethical and moral exemplarity begets a counterclaim that the plays are best regarded as close observations of early modern courts, spy networks, gender relations, and theatrical practice. An interest in historical context will arise to try to qualify some of the universal or transhistorical claims about what is typically, uniquely, or quintessentially human. A study of the emotions or the passions as they were understood in the sixteenth century will disclose something surprising about a play that has become assimilated to modern notions about 'human nature'. (21, emphasis in original)

Although *Richard III* is enlisted as a history play in the First Folio and still acknowledged to be so, the play inhabits some tragic elements that should be mentioned when considering the protagonist's development particularly in terms of his tragic existence and downfall. Above all, the play presents a protagonist who is "learning wisdom through suffering, willing to know and endure [his] fate even as it destroys [him]" (Dollimore 49). The play embodies elements of tragedy, primarily, as it encompasses the protagonist's moral decay as a reflection of the corrupting influence of power and the catastrophic consequences of his actions. Richard III is the portrayal of a tragic hero; his hamartia is his ambitious Machiavellian nature signified by his ruthless and cunning strategies to seize power regardless of the moral cost. He is of noble birth; yet, he desires to ascend to power through immoral means that prepare his doom. He embodies the Machiavellian principle that the desired outcomes justify the methods used to achieve them such as manipulating and betraying those around him to ascend to the throne. In line with Aristotle's definition of tragedy, Richard III's isolation arouses sympathy and pity from the reader/ playgoer even as his villainy is revealed in "[t]he opening ferocity of Richard, still the duke of Gloucester, [that] is hardly more than a fresh starting point for the development of the Elizabethan and Jacobean hero-villain after Marlowe, and yet it seems to transform Tamburlaine and Barabas utterly" (Bloom, *Richard III* xi). The play also circulates fear as it mirrors the potential of evil within the realms of power and politics. In a similar manner, Moseley deduces that

> *Richard III* is clearly related to the revenge tragedy; the play's characters are virtually all guilty, passionately aware of the guilt of others and caught up in a tempest of hate. Richard, thinking he is serving his own ends, is being used by Providence systematically to clean up this world of blood by being an instrument of punishment; and in doing so he increases his own guiltiness and his certainty of damnation. The black irony is obvious.
>
> Finally, Shakespeare uses here all the techniques [associated] with his tragedies: the insertion of non-historical scenes to develop a particular area – here, the philosophy of revenge; the insertion of supernatural events to suggest a divine vengeance operating to punish sin; the evocation of pathos in the death of children. (22)

By signaling *Richard III* as a tragedy, "at the very least Shakespeare is telling his audience to contemplate the vicissitudes of human life; by using material from well-known, topical English history, he removes the subtle barrier between what can be conveniently catagorized as 'story' and what is painful in the here and now" (Moseley 18, emphasis in original). Eventually, *Richard III* inhabits the essential elements of tragedy to highlight the tragic dimensions of ambition and power through a morally ambiguous historical character who is "personally evil, guilty of great crimes, and a tyrant who [has] deserved to lose his throne and who indeed [is] destined for hellfire" (Hicks 6).

His series of history plays through which "the clash between the houses of York and Lancaster is staged is often referred to as the first tetralogy (meaning a set of four plays) and includes the three *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*," vividly portrays the dispute between these families (Connolly 5). Produced and performed during the early phase of Shakespeare's career between 1589 and 1593, this tetralogy played a crucial role in establishing Shakespeare's reputation as the celebrated playwright of history plays. This sequence of plays offers a comprehensive dramatisation of a turbulent period in English history thus delivering a detailed portrayal of this significant historical era. One of these plays that has maintained its reputation through the centuries is *Richard III*, "the last of the connected plays of Shakespeare's history cycle, and in many ways it is a direct sequel to *Henry VI*, Part 3" (Riley 157). Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III and his reign "formed the concluding chapter in a sequence of plays which recounted the events of the reign of Henry VI and the conflict known as the War of the Roses" (Connolly 5). At the conclusion of *Henry VI* Part 3, the Yorkist faction emerges victorious leading to Edward IV's coronation. These events are "recalled in the first act of *Richard III*, and here the conflict shifts from being between two rival houses to a strife among brothers" (6).

By drawing upon historical references, Shakespeare's historical plays illuminate parallels between the past and the present, while also considering their connections with other literary works and genres of the period. The connection between history and tragedy in Shakespeare's work is highlighted by his use of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577) as a source for *Richard III* as well as for his tragedies like *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. These chronicles employ key historical events in England, Ireland and Scotland serving as a backdrop for Shakespeare's exploration of themes such as power and ambition. With regard to *Richard III*, William Shakespeare "makes a specific parallel between contemporary plots and the intrigues of [the real-life] Richard in seeking the crown" in his construction of the plot of the play (Moseley 19). Considering the sources of *Richard III*, Boyce states that although an anonymous play of the 1590s called *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* "has sometimes been thought to be a source for *Richard III*. However, most current scholarly opinion holds that the slight similiarity between two plays, if it reflects any relationship, shows an influence of Shakespeare on the other playwright" (Boyce 499). He lists Shakespeare's most probable sources as *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* by Edward Hall (1548), "an academic Latin play, *Ricardus Terrius*, written about 1580 by Dr Thomas Legge" Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587) and Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* (1543) (Boyce 499, Dover Wilson xi, xxix).

When Shakespeare's history plays are taken into consideration, it should be noted that he is more a playwright than a historian. However, the reality is that "like any writer of history, Shakespeare weighed the information from his sources, determined which provided the most useful account, and tried to make the past a visible reality for his audience" (Riley 4). His everlasting success is rooted in his adoption of creative flexibility with his already biased and unreliable sources. This approach shows that he treats his historical sources not as constraints but as springboards for creativity. He makes use of the historical materials to craft narratives that would bring history to life for his reader/playgoer in a compelling and dramatised form. For example, in *Richard III*, tragic history is blended with grand entertainment that has resulted in drama that has consistently enjoyed popularity. The historical figure Richard III, despite his "reign of

just two years and two months, has spawned a remarkable quantity of literature" (Hipshon 1). This extensive body of work often revolves around "the enduring controversy surrounding Richard's seizure of the throne in 1483 and the mystery of the disappearance of his nephews, the two Princes in the Tower" that reflects the ongoing fascination with and debate over these pivotal and contentious moments in his short but impactful reign (Hipshon 1). For instance, the reign of real-life Richard III has had a lasting influence on the nature of monarchy and governance in England along with the impact of the Battle of Bosworth Field that

> has also entered the public consciousness because it has always appeared to represent a defining moment in English history. It was the last time a king of England led his troops into battle and it caused the destruction of one dynasty and the advent of another. The Tudor era began at Bosworth, and the medieval world, represented by Richard and his household knights charging to their deaths, seemed to disappear forever. But the reign is important for other, perhaps more significant, reasons. (Hipshon 1).

The battle marks the crucial point of the play which represents both the fall of Richard III and the transformative shift in England's monarchy. Nevertheless, the murder of Edward IV's sons was necessary for the full realisation of that myth. As Wood states, "there were to be other incidents that would contribute substantially to the legend, notably the incestuous court paid to his niece, but above all else it was this massacre of the innocents that was to give him his enduring reputation for pure, unadulterated evil" (187). In essence, *Richard III* was unknowingly laying the ground for the creation of Shakespeare's legend of a tyrannical ruler that would inspire Shakespeare to generate a narrative deeply rooted in the actual events of his reign.

In the broadest sense, *Richard III* depicts the rise and fall of Richard III, the Duke of Gloucester, and "suggests the playwright's interest in individual human capacities for good and evil, a characteristic concern of the RENAISSANCE" (Boyce 497, emphasis in original). The events revolve around the Duke who is marked by physical deformity and villainy. He desires to ascend to the English throne and eliminates everyone that poses an obstacle for him. The play opens with his soliloquy in which he explicitly states his intention to become the king in the place of his elder brothers, King Edward V and George, the Duke of Clarence. In the course of events, he arranges the murder of his

brother George, his supporters like Lord Hastings and his young nephews also known as the Princes in the Tower. He massacres everyone who could have any claim to the throne and eventually becomes king; however, it turns out to be a short-lived reign. The play ends with the Battle of Bosworth where Richard III is defeated by Henry Tudor. On a national scale, his downfall marks the end of the Plantagenet dynasty and the rise of the Tudors. The Earl of Richmond's victory at the Battle of Bosworth is foregrounded as the restoration of order in the play. It is presented as the re-establishment of order because, Henry VII who has now become king, is portrayed not just as someone who "strives to end the slaughter England has endured, but reaches out to a public beyond an aristocracy notable mainly for its ingrained obsession with material gain and self-interest" indicating a leadership style that transcends self-serving aristocratic interests and aims at broader national healing and unity (Hadfield 77).

Shakespeare's history plays portray insightful commentary on the human desire for power through characterisation and are placed "on the virtue and ability of the individual as qualifications for rule, rather than simply inherited rights […]. Richard III, Macbeth and Claudius are all deposed because they are not fit to rule, not simply because they are usurpers or have a dubious claim to the throne in question" (Hadfield 11). As an exemplary one, *Richard III* is remarkable in its portrayal of the incomparably complex protagonist, Richard the Duke of Gloucester. He exhibits a captivating blend of villainy and charisma that profoundly penetrate into the inner workings of authority and the lust for supremacy. Additionally, it should be noted once again that the play was written and performed in the political context of the Elizabethan Era in which the significant focus on narratives was about monarchy, national identity and uncertainty in matters of administration as the "over-riding political issue of the time was the question of sovereignty and the legitimacy of the monarch" (Hadfield 1).

By exclusively depicting the protagonist in the exact opposite way in *Richard III*, Shakespeare reflects his support for a strong leader who is capable "to unite the factions struggling for political control throughout Britain, placing little stress on the legitimate claim of the monarch in question and emphasizing instead the ruler's personal abilities and charisma" (Hadfield 31). This starkly contrasting manner suggests a deliberate shift

from traditional portrayals that focuses on a leader whose legitimacy and authority stem not from their hereditary rights but from their individual capabilities and magnetic personality. Shakespeare's perspective here suggests that he places a higher value on effective leadership and the cohesion it brings rather than on hereditary rights to rule by emphasising that a leader's personal qualities and appeal are crucial in resolving political strife and establishing stability.

The Elizabethan political climate provides contextual insights into the pursuit of power as reflected in Richard III's character. Although the Duke was self-interested and ruthless as his fellow noblemen, he emerged as an effective plotter who "was destined nevertheless to feature only marginally in the history" despite his efforts (Hicks 2). Richard III's immoral nature is not only specifically a reflection of his personal character but also symbolises the broader social and moral breakdown prevalent in England at the time when "all the great personages of the court, and all, or nearly all, the private families of the kingdom, and all the towns and the villages, were divided and distracted by the dreadful feud" (Abbott 5).

Despite having been produced in the mentioned period, Shakespeare's works transcend the Elizabethan Era due to the insightful exploration of universal and timeless themes such as love, power relations, identity and deep-rooted anxiety. Shakespeare's extraordinary talent for exploring the depths of the human mind and expressing the complex interactions within personal relationships and social frameworks continues to be unmatched. In his notable book, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (2004), Stephen Greenblatt explores the influence of the political environment, societal norms and intellectual discourses on Shakespeare's works such as *Richard III*. Shakespeare offers insight into Richard III's psychological struggles, particularly his self-awareness and their reflections on his actions. These internal deliberations unveil a complex character whose manipulations and ambitions result in personal and moral consequences while enriching the depth and intricacy of his political manaeuvers. Shakespeare's ingenuity in the portrayal of the complexities of human nature is praised by Harold Bloom as Shakespeare's own "ways of representing human changes, alterations not only caused by flaws and by decay but effected by the will as

well, and by the will's temporal vulnerabilities" (Bloom, *Shakespeare* 2). For instance, in *Hamlet*, as Bloom states, the eponymous protagonist's internal conflict is still the matter of today's debate as the play has contributed to the evolution of human consciousness with profundity (3).

Besides its prominent character portrayal, *Richard III* is thematically rich as it explores power relations, -lack of- morality and human ambition from a historical, social and psychological perspective. The play's engagement with the themes of political instability, betrayal and the struggle for power are the most important socio-political aspects that directly affect Richard III's self-fashioning. The turbulent political environment of the time highlights the power dynamics and their influence on Richard III's quest for power, identity and tragic downfall. Richard III's characterisation remains one of Shakespeare's most fascinating and disturbing creations with Richard III's persuasiveness, cruelty and disregard for morality for the sake of his deeds. The individual story of Richard III, while striking in its own right, serves to highlight this larger theme of national regeneration. His complex characterisation reflects the turbulent political environment of the time. In this sense, Shakespeare's depiction of Richard III becomes a multifaceted narrative which intertwines personal ambition with the collective need for a rebirth in national ethics and governance.

Written during the transitional period from the medieval world to the Renaissance, Shakespeare's *Richard III* complies with the significant shifts in worldview and changing dynamics in politics. Niccolo Machiavelli, a highly influential republican theorist, was "well known as a historian of Florence and theorist of the art of war, as well as an analyst of both republican and princely forms of government" (Hadfield 11). In Renaissance England, Machiavelli's complex and often controversial legacy was studied under two contrasting lights: he was viewed as "an advocate of oligarchical, republican government, which he argued was the best and most stable form of political existence, as well as a sly adviser to princes, telling them how to circumvent traditional ethical restraints and pursue their own interests in the name of realpolitik[3]" (11). In other words, Machiavelli's theory

[3] First used by Ludwig von Rochau in 1853, the term refers to an "act of statecraft to identify the contending social, economic, and ideological forces struggling for supremacy within the state" and to a

emphasises the use of practical means to pursue a country's or individual's interests and often involves a pragmatic approach dealing with strategic goals. In his work, *The Prince* (1532), Machiavellian ideas of insidiousness and duplicity in political affairs resonate in Richard III's character "with its intrigues, counterplots, sudden executions, and secret assasinations, is the earliest and most faithful representation in English drama of the character of a fifteenth- or sixteenth century Italian tyrant" (Dover Wilson xvii). Richard III proves to be a typical Machiavellian anti-hero with his manipulative, remorseless and power-hungry character whose thirst for dominance and reign reflect the period's shifting attitude towards monarchy and divine right. He sets forth an image of a "'new man', disciple of Machiavelli, who rejects the civilized conventions which other people assume as the ground rules" (Moseley 14). Specifically, the creation and presentation of a character like Richard III reflect the era's fascination with the Machiavellian concept of power. Richard III's seizure of the throne and the prevalent unrest challenge the inherited idea of divine ordination that highlights the significant role of interpersonal relations in matters of governance. This fact is significant in highlighting the tension between traditional beliefs and emerging Renaissance Humanism which foregrounds "a literary culture that concerned itself with the question of how to promote civilised values and at the same time guard against the barbarism to which the baser side of human nature always threatened to lead us. Shakespeare's plays are a product of that humanist culture" (Headlam Wells 7). Namely, the focus on individual capability and the exploration of human nature finds a dark reflection in Richard III's character.

Shakespeare skillfully depicts Richard III's ascent and downfall as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unrestrained ambition and the risks involved in fashioning one's identity for power. The construction of the character Richard III in *Richard III* represents a pivotal moment in Shakespeare's career that signifies a major shift in his approach to character development. He crafted "a great monster, but one that will be refined into Shakespeare's invention of the human" (Bloom 73). Richard III's story, in all its complexity, remains a powerful reminder of the tragic potential that lies in the pursuit of power at the expense of ethical considerations. This character plays a crucial role in Shakespeare's exploration

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system of politics or principles based on practical rather than moral or ideological considerations (Bew 18).

and depiction of the intricate nature of humanity signaling a shift towards more complex and profound characterisations.

Richard III emerges as the stage play of a character who is torn between the societal paradigms and his deliberate attempts to fashion himself. Richard III is not merely a character, he stands out as an entity that embodies the Renaissance spirit defined as the blend of the limits of personal capability, intellectuality and moral dilemma. The sociocultural influences of the era are not limiting but rather integral to the essence of an individual. This person is portrayed as a prototypical Renaissance man who is intelligent but morally ambiguous and driven by great ambition but constrained by the social and political norms of this time. During the Renaissance, there was a widespread belief in the importance of aligning one's self with something greater whether it be God or a spiritual entity. This pursuit of alignment, however, was fraught with challenges. It was within this context of striving and often failing to achieve such lofty ideals that Shakespeare excelled. He deftly navigated the resulting tension or unease that made him, as Bloom observes, "the greatest master at exploiting the void between persons and the personal ideal" (Bloom 7). Shakespeare skillfully captures and portrays that tension experienced by individuals as they struggle to reconcile their personal identities with larger societal or spiritual ideals. As is the case in *Richard III*, throughout the play, Richard III's multifaceted character is explored as notorious and ambitious as he declares himself to be "determined to prove a villain" (I. i. 30). In this sense, *Richard III* does not only appear as a narration to unfold the political conspirations and immorality of the power-holders, but also reveals the *zeitgeist* of the Renaissance. For Elizabethan Humanists, this view was encapsulated in the belief that "the proper study of mankind was man**,**" a perspective that profoundly influenced the literary and philosophical thought of the era (Headlam Wells 4). Particularly in the case of Richard III, both as a historical literary figure and a monarch, he stands as the embodiment of the inherent conflicts and contradictions of the Renaissance period. This is evident through his embodiment of the era's concurrently existing pretentiousness and moral ambiguities.

In addition to the protagonist's portrayal as a new man, the other early-modern attribute observed in *Richard III* is the exploration of human psychology. Shakespeare provides

insight into Richard III's motivation via the soliloquies in which he exposes his mind. The exposition of Richard III's mind through these soliloquies showcases his self-awareness concerning his actions and adds introspective depth to the character. Richard III's self-awareness and contemplation of his physical deformity and moral decisions highlight the humanist focus on how individuals perceive themselves and form their own identities.

In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt depicts self-fashioning as a concept rooted in the social and political aspects of the Renaissance during which the literary figures of the time

> celebrated the capacity for self-fashioning, […] but they also feared this power, not only because it seemed fundamentally a chaotic energy, and not only because they might sink down the scale of being, but also because no matter what the nature of their transformation – self-controlled or random, higher or lower, celestial or bestial – man's essential identity is put to risk. (Carroll 24-25).

Greenblatt delves into the complex relationship between self-perception and personal autonomy and uncovers a profound truth which suggests that the sense of freedom and the belief that individuals are more than just products of their social environment are deeply interconnected. In the epilogue Greenblatt writes that

> there were […] no moments of pure, unfettered subjectivity; indeed, the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society. Whenever [he] focused sharply upon a moment of apparently autonomous self-fashioning, [he] found not an epiphany of identity freely chosen but a cultural artifact. If there remained traces of free choice, the choice was among possibilities whose range was strictly delineated by the social and ideological system in force. (*Renaissance* 256)

Essentially, the capacity to make free choices is rooted in the illusion of believing in freedom. Within the framework of self-fashioning theory, this illusion implies that identities and decisions are shaped not just by the environments but also by the perception of autonomy. In other words, the sense of self and the choices are deeply influenced by the belief in freedom, even if that freedom is, to some extent, an illusion shaped by societal and cultural constructs. In that vein, Shakespeare accurately reflects the

fundamental nature of humanity which is a universal trait, along with exhibiting a societal construct. This demonstration is not limited or shaped by the norms, values, or behaviours of a specific society, but rather refers to something more innate and universally revelant to the human experience. Shakespeare's characters, especially in plays like *Hamlet* and *Richard III* are crafted to reflect the "ways of representing human changes, alterations not only caused by flaws and by decay but effected by the will as well, and by the will's temporal vulnerabilities**,**" reflecting the complex interplay between inherent weaknesses, the impact of the socio-political environment on the individuals and the powerful role of personal choice in one's self-fashioning (Bloom 2).

The art of self-fashioning is powerfully personified in Richard III, a character whose formation of identity is strongly and inevitably influenced by the moral and ethical dilemmas of the time. Greenblatt's theory offers an alternative perspective for exploring the character of Richard III characterised "as a puzzling bundle of contrasts: loyal yet treacherous, pious yet ruthless, courageous yet paranoid" and presented as a shape-shifter adapting in response to the evolving landscape of power, desire and social expectation (Horspool 4). He artfully constructs his identity to ascend to the English throne. Greenblatt's theory describes a dynamic process that portrays Richard III not simply as a product of his era, but as an active architect shaping his own identity as a result of "a radical choice. Since he is who he is, he chooses to be who he is – wilfully embraces his identity. He insists upon his difference from others" (Holbrook 118). In essence, the self-fashioned overreacher, in line with Richard III, is displayed not just a product of his time but an active participant in shaping his own self and his time. Apart from being "manipulative, highly self-conscious, obsessed hero-villain, whether Machiavellian plotter or later, idealistic quester, ruined or not, [Richard III] moves himself from the passive sufferer of his own moral and /or physical deformity to becoming a highly active melodramatist" (Bloom 196). His declaration to prove himself a villain in the opening soliloquy is a deliberate self-reflection of his intent to reshape his identity which invites the readers/ playgoers "to see the action as demonstrative of the power of him who rejects all moral restraints, to share his glee in that power – and at the same time provides an irony unperceivable by him" (Moseley 39).

Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory is an essential source for understanding the manipulative nature of the protagonist in *Richard III*. Richard III's acts of manipulation are pivotal elements of his self-fashioning as they "become figuratively connected with other acts, including acts of love, the idea of violation spreads through characters'[s] other relationships, tainting them, and relationship itself comes into question. Relationship is a way of fixing identity" (Leggatt 3). Thus, Richard III's interactions, marked by manipulation, alliance and betrayal unveil a character whose identity is not static but dynamically fashioned through his ambitious nature and exploitation of power dynamics. Despite projecting a dark light on the portrayal of a self-fashioned overreacher, Richard III is emblematic of a subtle interplay between individual agency and the prevalent social and cultural paradigms of his time. His ascension to power that is marked by manipulation and treachery and his short-lived reign are intricately woven into the fabric of the Renaissance socio-cultural environment. Richard III's self-fashioning is inescapably influenced by the Renaissance fascination with the idea of the Great Chain of Being, a "metaphor [that] served to express the unimaginable plenitude of God's creation, its unfaltering order, and its ultimate unity. The chain stretched from the foot of God's throne to the meanest of inanimate objects" (Tillyard n.p.). In his book, Tillyard depicts the hierarchical cosmos integral to Elizabethan thought wherein the king is placed at the top of the hierarchy and the sovereignty is believed to be ordained by divine right. However, Richard III's usurpation of the throne in Shakespeare's play reflects his disregard for these traditional notions of hierarchy and divine authority. In this environment that is dominated by the bourgeoning sense of personal identity, Richard III's Machiavellian quest for power and identity should be read as a manifestation of the era's tendency towards ambition, lack of morality and the dynamics of monarchy. In addition to its being contextually influenced by classical works such as *The Prince*, Richard III's aspirations "could be described as Machiavellian in their deliberate separation of morality from politics in order to achieve his goal. One of Machiavelli's most celebrated maxims was that the successful prince had to be capable of adopting the slyness of the fox as well as the strength of the lion, a key lesson of *The Prince* that was singled out by Renaissance readers" (Dover Wilson 81). Along the same lines, his overreaching ambition in pursuit of the crown exemplifies the growing individualistic ethos of the period, a time when personal ambition began to challenge established structures.

Furthermore, the portrayal of Richard III's consistently evil persona reflects the period's interest in human psychology and exploration of the complexities of human nature. This interest is reflected through Richard III's introspective moments, moral conflicts and ambitious derive that are intertwined with his moral ambiguity and villainy. Contrary to the higher socio-political expectations of a Renaissance man, Richard employs his intellect and talents for manipulation and power. Richard III's opening soliloquy sets the tone for his "peculiarly self-conscious pleasure in his own audacity [that] is crossed by the sense of what it means to see one's own deformed shadow in the sun" (Bloom 193). His self-assured pleasure metaphorically suggests that he is conscious of his physical flaws and how they contrast with his ambitious desires. This awareness of his deformity may serve as a source of inner conflict or insecurity. He states that he is

> […]not shaped for supportive tricks,
> Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
> […]
> Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
> Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and *unfashionable* (I. i. 14-22, emphasis added).

Also, his acknowledgement as an 'idealised' Renaissance man turns out to be impossible due to his physical deformity which is "an indication of, and a metaphor for, his moral failings" (Riley 160). Based on historical knowledge, Richard III may have suffered the "scoliosis that was to distort him physically, that rendered him less physically adept than his peers, that denied him the strength to wield certain weapons, and that may have limited his stamina" (Hicks 44). His hunchback adds a layer of complexity to his character while challenging the Renaissance ideals of physical and moral perfection. Often interpreted symbolically and represented in the play accordingly,

> [he] became such a monster, morally, when he grew to be a man, that the people believed that he was born a monster in person. The story was that he came into the world very ugly in face and distorted in form, and that his hair and his teeth were already grown. These were considered as portents of the ferociousness of temper and character which he was subsequently to manifest, and of the unnatural and cruel crimes which he would live to commit. (Abbott 25)

Therewithal, Richard III is aware of his physical appearance and its perception by the ones around him. He desires to change his ill-fate decided at his birth with a physical deformity. He feels marginalised and underestimated because of his appearance. This subconscious sense of inferiority drives him to exert control in destructive and consequently self-destructive ways. However, the reason of his fashioning is not merely confined to his physicality but extends to his heightened awareness of the societal and political structures of his time. His heightened awareness of his physical form underscores his ability to use his body like an actor by manipulating his appearance to align with his objectives. This awareness allows him to strategically project different facets of his character. To put it another way, he employs his physical presence as a tool to influence and deceive others in his pursuit of power.

Richard III's overreaching ambition forms the backbone of a narrative imbued with moral ambiguities and obsession with power in his process of self-fashioning. His intricate character is crafted with layers of complexity that bring these thematic elements to the fore by providing a deep psychological insight into his motivations and actions. At the heart of Richard III's fashioned personality lies his unyielding ambition. This ambition is a deep-rooted drive that dictates his every action and decision. Throughout the narrative, Richard III's pursuit of power is linked to his masterful employment of manipulation which is central to the exploration of his self-fashioning. From the very beginning of the play, the reader/playgoer is offered a character whose aspirations involve demonstrating villainy. This self-awareness and declaration signify not just an acceptance of his outsider status but a strategic decision to embrace and exploit this identity for his gain. Richard III's manipulation of his own identity is multifaceted and evolves throughout the play. He adeptly alternates between roles - the loyal brother, loving uncle, the humble and unwilling leader, the loving husband – each of which are carefully constructed to fit the situation and further his ambitions. For example, Richard III acts as a caring uncle who concerns himself with the Prince's "best health and recreation" (III. I. 67) but actually plans to have him killed at the Tower of London. His dislike of his intelligent nephew is presented in the following lines:

> *Prince.* But say, my lord, it were not regist'red,
> Methinks the truth should live from age to age,

> As 'twere retailed to all posterity,
> Even to the general all-ending day.
> (*Gloucester*. So wise so young, they say, do ne'er
> live long.
> *Prince*. What say you, uncle?
> *Gloucester*. I say, without characters, fame lives long.
> [aside] Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,
> I moralize two meanings in one word. (III. I. 76-83)

Richard III's ability to reshape his identity is evident in his use of self-fashioning as a tool for personal advancement. His self-fashioning, therefore, is a quest to be recognised and accepted in order to recompense the physical and psychological wounds he bears, hence allowing him to gain power. Through fashioning himself as a successful leader who obtains what he wants at any cost, he aims to gain control over his destiny, over people and over the realm itself. He also concerns himself with his self-acquired position in the Great Chain of Being. Shakespeare constructs Richard III's pursuit of power along with moral and psychological decline distancing him further from humanity with his each act of betrayal, manipulation and murder.

In *Richard III*, the expression of power is put forward as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that pervades the societal, psychological and political spheres. As the personification of this complexity, Richard III utilises power not just as a means to ascend to the throne but also as an instrument of self-fashioning. To put it differently, the protagonist's relentless pursuit of self-fashioning is bound to his use of power; it is through controlling power effectively in the process of his self-fashioning that is essential for his ultimate goal of ascending to the throne. This intricate relationship underscores the notion that Richard III's self-fashioning is not just a personal ambition, but a strategic necessity in his quest for kingship. His manipulative schemes and political intrigues are both a product and reflection of the intricate dynamics of power within the Renaissance period. Richard III's ambition and pursuit of power are depicted against the backdrop of the political landscape of the actual historical context, the Wars of the Roses. The play specifically offers the portrayal of dynamics of authority prevalent two centuries ago and as Potter furthers, it has

> a more conservative political and moral purpose than its predecesssors: in it, the accession of the first Tudor king is made as legitimate as possible, considering that

> it was a military conquest, and all major characters at some point recognize the existence of divine justice, often based on their actions in earlier plays. The only events that are begun and ended in the play are curses and their fulfillment. (Potter 163)

This historical, social and cultural setting makes the character more realistic by aligning his ambitious political existence and actions with the realities of fifteenth-century English politics.

Greenblatt reads Richard III's self-fashioning as a complex interplay with power. Each of Richard III's political manoeuvres, every deceitful action is not just a step leading him to his goal but a precise step in his fashioning process. Power, in Richard III's perspective, is not an external factor to be seized but an intrinsic element penetrating into the identity. Motivated by an overreaching ambition, Richard III demonstrates that power does not solely mean position or title, but indicates an art form performed through the strategic manipulation of people and authoritative portrayal of himself. For instance, his public display of humility and his reluctant appearance to take the throne is a pre-calculated 'performance' designed to present himself as a righteous and unwilling heir and gather public support and sympathy:

> Gloucester. […]
> If not to answer, you might haply think
> Tongue-tied ambition, not replying, yielded
> To bear the golden yoke of sovereignty,
> Which fondly you would here impose on me;
> If to reprove you for this suit of yours,
> So seasoned with your faithful love to me,
> Then, on the other side, I checked my friends.
> […]
> Your love deserves my thanks, but my desert
> Unmeritable shuns your high request.
> First, if all obstacles were cut away
> And that my path were even to the crown,
> As the ripe revenue and due of birth,
> Yet so much is my poverty of spirit,
> So mighty and so many my defects,
> That I would rather hide me from my greatness, (III. vii. 144-161)

Nonetheless, his rise to power ultimately leads to instability and chaos in the kingdom culminating in Richard III's own downfall. The alliances and loyalties he has manipulated

begin to disentangle from his intrigues that eventually result in his downfall at the Battle of Bosworth Field.

In *Richard III*, the protagonist's ascent to power is underscored by strategic political manaeuvers deeply rooted in self-fashioning. Richard III, portrayed as a cunning and manipulative figure, employs a series of calculated strategies to ascend to the English throne, each move reflecting his adeptness in reshaping his identity to suit his political ends. His journey from a marginalised Duke to the King of England is a testament to his political skills. Richard III's predicament in the play resides in a crucial point: "[I]f no politically viable grounds could be invented or appropriate procedures developed, the deposition was apt to be judged an outright usurpation" (Wood 176). Without justifiable reasons or acceptable methods for his rise, Richard III's ascent to the throne would have likely been seen as an illegitimate quest for power.

At the core of Richard III's strategic plots lies his sharp insight into the political landscape, and the character traits of those involved. Richard III's exploitation of political structures becomes clear through his manipulation of influential courtiers. He cunningly exploits the ambitions and fears of individuals like Buckingham, Hastings, and the Woodvilles and turns them into pawns in his grand scheme to eliminate rivals and consolidate his power. Richard III's exceptional ability to understand their probable motivations, predict their moves and take advantage of their weaknesses is strikingly shown in his deception of Lord Hastings. Richard III fakes allegiance to Hastings, but then arranges for his execution on false charges of treason. In this act, Richard III's capacity to switch from a trustworthy ally to a ruthless executioner showcases his adeptness in employing identity as a means of political manipulation. He skillfully designs the downfall and murder of his rivals and prepares intricate plots to eliminate obstacles facing his ascension including the murder of his brothers, Clarence and Edward IV. Furthermore, his political plots excel in his decision to imprison and ultimately eliminate his young nephews who appear as the final evident obstacles. In addition, Richard III's interactions with the public and the nobility reveal his calculated performance. His display of feigned piety and humility, especially in the scene where he accepts the crown, is an explicit act of self-fashioning crafted to shape his public persona

and influence collective perception through his manipulative use of self-presentation as a tool for personal advancement. Similarly, his interaction with the citizens of London where he presents himself as a reluctant leader, called upon by divine providence, is a testament to his ability to craft and project an image that serves his political ends. By presenting himself as a reluctant but divinely appointed ruler, he cleverly legitimises his seizure of the throne.

In terms of Stephen Greenblatt's theory, an individual's behaviours play a crucial role in shaping their identity. Similarly, this identity, in turn, influences and molds their behaviours and manner of speaking. Greenblatt's perspective highlights a reciprocal relationship between identity and behaviour suggesting that the way individuals act and communicate is both a reflection and a formation of who they are. In this context, Richard III's identity is formed not only by his actions but also through his speech. He excels in the art of rhetoric which means using language skillfully to mislead, enchant and dominate others. His capability to reshape his public persona and steer the public consensus through rhetoric is crucial to his self-fashioning process. His fashioned self is not just defined by his political ambitions but also by his intellectual dexterity, eloquent speech and insight into human psychology that are all essential traits of a Renaissance individual. Richard III's murders, purposeful manipulations, his control over people thanks to his rhetorical ability exemplify a determined and conscious crafting of identity for himself that illustrates Greenblatt's theory. He displays a remarkable ability to adapt his language as well as his behaviour to suit the preferences of his audience so as to achieve his goals. His making advances to Lady Anne displays his skill in persuasion and deception "hypnotizing her with words, and she finally accepts a ring from him and agrees to meet him again" (Boyce 494; Shakespeare, *Richard III* I. ii. 202-25). Here, Richard III artfully constructs the persona of a remorseful and passionate lover which is a stark contrast to his real and ruthless self. The scene is described as a "testament to Richard's ability to dissemble and conceal his true nature, as he proceeds to seduce a woman" (Riley 162). Despite her awareness of his role in the deaths of her husband and father-in-law, Anne is won over by Richard III. This scene exemplifies the act of manipulation at its finest with Richard III adeptly adjusting his tone, language and manner to achieve his aim which demonstrates his skill in reshaping his identity to suit the moment at its finest.

Following his triumph, his self-congratulatory soliloquy after his success in manipulating Lady Anne reveals his satisfaction and keen awareness of his linguistic skills and capacity for deception: "My dukedom to a beggarly denier, / I do mistake my person all this while: / Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot, / Myself to be a marv'llous proper man. / I'll be at charges for a looking-glass, /And entertain a score or two of tailors, / To study fashions to adorn my body" (ii. 251-57).

His persuasive dialogues, soliloquies and asides not only advance the plot but also reveal his complex psychological state. Each of these techniques contributes to an 'air of myth' reinforced by the consistent tone that prevails throughout the play; in Boyce's words:

> Even the violence takes place offstage, for the most part. The plot and themes unfold largely through talk – however absorbing and varied – rather than action. The only exceptions are the stabbing of Clarence (though not his drowning) and Richard's death in single combat, each of which constitutes a climactic moment in the play's development. (498, emphasis in original)

His monologues and direct addresses to the readers/ playgoers not only provide insight into his genuinely evil and ambitious nature but also highlight the disparity between how he presents himself to the world and his hidden desires. In other words, Richard III's soliloquies serve a critical role in the play by offering a glimpse into his psyche and effectively connecting his outward behaviours with his inward motivations. They grant the reader/ playgoer a front-row seat to the evolution of his schemes and the extent of his duplicity. The way Richard III employs language to craft his identity demonstrates his awareness of the influence of words and public perception created through them. He makes use of the soliloquy to address the reader/playgoer as it is a practical literary device that "represent[s] a moment of theatrical directness and emotional clarity. It will declare the speaker as either 'good' or 'bad', as more or less charismatic or sympathetic" (Palfrey 254). In Palfrey's words,

> [t]he opening speech of *Richard III* is one of Shakespeare's most famous soliloquies: or certainly its opening line is. It is a good example of Shakespeare's early soliloquies. It declares the speaker's 'character type', reveals his attitude and plans for action, and does so as a consummate exercise in *rhetoric*. This means that every turn of phrase and shift of rhythm is a gift to the eager audience. The speech is not a clear window onto Gloucester's thoughts. We are supposed to identify it as rhetoric.

> The manners of the speech itself, quite as much as its overt message, are the things that hold meaning – that is, humour, personality, dissidence, and menace. (256)

His introspective moments, especially towards the end of the play, show increasing feelings of isolation, paranoia and possibly even remorse. In these moments, Richard III is brutally honest both with himself and the reader/playgoer. He embraces his malevolent nature and admits to creating a character that is villainous as well as fascinating. The soliloquy in which he narrates that he is tormented by the ghosts of his victims is particularly notable in terms of portraying his tragic downfall. Richard III struggles to accept the consequences of his overreachingly ambitious nature and acknowledges his fashioned personality as the nightmare he wishes to flee. This internal strife culminates in the famous dream sequence before the Battle of Bosworth, where he faces the harsh truth of his identity. Richard III puts it as follows:

> What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
> Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I.
> Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:
> Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why –
> Lest I revenge. Myself upon myself?
> Alack, I love myself. For any good
> That I myself have done unto myself?
> O, no! Alas, I rather hate myself
> For hateful deeds committed by myself!
> I am a villain. Yet I lie, I am not.
> Fool, of thyself speak well. Fool, do not flatter.
> My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for villain. (V. iii. 182-95)

In this scene, the reader/playgoer sees Richard III struggling with the repercussions of his deeds which are in contrast with the confident plotter presented earlier. Shakespeare skillfully portrays an internal battle that inevitably leads to Richard III's undoing. Shakespeare shows how Richard III's "self-transformations have finally collapsed into the dual roles of victor and victim, confessor and criminal" that underscores the dilemma common to all those who constantly change their façades (Carroll 22). Besides, Richard III's self-destructive ambition, culminating in his desperate cry, "A horse, a horse! my kingdom for a horse!" (V. iv. 13) reveals a character whose identity is as much a creation

of his overwhelming desires as it is a victim of them. Overwhelmed by the many roles he has taken on, Richard III struggles to firmly determine his actual identity. His cry symbolises the transient nature of earthly power and material possessions mirroring the Renaissance tension between worldly involvement and the inevitability of change and mortality.

In *Richard III*, the protagonist's ascent to power is masterfully depicted as being deeply intertwined with his manipulation of the existing social and political frameworks. Richard III "with his sidekick Buckingham, tries to manipulate the crowd in much the same way. This incident, too, is also described rather than enacted. Buckingham assures Richard that he did everything he could to persuade the citizens to join in his cry for" Richard III highlighting their cunning strategy to sway public opinion through a carefully orchestrated yet narratively recounted performance (Shapiro 163). This exploitation is crucial in crafting and asserting his self-fashioned identity. Richard III's usurpation of the English throne is woven through intricate social manipulation and astute political manaeuvering. He skillfully navigates and exploits the complex societal hierarchy and norms of the era. At the heart of Richard III's approach lies a profound understanding of the societal expectations and the political milieu of fifteenth-century England. He strategically uses these social norms and expectations to construct a public image that starkly contradicts his true intentions and deeds. His understanding of the intricate workings of the court, the adaptable nature of public opinion and the dynamics of power relations in late medieval English society is pivotal in his ascent to the throne as these complexities and "contradictions [have] their advantages since, with so many stories in calculation, it [becomes] difficult to form an opposition united by certain knowledge of his intentions" (Wood 178). Furthermore, the villainy of Richard III is not merely represented as a character trait but a fundamental element of his self-fashioning, integral to his ascent to power and control. His villainy becomes "in every sense his defining characteristic. […] [H]is success is represented first as a political phenomenon, where he is supported by people who are either naively trusting or think he is horrible but will do them some good, and second – notoriously, in the wooing of Lady Anne – as a kind of mesmeric magic, because he is so obviously villainous" (Orgel 49).

Putting forward such an overreaching fashioned identity necessitates a performative act, an ornamental display that is repressed and expressed within the confines and liberties of societal norms and expectations. Richard III is "never what he seems; he is an actor role-playing to suit his purposes and his audience; he invites [the reader/playgoer] to watch his histrionic skill; he role-plays and stage-man-ages so much that the conflicts between the roles remove any centre that might be, and leave him empty, a man of many voices, a divided self, whose only essence is his will" (Moseley 35). This controversial nature and appearance of Richard III who can be both a mourning brother in public and a relentless murderer in private illuminates the performative essence of his self-fashioning. In the scene in mention, Richard III aims to create a perception of himself as a devout, humble man uninterested in earthly matters. The acclaimed perception runs counter to his actual ruthless, power-hungry nature. He strategically constructs an image of himself as a reluctant leader chosen by divine right rather than his own personal ambition. His fashioning himself as a religious man serves a dual purpose. First, it helps to camouflage his treacherous actions; secondly, his image appears alike to the common people and the nobility who are deeply influenced by religious doctrines and the belief of the divine right to rule. Richard III's disguise does not comply with his reality. In the play, there is a deliberate focus "on legal procedure and that this part of Richard's own performance of power as he appears to conform to the rules of law and custom which he simultaneously breaks" (Connolly 19). This strategy emphasises Richard III's cunning ability to publicly adhere to legal norms and traditions while covertly undermining them, showcasing his skillful manipulation of power and authority to achieve his own ends. Through this appearance vs. reality theme, Shakespeare marks that outward appearances may be misleading and used to disguise one's actual intentions and character. The portrayal of this debatable relationship between religious ideology and political manipulation is not just a reflection of the personal ambition of a Machiavellian ruler but also an illustration of the social and cultural dynamics of the time.

The consequences of Richard III's self-fashioning are not only political but also deeply personal and psychological. As he manipulates and betrays those around him, Richard III becomes increasingly isolated. His identity, so carefully crafted and manipulated to achieve his goals, begins to unravel. The loyalty and support he had so skillfully

engineered through deceit and coercion dissipate, leaving him vulnerable and alone. This isolation is vividly depicted in the later part of the play, particularly on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth Field, where "a succession of spirits appears, each one the Ghost of a character murdered by Richard. Each delivers a similar set of messages: They remind Richard of his misdeeds and bid him 'despair and die'; turning to Richmond, they assure him of supernational aid. Richard wakes and despairingly acknowledges his guilt" (Boyce 496). These spectral visitations symbolise not only his impending doom but also his realisation of the moral and existential cost of his actions. It was "but the last of his bold and impetuous gambles, a desperate attempt to win back a kingdom that he knew was on the verge of being lost, though not for the lack of a horse" (Wood 206). His confidence and cunning nature that have paved the way to his rise resonate in paranoia, self-doubt and desperation. The invincible persona he has created through his manipulative acts dissolves revealing a man overwhelmed by the consequences of his ambition.

The loss of moral integrity implies a loss of self. For Richard III who is entirely preoccupied with his self-fashioning, the loss of identity means the disintegration of the identity he has crafted and of the values, beliefs he has adopted. Despite his attempts to shape his own identity, Richard III's manipulative tactics eventually result in his loneliness and ruin. His continuous alteration of his persona leaves him with an unstable self-perception. As he gains more power, his paranoia and disconnection from reality intensify. This reaches a peak in the play's final act where Richard faces the spirits of those he has harmed. In this scene, he starts to confront the outcomes of his deeds and the identity he has fashioned. In spite of his strategic mind, his actions lead to the loss of the very core of his fashioned self and his reasons for existence. Defeat involves his realisation of being isolated and the meaninglessness of his ambition. Richard III's goal of becoming king is challenged by the loneliness and vainness of his governing desire. In the play, Richard III's fate is mirrored in his predestined downfall as a result of his overreaching ambition. Despite his attempts to control and fashion his self and destiny, he is ultimately unable to escape the consequences of his deeds.

Throughout the play, the glimpses into Richard III's psychological struggles are conveyed through his own moral corruption and the inevitable consequences of his

actions. Hence, he is confronted with his ultimate downfall. The realisation of his overreaching ambition and the consequences of his quest for power display a critical moment of self-awareness that proves futile in his upcoming defeat. In essence, Richard III's process of self-fashioning appears to be a complex and multi-layered journey that not only encompasses both the external motivations prevalent during the Renaissance but also his unbridled ambition. Through Richard III's character, Shakespeare explores human nature, the power of manipulation and the awaiting tragic consequences of overreaching ambition at the expense of moral integrity and a nation's stability.

CHAPTER 2
"WHILST I AM HERE ON EARTH LET ME BE CLOYED / WITH ALL THINGS THAT DELIGHT THE HEART OF MAN"[4]: *DOCTOR FAUSTUS* AS A SELF-FASHIONED OVERREACHER

Christopher Marlowe (1564- 1593) who remains one of the most influential figures in English Renaissance drama, was born and lived in Canterbury as the son of John and Katherine Marlowe. Having been a migrant worker in Canterbury for twenty years, John established himself as a self-made man. He started as an apprentice to a member of the shoemakers's guild and became known as "a competent, if sometimes quarrelsome, tradesman who nevertheless held a number of minor civic offices" (Healy 338). Likewise, his wife Katherine Arthur, daughter of labourers who "had business connections in the parish of St George" (Riggs 16), was a woman of "a capable mind, and one might conclude that Christopher's intellect derived genetically as much (or more) from the Dover Arthurs as from the Marlowes" (Honan 28-29). Christopher Marlowe's innate talent and ambition prompted him to pursue his education first at the King's School in Canterbury and then at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. There, on a scholarship, he earned both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees. These academic achievements laid the foundation for his future recognition as a renowned playwright and poet of the Elizabethan Era. This in itself was a considerable achievement for Christopher Marlowe as a self-made man as education in the sixteenth century was largely the privilege of the elite. Marlowe attended the prestigious King's School in Canterbury before proceeding to Corpus Christi College where he earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Marlowe's education that took place among "peers at university who were needy scholars competing for a dwindling supply of low-paid jobs in the Church of England" reflects the struggle for advancement that is mirrored in the characters of his dramatic works (Riggs 7). While at Cambridge, Marlowe's irregular attendance became a subject of considerable controversy and speculation. His absences triggered rumours about his involvement in "the dangerous world of espionage" against Queen Elizabeth's government (Male 2). However, the intervention of the Privy Council, evidenced by a letter to the

[4] (III. i. 59-60)

administration, indicated that Marlowe had been engaged in activities "touching the benefit of his country" (Riggs 242). This correspondence suggests that Marlowe was involved in an undefined kind of assistance to the government of Queen Elizabeth I. Upon leaving Cambridge, Marlowe moved to London and began his short but illustrious career as a playwright. After completing his studies at Cambridge, he deserted his academic pursuits and engaged in the dynamic and competitive realm of London's theatrical scene where he quickly established himself as a prominent playwright and poet. He quickly made a name for himself in the Elizabethan theatre scene with his works exhibiting a command over blank verse that set him apart as a preeminent playwright of his era along with William Shakespeare. Marlowe's dramatic works such as *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part 1 (1590) and Part 2 (1592), *The Jew of Malta* (1592), *The Massacre at Paris* (1593), *Edward II* (1594) and *Doctor Faustus or the Modern Prometheus* (1616) are all distinguished works with their ambitious protagonists and their exploration of the potential and limits of human power. As Male states, [t]he life of Marlowe the overreacher, so rich in promise ended in what looked like political assassination. Marlowe's earlier service […] did not protect him when his name became associated with atheism and treason. The heroes of Marlowe's plays were all ambitious high fliers. Each died in sudden decline, horror or annihilation" (4).

His self-actualisation process from the son of a shoemaker to one of England's preeminent dramatists encapsulates Marlowe's status as a self-fashioned individual making his mark on the edge of modernity. This journey of self-creation and boundary-pushing, mirrored in his dramatic works, reflects Marlowe's own life narrative and artistic ethos where he consistently explored themes of ambition and defiance against conventional norms. Christopher Marlowe's protagonists, much like himself, epitomise individuals who aim to transgress societal and moral boundaries to achieve their goals. Reflecting the complex character of their creator, Christopher Marlowe's protagonists often embody a deep-seated desire to challenge existing norms and limitations. Marlowe himself is described as "the impenitent sinner, the structural pattern exists for a protagonist who is tragic and yet comically degenerate, and who is both an individual and a universal example of spiritual failure" (Bevington 165). His characters are also theorised as embodiments of the dual nature of Renaissance ideals through their quest for

individualism and self-determination, coupled with the tragic consequences of overreaching one's limits. Marlowe examines the constitution of individuals through his protagonists who "fashion themselves not in loving submission to an absolute authority but in self-conscious opposition: Tamburlaine against hierarchy, Barabas against Christianity, Faustus against God" (Greenblatt, *Renaissance* 203). For instance, in *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part 1, Marlowe introduces Tamburlaine, a shepherd, as the epitome of an overreacher who turns conqueror. Born of humble origins, Tamburlaine refuses to accept the social order's limitations and embarks on a mission to conquer the world. Through this character, Marlowe embodies the Renaissance ideal of individualism as Tamburlaine self-fashions his identity and rewrites his destiny by means of absolute dedication and strength. Tamburlaine's journey exemplifies the belief that one's fate is not predetermined but can be shaped and altered through desire and resilience that reflect the era's emphasis on the power of the individual to define their own path.

Marlowe's influence on shaping and popularising this literary archetype, the self-fashioned overreacher, through *Doctor Faustus* is arguably one of his most significant contributions to English Renaissance drama. With *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe presents a comparatively similar approach through the protagonist, a learned scholar who aims to surpass the limitations of human knowledge. His ambition leads him to make a pact with the devil, trading his soul for twenty-four years of service from Mephistopheles who will provide him access to supernatural knowledge. Based on the storyline of the play, "Faustus gets what he asks for, since his calling out in frightened prayer means he has failed as a man, failed in his own self-possession, self-confidence, self-cohesion" (McAdam 118). Faustus's quest for authority over the natural world and his willingness to challenge divine authority can be seen as a Renaissance feature emphasising human potential and the pursuit of knowledge. His ultimate downfall, however, suggests the peril of overreaching beyond human limits, serving as a moralistic counterpoint to his initial ambition "to overreach all natural endeavors, and forgo living a manly life" (120). Set in the Early Modern period, *Doctor Faustus* stands as a notable example of a Renaissance text; it embodies the period's core characteristics among which the concept of the Renaissance man is the main one within the scope of this dissertation. In the character of Faustus, the Renaissance man is portrayed as a figure who is "well equipped to search for

new horizons, yet he is destroyed by a bargain which, for his part, is scarcely worth-while" (Male 45). This character often takes on the role of a self-determined ambitious achiever skilled in various areas. This chapter aims to analyse and demonstrate how the character of Doctor Faustus exemplifies a self-fashioned overreacher in the light Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory. It will explore the relevance of this theory to the protagonist's portrayal and actions.

Doctor Faustus or the Modern Prometheus (1616), first performed in 1592, is for Willard Farnham a medieval morality play that contains "a late Renaissance temper" (4). In his analysis of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Farnham observes that the play represents "a curiously faithful revival of religious drama from an unsophisticated older age by the playwright least likely in his time to do such reviving. It has a figure of humanity who embraces evil-doing and imperils his soul" (4-5). This remark highlights the paradoxical nature of Marlowe's work that skillfully combines themes of archaic religious morality with the complex and morally ambiguous character of Faustus. Similarly, McAdam offers insightful commentary on the play noting its embodiment of the Everyman concept, as he describes "how the character is drawn with enough specificity to communicate extraordinary aspiration but with enough vagueness to leave [the reader/ playgoer] feeling the spirit of the man is somehow universal" (141). This perspective emphasises the delicate balance in the portrayal that resonates broadly with reader/playgoer from various backgrounds and experiences, yet maintains unique aspirations that make the characters' journey personally relatable but distinct. However, Marlowe presents not a typical morality play in which a human figure is tempted by a figure of evil, but introduces "a knowing Faustus deliberately setting himself upon an evil course" (Farnham 5). In addition, Mitchell's analysis offers a profound understanding of the complexities in the play's combination of different theatrical traditions. Indeed, the play's

> desperate nature and some of the difficulties critics have found with it may well stem from the fact that Marlowe seems to have fused three different types of plays: the medieval morality play, with its chorus and good and evil angels; the folk-play, or mummers'[s] play, with its free improvisation on a set theme and its use of a 'quête' of apparently arbitrary characters; and the new type of expressive poetic drama which Marlowe was pioneering and which Shakespeare and Johnson [sic] were to develop to its full and as yet unsuspected potential. (Mitchell 63)

This multifaceted approach not only characterises the play's structure but also reflects the transitional nature of the era's theatrical landscape. Eventually, it is commonly accepted that this play is "neither a morality play nor an unambivalent celebration of radical humanism; it is a tragedy which dramatizes a conflict between two irreconcilable systems of value, each of which, we may feel, has at least partial validity and a genuine claim to our allegiance" (Mebane 118). Besides, Deats also locates *Doctor Faustus* as an example for "a lacerating tragedy, as revealed in the two soliloquies with which Faustus opens and concludes the play. […] In both speeches, Faustus portrays an interiority that anticipates Hamlet's famous internal conflicts, and this psychological inwardness evokes from the audience both pity and terror" (13). In light of these, *Doctor Faustus* is "the tragedy of a man who in striving boundlessly misdirects great gifts of mind and spirit and hence progressively loses his soul by disintegration as well as by capture" (Farnham 10).

Christopher Marlowe's seminal, "and perhaps the last" (Bevington 245) work, *Doctor Faustus*, exists in two distinct versions, known as the A-text and the B-text. This is the play's unique characteristic that enriches its place in the canon of Renaissance English drama. The information about the play's original production remains elusive as the precise date of its composition and first performance are not definitively known. It is broadly accepted that the play was written and performed sometime between 1588 and 1593; the earliest existing text, also known as the A-text, was published in 1604, more than a decade after Marlowe's death. This version, first published in 1604, is shorter and is generally considered to be closer to Marlowe's original play, though it most probably underwent alterations in the hands of actors or scribes (Deats 18). The A-text remained as a single copy and was reprinted in 1609, 1610 and 1611 and "entered in the Stationer's Register on 7 January 1601" (Mitchell 53). This version of the play is marked by straightforward narration to foreground Faustus's moral and spiritual dilemmas which present the play as the "tragedy of a scientific libertine who gained control over nature while losing control of himself" (Levin 134). This means that it does not contain most of the additional scenes, particularly the comic interludes that are found in the longer B-text. This approach provides a more direct exploration of the play's central themes and characterisation.

The latter version, the B-text, appeared in 1616 with significant alterations and additions, leading to ongoing scholarly debate about the relationship between these two texts and their respective authenticity. The B-text, published in 1616, is considerably longer, containing additional comic scenes and other elaborations that contribute to a more inconsistent shift in the mood of the play. For example, as Mitchell notes W. W. Greg's much-debated "reading of the B-Text has ideological implications as the B-Text is a much more orthodox play in religious terms containing as it does far more moralizing, and conventional presentations of heaven and hell" (Mitchell 54). This version potentially incorporates revisions made for performance by different theatre troupes after Marlowe's death. The existence of the two versions offers fascinating insights into the dynamic nature of Renaissance theatrical practices, editorial interventions and the reader's/ playgoer's reception. The variations between the A-text and B-text of *Doctor Faustus* show how plays are adapted and modified to cater to the evolving reader/ playgoer tastes that reflect the fluidity of theatrical productions in the Renaissance era and the role of editors in shaping a play's narrative. These two versions reflect the different editorial and publishing practices of the Elizabethan Era, a period marked by a dynamic theatrical culture and the beginnings of commercial book publishing thanks to the printing press, yet without attentive authorial or editorial process. In the context of Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory, the B-text of *Doctor Faustus* is preferred in this study due to its richer and more elaborate character development along with its expanded scenes that offer deeper insights into the protagonist's psychological complexity and moral dilemmas which exemplify Greenblatt's concepts of identity and self-representation.

The play was performed by the Admiral's Men, a leading acting company of the time, which included one of the most famous actors of the Elizabethan stage, Edward Alleyn, among its members. It is highly likely that Alleyn played the title role in the original productions of *Doctor Faustus* (Rutter 263- 266, Gurr 109). Despite its minimalistic stage design and the absence of elaborate scenery and advanced technology in the Elizabethan theatre, the depiction of supernatural events such as the appearance of Mephistopheles was impressively achieved. This effectiveness was primarily due to the use of simple props, costumes, visual and auditory effects and fireworks. These items would have been used creatively in the production of *Doctor Faustus* to suggest Faustus's magical abilities,

the presence of demons, and the various locales visited by Faustus and Mephistopheles. Gurr describes the simplicity of the scenery and the use of properties as means that will suggest changes in character or location that point out the resourceful use of theatrical elements to convey narrative shifts. He specifically mentions a trap positioned "under the stage surface offering a hell for Marlowe's Barabbas [*sic*] and Faustus to sink into, for devils to spring from" (223). On the other hand, Mebane discusses the critical role of language in evoking the supernatural on the Elizabethan stage. Moreover, Marlowe's rich and evocative verse plays a key role in *Doctor Faustus* which enables the reader/ playgoer to visualise the fantastical elements of the plot and "paints beguiling portraits of sensual delight and of infinite knowledge and power, and at the same time it brings [the audience] to feel pity and terror as [they] realize the extent of Faustus' self-delusion" (118-9). For instance, Faustus's incantations, the descriptions of hell by Mephistopheles, and the vivid imagery used throughout the play would have aroused the readers's/ playgoers's imagination transcending the limitations of the physical stage.

The story of the play revolves around the Faust legend, "an English translation of the German 'Faust Book'" (Bevington 251). This legend which may not have been published until 1592, narrates the tale of a scholar who sells his soul to the devil in return for knowledge and power. Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus is portrayed as "the humanist hero of Renaissance individualism, who barters his soul in return for all the things of Renaissance privileged: knowledge, beauty, power" (Deats 4). The protagonist, Doctor Faustus, a respected academic in Wittenberg, Germany, becomes disillusioned with the limits of traditional scholarly disciplines and decides to pursue necromancy. He is fascinated by the prospect of limitless knowledge and power and this ambition leads him to make a pact with the devil as he signs a contract in his own blood. The devil's intermediary, Mephistopheles, is assigned to serve Faustus and grant his every request. However, despite many worldly pleasures and experiences Mephistopheles provides, Faustus is dissatisfied as he realises that his yearning for grandeur results and desires in mere illusory spectacles instead of significant transformations; for instance, when he requests a wife, Mephistopheles presents him with a succubus, a demon assuming a female form. Faustus also seeks insight into great cosmic mysteries, but Mephistopheles denies him this knowledge on the grounds that discussing heavenly matters would deeply

sadden him. As Faustus's twenty-four years pact comes near to its end, he experiences severe fear and regret. In the face of awaiting damnation, he contemplates repentance but he ultimately finds himself at the point of no return trapped by his earlier choice. An Old Man appears, representing Faustus's conscience and his potential for redemption but Faustus rejects his pleas for repent. In the final scene, as the clock strikes midnight, Faustus is confronted with the reality of his fate and is filled with horror. He makes desperate, futile pleas for mercy as his time runs out. He is dragged off to hell by devils as the Chorus closes the play with a somber warning about the perils of overreaching ambition and the quest for forbidden knowledge. Thus, *Doctor Faustus* "offer[s] a terrible and edifying example, a warning to all Christians to avoid the snares of science, of pleasure, and of ambition" (Santayana 12) through the dramatic exploration and manifestation of the Renaissance Humanistic values that prioritise human potential and agency as well as providing an examination of the nature of ambition.

Christopher Marlowe's use of episodic scenes in *Doctor Faustus*, a structure that had already been employed in medieval morality plays, enabled him to connect with the theatrical conventions familiar to his readers/ playgoers. At the same time, he utilised these familiar formats to explore new and more complex themes and character developments that the play offers. While these episodic scenes allow for the exploration of the play's themes, different aspects of Faustus's character and his response to his powers, they also make the passing of the twenty-four years appealing to the reader/playgoer by showing Faustus in different situations and locations. As is the case with the episodic scenes, the plot structure of the play follows the tradition of medieval morality plays which "flourished primarily in the fifteenth century using allegory to teach a moral lesson" predominantly on Christian ethics and values through personifying moral qualities and vices as characters (Deats 5-6).

Doctor Faustus is a profound and impactful play that investigates the eternal human quest for power and knowledge by exploring the complexities of overreaching through its compelling plot where the ambitious Faustus makes a fateful pact with the devil in his unsatisfied thirst for supremacy and wisdom. In a broad sense, the play offers "nothing less than the spiritual biography of its protagonist from birth until death and from innocence to damnation" (Bevington 258). Moreover, the play "draws a parallel, rather

than a contrast, between divine and necromantic 'scripture' by attacking the belief that words themselves – magical utterance, a prayer, a pure act of poetic imagination – are so powerful that they can act as a substitude for natural human development" (McAdam 134). At the beginning of the play, Faustus, dissatisfied with the traditional fields of learning, turns to necromancy, hoping that magic will offer him unrestricted knowledge and power. This decision initiates the rising action of the plot that includes his pact with Mephistopheles, exploitation of newly acquired powers and realisation of the transitory and superficial nature of the pleasures and abilities his magical knowledge provides. Additionally, the climax occurs when Faustus desperately seeks redemption and an escape from his destructive contract. The falling action of the play focuses on Faustus's growing desperation and his failed attempts at repentance, as the limits and consequences of his pursuit of forbidden knowledge become clear. The tragic events that lead Faustus to being condemned to hell and the dangerous potential of knowledge when detached from moral wisdom and humility are portrayed through the reversal

> from presumption to despair; from doubt of the existence of hell to belief in the reality of nothing else; from a desire to be more than man to the recognition that he has excluded himself from the promise of redemption for all mankind in Christ; from haste to sign the bond to desire for delay when the moment comes to honour it; from aspiration to deity and omnipotence to longing for extinction. (Gardner 39)

Throughout *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe explores the dual nature of knowledge - its boundless possibilities and potential for destruction when pursued without ethical constraints. As for the resolution, the play serves as a cautionary tale for Renaissance men about the awaiting dangers in uncontrolled ambition and the pursuit of knowledge.

In the lines, "Only this, gentles – we must perform / The form of Faustus' fortunes, good or bad" (Prologue 6-7), Marlowe addresses "the course, the progression of event" with the word "form" (Bevington 258). So, the subject matter of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* can be interpreted as an extensive exploration of its protagonist's background, internal struggles and relentless efforts towards self-fashioning. Faustus initially appears as a bright scholar who has pursued every learning opportunity and is now seeking knowledge that transcends mortal understanding. The perils of ambition is the outstanding theme in the play. The protagonist's desire for knowledge and power ultimately leads him down a path of self-destruction. He uses his magical abilities to

indulge in sensual pleasures and commit cruel and violent crimes such as conjuring spirits to torment the Pope and his friars, humiliating and attacking scholars and deceiving and abusing others for personal amusement that all make him more and more decadent and depraved. The play also explores the tension between individual agency and social context through the role of individual agency in shaping one's destiny. Faustus is presented as a product of his cultural and intellectual environment, driven by the same desires and aspirations that characterised many Renaissance intellectuals. However, as he is ultimately held responsible for his own choices and actions, the play suggests that his downfall is the result of his own hubris and greed. By specifically taking the key themes of the play into consideration, the story carries profound philosophical and ethical implications that make it a valuable resource for further literary analysis and interpretation in relation to the Renaissance ideals. *Doctor Faustus*'s significance lies in its renewed interest in classical learning, shift towards humanistic thought and increased focus on human potential through Faustus's dissatisfaction with what the traditional academic disciplines provide and his pursuit of necromancy as a means to achieve limitless knowledge. This reflects the Renaissance's break from the confines of medieval scholasticism and its embracement of new fields of study through

> the humanist experiments of Med- wall, Rastell, and Heywood, the early 'regular' comedies of the schools and universities, and the erudite plays of the Inns of Court. The preconceived standard of classical scholarship, with its preference for intellect, philosophical probing, and the correspondences of the Aristotelian unities, measures literary progress in the sixteenth century only by the degree to which sophisticated learning freed English drama from the fetters of ignorance and bad taste. (Bevington 1)

In addition to its innovative themes, the play also holds a unique position in the canon of Renaissance drama due to the employment of dramatic techniques that specify the play as a precedent for subsequent works in English drama. Greenblatt indicates Marlowe's attention to "the idea of physical movement, to the problem of its representation within the narrow confines of the theater" (194) in his works as follows:

> [T]he moments of intensest time-consciousness all occur at or near the close of [his] plays [that] has the effect of making the heroes seem to struggle against *theatrical* time. As Marlowe uses the vacancy of theatrical space to suggest his character's

> homelessness, so he uses the curve of theatrical time to suggest their struggle against extinction, in effect against the nothingness into which all characters fall of the play. (200, emphasis in original)

The most significant feature of the play is undoubtedly its eponymous character, Faustus, as a distinctly Renaissance tragic hero who embodies both an educated and a successful but a flawed character. The tragedy of Faustus stems from his own free will and personal responsibility, the case which illustrates the Early Modern focus on human agency and exploration of individualism, "as well as identifying a pervasive pattern of visual irony that destablizes the ostensible Christian orthodoxy verbally endorsed in the text" (Deats 67).

Marlowe's employment of the supernatural elements at the core of his work plays a significant role in his success and *Doctor Faustus* is no exception through "its ironies [that] run to ever increasing depths that serve to undermine rather than reinforce the Christian morality" (McAdam 121). Faustus's first encounter with Mephistopheles marks the beginning of his journey into the other world and establishes the play's main story. Moreover, Marlowe makes use of the appearances of devils, angels, and ghosts as the means through which he reifies Faustus's psychological struggles and also enhances the dramatic impact of the play. The reifications of the vice figures "illustrate the debased aspects of Faustus' nature by indirection and analogy. They personify the purely degenerate side of Faustus and so allow the loftiness of his tragedy to exist more coherently in its own right" (Bevington 254). In the scene where both the Good Angel and the Bad Angel appear and in another scene where Faustus is visited by a host of spirits representing the Seven Deadly Sins, and the personifications of the immoral misdeeds of Faustus serve as visual manifestations of his internal conflict while enhancing the dramatic tension (Jump 29).

Despite the fact that *Doctor Faustus* is a tragedy, it innovatively combines tragic and comic elements that are seen as a counterbalance to its more serious themes. These comic scenes, believed to have been written by William Birde and Samuel Rowley, add a layer of humour and contrast to the tragic narrative and "separate Faustus'[s] pact with the devil from its terrible culmination can readily be added to without destroying the overall shape of the play, and the result is probably what we see in the B-text, with its extra Rome

scenes, expanded Benvolio plot, and so on" (Brandt 17, Rutter 269). The comic scenes not only "emphasize the theme of Faustus'[s] degeneration; they often reinforce the identification, originally established in the opening soliloquy, of the world of political ambition and self-aggrandizement as – metaphorically, perhaps – demonic" (Mebane 119-20). For example, in the scene when Dick and Robin attempt to perform magic through one of Faustus's conjuring books and amuse themselves with it, their humorous adventure turns out to be an irritating one for Mephistopheles who eventually transforms them into an ape and a dog, respectively. These scenes serve as a subplot that offers a distinct contrast to the main narrative. This juxtaposition is rationalised as a way to provide relief from the intense, tragic elements of Faustus's tragedy while reflecting the complex human experience. By including these lighter, humorous sequences, Marlowe not only provides comic relief but also underscores the multifaceted nature of life where comedy and tragedy often coexist.

The main story of *Doctor Faustus* is centred around the protagonist's process of self-construction and performance as a model to Renaissance man, a term that can be "applied to Faustus the challenger, the explorer of forbidden territories, ready to take risks involving hostility, danger and destruction because of his powerful assertion that man has the life, the intelligence and the right to mastery of the universe" (Male 77). Faustus rejects conventional knowledge and its restrictive limits; therefore, he "seeks a power within himself which can overcome the constraints of the material world in which he is confined: In Jungian terms he is reaching out beyond his conscious mind to the forces of the unconscious" (Mitchell 57). Faustus is a scholar well-informed in multiple disciplines including law, medicine, theology and philosophy; however, "disillusioned with all conventional branches of study, [he] turns to magic and eventually decides to sell his soul to the devil" (Hopkins 27). In the same vein, his curiosity and pursuit of knowledge beyond conventional boundaries do not align with the intellectual curiosity of the idealised Renaissance man of the time. As the concept of Renaissance man stands to define a person with many talents or polymathic knowledge and embodies the period's emphasis on forcing the human potential, Faustus strives to break the confines of human limitations, in his case, through the practice of necromancy "equated with imperialism and Faustus with the colonizer who sells his soul for the power and control intrinsic to

the imperialist enterprise" (Deats 3). Although Faustus carries the several traits of a Renaissance man "with his eager, courageous, outward-looking, chance-taking view of the world," his choice of practice serves as a critique of unbounded ambition (Male 35). His tragic end underscores the potential dangers of such ambition and the moral and spiritual costs of transgressing the boundaries of human capability. This paradoxical portrayal of Faustus as both an epitome and critique of the Renaissance man adds layers of complexity to his character due to its underlying dualism. In the prologue, his concern is stated to be "cursed necromancy; / Nothing so sweet as magic is to him, / Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss: / And this the man that in his study sits" (25-28). According to Mizener, keeping this intricate duality in mind, Marlowe's dramatic work emphasises the portrayal of the dilemma of the Renaissance man "within the limits of this dualism that the tragical history of the life and death of Doctor Faustus exists" (115).

As self-fashioning signifies the idea that individuals may shape their destiny through their choices and actions, Faustus's assertion of his desires and his attempt to re-construct his destiny portray the period's increasing emphasis on self-dependence and self-determination. Transitioning from Faustus's individual agency to a broader literary context, it is noteworthy that Marlowe's play offers more than a personal narrative of ambition and downfall. The play serves as a mirror to the early-modern characteristics of Renaissance literature through the medium of Faustus's process of self-fashioning. As Greenblatt's theory suggests, self-fashioning is the process throughout which individuals construct their identities in relation to their interactions with others and their culture. Greenblatt's theory is basically based on Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's work, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486), in which God presents "[a] creature which might comprehend the meaning of so vast an achievement, which might be moved with love at its beauty and smitten with awe at its grandeur" (5). Addressing the "creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, [he speaks to it] in order that [he] may, as the free and proud shaper of [his] own being, fashion [himself] in the form [he] may prefer" (7).

Stephen Greenblatt defines the time in which *Doctor Faustus* was produced as "the period in which European man embarked on his extraordinary career of consumption, his eager pursuit of knowledge, with one intellectual model after another seized, squeezed dry, and

discarded, and his frenzied exhaustion of the world's resources" (*Renaissance* 199). Greenblatt further argues that Renaissance writers were engaged in a process of self-fashioning through the protagonists in their literary works by means of constructing representations of themselves that were often at odds with their actual lives. In the play, Faustus initially reveals his desire to construct a certain identity for himself as a learned and knowledgeable man in the following lines: "Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin / To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess; / Having commenc'd, be a divine in show, / Yet level at the end of every art, / And live and die in Aristotle's works" (I. i. 1-5). He clearly states his wish to be seen as a divine figure in addition to be well-versed in all arts and subjects that have been living and dying in Aristotle's works. His aspiration for knowledge and status reflects the course of his self-fashioning, aiming to be a powerful and learned figure. Faustus's quest for knowledge and status "stands apart then from both orthodoxy and skepticism; he calls into question the theory of literature and history as repeatable moral lessons, and he calls into question his age's characteristic mode of rejecting those lessons" (*Renaissance* 212). His unique position challenges the era's educational and moral frameworks and distances him from the prevailing doubts of his time. So, Faustus's desire for self-fashioning is a reflection of the broader cultural trends of the Renaissance as it stands out to be "a time when people [become] increasingly conscious of the potential for personal development and of the possibilities that lay within the individual self" (Johanson 1). Johanson further claims that for people in the Renaissance, there was no distinction between gaining knowledge and the desire for self-improvement; for this reason, they needed to fashion themselves by becoming more knowledgeable and powerful as they saw this as the only path towards personal growth and development (1).

Faustus's self-presentation influences his relationships with others for a scholar who turns into a necromancer renders him unique and creates a distinct power dynamic in his interactions with others. For instance, his relationship with his servant Wagner and his interactions with Mephistopheles are marked by a sense of superiority on Faustus's part thanks to his newfound powers. Additionally, his dealings with the nobility, such as the Emperor and the Duke and Duchess, underscore his ambition to be recognised and revered as a man of unmatched abilities. Even during his exchanges with fellow

academics, he dominates the conversation which frequently position him as an influential figure. Drawing on Greenblatt's theory, one can examine how Faustus fashions himself as an overreacher seeking to transcend human limitations through his pursuit of knowledge and power. The theory gives way to analyse how Faustus constructs his identity through his actions, speeches and relationships with other characters. The play puts forward how his actions and decisions are shaped by the power relations he engages in as well as his personal relationships with the other characters. In *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe portrays a character who seeks to fashion himself and become a demi-god who frankly states,

> 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, (I. i. 52-58)

As Faustus openly states, he needs others to "obey" him while he constructs his own identity. The other characters respond to Faustus's self-fashioning in a variety of ways and through his interactions with other characters, particularly Mephistopheles, Faustus unfolds his dilemmas through his own soliloquies. Some characters are fascinated by Faustus's intellect and magical abilities, and they want to learn from him or collaborate with him. A group of scholars, for example, asks Faustus's assistance in solving a problem while a group of aristocrats invites him to perform a magic show for them. These characters are attracted to Faustus's self-presentation as a powerful and knowledgeable individual and they consider him as a means to achieve their own purposes. On the other hand, other characters are worried about Faustus's claims and intentions. They regard him as a dangerous and delusory figure who is experimenting with forces beyond his control. For example, the scholars express their concern:

> 1 *Scholar*. O Faustus, then I fear that which I have long suspected,
> That thou art fallen into that damned art
> For which they two [Valdes and Cornelius] are infamous through the world.
> 2 *Scholar*. Were he a stranger, not ally'd to me,
> The danger of his soul would make me mourn. (I. ii. 24-29)

In the same vein, the Good Angel warns Faustus of the repercussions of his crimes and advises him to repent before it is too late: "Never too late, if Faustus will repent. / […]

Repent, and they shall never gaze thy skin" (II. ii. 80-82). The reactions of these characters to Faustus's self-fashioning both highlight the theme of the play that is the dangers of excessive ambition and also serve to reinforce the tragic element as Faustus's downfall is ultimately the result of his excessive ambition.

The era in which *Doctor Faustus* was written was marked by significant transformations in societal structures and cultural values that foreground the cultural backdrop which undoubtedly influenced the fashioning of individual identities and literary characters that are "moving simultaneously on the level of human society in the material world and within a landscape of the human mind which corresponds to a religious and cosmological drama" (Mitchell 57). The profound societal and cultural shifts of the Renaissance shaped the construction of individual identities in literature revealing the era's complex interplay between the physical and the spiritual, philosophical realms. Faustus is emblematic of this duality that reflects the period's intricate humanistic and philosophical discussions. Among the prevalent discussions, the widespread religious change and intellectual upheaval during the Reformation not only had a thematic influence on the play but also gave rise to the proliferation of Protestant ideologies throughout Europe. In addition to these changes, as McAdam states, the "religious suspicion of the illusory nature of the human self [is the fact] that makes self-fashioning such a tentative activity for Marlowe's heroes" (145). McAdam's implication lays emphasis on the precariousness of identity in Marlowe's works in which the protagonists's attempts at constructing identities are constantly undermined by the era's deep-seated religious skepticism about the authenticity of the individual self. Eventually, although it represents a "remarkable advance over the Tudor moralities" (Bevington 261), *Doctor Faustus* contains a paradox "in its moving tragedy of noble character and its explicit denunciation of moral failure, in its hero's sympathetic aspiration and deplorable degeneracy. This paradox was central to the process by which the English moral drama made its contribution to the late Elizabethan theater" (262).

Faustus's self-fashioning reflects many of the key characteristics of Renaissance literature; namely, a renewed interest in classical learning, Humanism and a focus on individualism and secularism. Additionally, the ultimate motivation behind Faustus's self-fashioning could be stated to be his wish to explore new areas of knowledge and

personal fulfillment that Greenblatt describes as "the renewal of existence through repetition of the self-constituting act. The character [in this case, Faustus] repeats himself in order to continue to be that same character on the stage. Identity is a theatrical invention that must be reiterated if it is to endure" (*Renaissance* 201). This can be seen in how Faustus continually reaffirms his choice to exchange his soul for knowledge and power. Despite the repeated warnings and opportunities for repentance, Faustus maintains his initial decision, thus reinforcing his identity as a tragic hero who is defiantly committed to his ambitions. This repeated affirmation of his decision becomes a self-constituting act through which Faustus continues to fashion and maintain his tragic identity. Faustus's determination to shape his identity resonates with the Renaissance emphasis on individual agency, encapsulating the spirit of self-fashioning which refers to the process of constructing one's identity and public persona according to a set of socially acceptable standards. In essence, the character's identity is formed and maintained through a sequence of recurring performances that mirror the Renaissance concept of self-fashioning.

Faustus's pursuit of forbidden knowledge could be interpreted as an embodiment of the spirit of the Reformation though it necessitates disregarding religious and scholarly orthodoxy. The text's challenging the established theological doctrine is represented by Faustus's agreement with Mephistopheles and subsequent employment of demonic witchcraft. The play sets an "objective critique of Reformation theological systems and beliefs such as predestination than a personal (and desperate) effort" (McAdam 113). Faustus enquires Mephistopheles about the nature of hell and eternal damnation which signals his skepticism towards religious teachings and his willingness to challenge the authority of the Church. Such acts, clearly transgressing the boundaries set by the Church, serve directly the opposite religious doctrine of the time. However, his challenge is rebuted by the Chorus in the epilogue:

> *Chorus*. […]
> Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
> Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
> Only to wonder at unlawful things,
> Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
> To practice more than heavenly power permits. (3-7)

In essence, Faustus's aspiration for boundless knowledge and power serves to underscore his agency and individualism and sheds light on the period's broader struggle for religious and intellectual autonomy.

Influenced by this tension between the medieval era and the Renaissance, *Doctor Faustus* manifests the competing cultural values during this transitional period. In contrast to the strong adherence to religious orthodoxy and the societal hierarchy in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance marked a shift towards Humanism, individualism and a focus on the material world. Medievalist belief in the divine order and the predominant emphasis on the community over the individual were put aside as a result of a growing emphasis on human potential and agency during the Renaissance. Faustus appears to be the personification of the shift from medieval disciplines such as divinity, law, medicine and logic all of which he rejects as insufficient for his ambitions and turns to necromancy which can be seen as a representation of the new and humanistic learning of the Renaissance. All the Renaissance values were presented as the devil's gift throughout the play. After being granted with powers, in the scene that he encounteres both the Good Angel and Bad Angel, Faustus expresses how his newfound abilities, especially the idea that the spirits can bring him anything he wants, dominate him. In the following lines it can be observed that he feels enthusiastic about the supremacy he now possesses: "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? / I'll have them fly to India for gold, / Ransack the ocean for orient pearl, / And search all corners of the new-found world / For pleasant fruits and princely delicates" (I. i. 79-86). These lines reflect his hubris and the impending tragedy that often comes with overreaching ambition. His self-fashioning as a powerful and knowledgeable figure includes a desire for material wealth and indulgence that highlight the complex and multi-faceted nature of his constructed identity. These sentiments set the stage for Faustus's subsequent actions and the choices he makes throughout the play emphasising the central theme of the dangers of unchecked ambition and the moral consequences of one's choices.

However, Faustus's damnation which stands as "a manifestation of a devastating psychological dilemma" (McAdam 123) can be interpreted as a consequence of his transgressions against the medieval moral and religious order. The scene in which Faustus

laments his fate and pleads for God's mercy exemplifies the cultural tension between his earthly Renaissance ambition and the traditional, medieval beliefs that value faith and repentance. His downfall sets forth the intense tension between the new, humanistic values and the older religious ones. Notably, while Faustus aspires to redefine himself in line with Renaissance ideals, he is ultimately punished according to the moral laws of medieval Christianity (Deats 25-26). These medieval values represent a worldview that treats transgressions of divine law with severe punitive measures while the emerging humanistic ideals of the Renaissance celebrate the potential of the individual to shape their destiny and foster progress. Faustus embodies the Renaissance overreacher who strives to redefine himself and his capacities even daring to transgress metaphysical boundaries embodying the spirit of Renaissance Humanism.

The Early Modern period that the play was produced in was marked by changes in social hierarchy and increased opportunities for upward social mobility that played a significant role in shaping the character of Faustus. This period witnessed the gradual dissolution of feudal structures and the emergence of a more fluid social system. In other words, the emergence of a money-oriented, political economy, the expansion of education and the increasing status of the merchant class made upward social mobility possible for its citizens. Faustus, a man of humble origins who aspires to transcend his given social status, is the practitioner of these societal shifts. To illustrate, stressing his potential for social mobility, Faustus states that he is "grac'd with doctor's name, / Excelling all, and sweetly can dispute / In th' heavenly matters of theology;" (Prologue 16-18) suggesting that he has already achieved a certain level of social status through his education and accomplishments. Following his pact with the devil, Faustus uses his magical powers to deceive the Pope and assert his dominance over the religious hierarchy by way of which he achieves his desire to transcend traditional social restrictions and assert his authority. Although his aspiration to achieve a god-like status through his mastery of magic initially brings him prestige and glory, the consequence of his actions turns out to be catastrophic, resulting in his damnation. The conflict is conveyed, in Bevington's words, as "the 'facts' of Faustus's life as they [have] been set down in various accounts and legends, and the generic predicament of a blasphemer" (251). Marlowe's portrayal of Faustus's ambitions,

successes and his ultimate end provides a rich site for investigating the social dynamics of the Early Modern period.

Faustus's self-fashioning is the consequence of his desirous nature which fuels his desire for self-creation, ultimately leading him to his tragic end. Starting with the prologue, Faustus is dissatisfied with the limitations of conventional wisdom and desires more knowledge, more power and ultimately more control over his existence. The potency of Faustus's ambition is portrayed in the opening soliloquy of the play where he decisively rejects all the traditional disciplines of conventional knowledge to practice necromancy. His willingness to take such a risk indicates Faustus's decisive ambition to obtain god-like powers and demonstrates the extent of his aspirations. By way of trading his soul for the ability to exercise supernatural powers for twenty-four years, he actualises his relentless ambition. Faustus's self-fashioning is also driven by his desire to use his newfound knowledge and abilities to dominate others and reshape the world according to his will. Faustus's ambition and desire are discussed as two fundamentally opposing standpoints throughout the play: while his ambition and desire are the roots of his extraordinary power that have enabled him to engage with emperors, summon apparitions of historical figures and perform impressive pieces of magic, these same traits also pave the way for his tragic downfall. His capability of summoning the spirit of Alexander the Great to show off his ability to command historical figures, deceiving and manipulating the Pope and his followers via his magical abilities, and summoning the spirit of Helen of Troy only to experience the pleasure of the company of a beautiful woman reveal the dichotomy in Faustus's self-fashioning by displaying the appeal and the menace inherent in the pursuit of ambition. On one side of this dichotomy lies the attraction of mastering knowledge and power that he exploits so as to entertain his audiences by disrupting the Pope's banquet, conjuring Alexander the Great for the Emperor and generating horns on the head of a disrespectful knight. On the other side awaits the peril of his ambition to lead him to his eternal damnation. Deprived of divine forgiveness and salvation due to his pact, Faustus realises the tragic consequences of his ambition and regretfully reflects: "Ah, Faustus, / Now hast thou but one bare hour to live, / And then thou must be damn'd perpetually" (V. ii. 130-33). By consistently choosing the pursuit of worldly pleasures and power over repentance and redemption, *Doctor Faustus* embodies the serious

consequences of ambition and desire and establishes the character as the prototype of the overreaching Renaissance individual in the literary spheres.

Throughout *Doctor Faustus*, the protagonist's attempts to shape and control his identity are marked by a restless ambition that characterises the Renaissance ethos. Faustus's attempt to shape his identity is a complex process, intertwining ambitious aspiration, a painful struggle with his own desires and the eventual recognition of his tragic foolishness. His self-fashioning commences from the very beginning of the play, when Faustus, discontent with traditional forms of knowledge yearns for a more potent and unbounded form of wisdom. His declaration, "A sound magician is a demi-god; / Here tire, my brains, to get a deity!" (I. i. 62-63) demonstrates his desire to transcend his human limitations and assume a position of near-divinity. Faustus's pursuit of knowledge is not just for the sake of intellectual curiosity but is closely linked to his self-perception and desire for power. His pact with Mephistopheles clearly manifests this fact as his willingness to trade his soul for services from the devil's agent signals a radical and dangerous reconstitution of his identity. He transforms from a respected scholar to a man whose power is derived from the demonic. Faustus who was once bold and fearless and not hesitant to risk his eternal soul for transient earthly power, gradually starts to grasp the deep void and fleeting nature of his ambitious yearnings. This realisation is not an epiphany, but rather a slow, gnawing recognition that grows more prevalent as his damnation approaches. Marlowe brilliantly encapsulates Faustus's despair and regret in a deeply moving soliloquy:

> *Faustus*. O God,
> If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
> Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransomed me,
> Impose some end to my incessant pain.
> Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
> A hundred thousand, and at last be saved. (V. ii. 163-168)

Here, the protagonist, laments his imminent damnation on the brink of his doom and longs for the salvation that he has previously declined. In this intense moment of introspection, Faustus tragically recognises the wasted potential of his exceptional intellect and the dreadful outcomes of his ill-conceived choices. Faustus's tragic soliloquy and his belated self-realisation encapsulate the profound consequences of his misdirected self-fashioning.

By choosing the path of necromancy, Faustus pursued an illusion of power and knowledge only to confront the harsh reality of its unstable nature. This moment serves as the peak of his character arc that exposes the pitfalls of unchecked ambition. It also demonstrates the tragic consequences of choosing temporal power over spiritual redemption. Thus, Marlowe presents a profound exploration of human ambition, the pursuit of knowledge and the moral and existential boundaries of human existence through Faustus's journey of self-fashioning.

As self-fashioning is about presentation, Christopher Marlowe portrays an ambitious man of high intellect who seeks to overreach his capabilities beyond conventional human limits that are "grounded in the recognition of man's mortality and his fallibility" (Gardner 38). Marlowe provides a character as a figure of profound intellectual confidence and ambition who is thirsty for wisdom and authority that transcends the conventional confines of mortal capability. In the context of the Renaissance that is marked by an intellectual reawakening and curiosity for the physical world as well as the afterlife, Faustus's quest embodies an unsatisfied urge for learning and power. Faustus presents himself as someone unafraid to challenge norms even though it involves engaging with the dark arts and the "political uses of artistic presentations as on the individual's failure to control his or her own responses" (McAdam 134). This revolutionary self-presentation influences his behaviour significantly.

In the same vein, Faustus's journey to surpass human capabilities is not a passive reception of these heightened capacities but rather an active pursuit. This endeavor to self-fashion enhances the dramatic tension within the play. Still, Marlowe's portrayal of Faustus does not just depict him as a symbol of intellectual representation; he also enriches his main character with a relatable touch of human imperfection. Despite his extraordinary capabilities, Faustus's trajectory ultimately serves as a critique of uncontrolled ambition. The tragic conclusion of his self-fashioning process serves as a reminder of the potential consequences when one's aspiration goes untempered by moral and spiritual consideration despite its grandeur. As an example, his interactions with Mephistopheles fluctuate between bold defiance and fear. Faustus's confident demeanor allows him to command the demon although his fear of the consequences becomes

evident at times when he begins to fear damnation: "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it. / Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God / And tasted the eternal joys of heaven, / Am not tormented with ten thousand hells / In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss?" (I. iii. 75-79). He sees himself as a fallen figure tormented by the loss of eternal bliss and the realisation that his own desires and pursuits led to his downfall. As also seen in the play, upon being offered a chance at redemption, Faustus chooses not to repent as his "heart is harden'd, [that he] canot repent" (II. ii. 18). Despite the Good Angel and the Old Man's earnest pleas to seek God's forgiveness, Faustus sticks to his identity as a man in control of his own destiny and rejects their advice. He asserts his will in his words: "I am a servant to great Lucifer" (iii. 42). Faustus's self-presentation, therefore, shapes his character's development and the choices he makes throughout the play that discloses the narrative towards its tragic conclusion. Thus, Marlowe's depiction of Faustus's self-fashioning creates a complex and multifaceted character that mirrors the intellectual vibrancy and moral dilemmas of the Renaissance period.

Faustus achieves omnipotence by way of "usurpation upon God; at the close he is an usurper upon the Devil" (Gardner 39). This pursuit of forbidden knowledge is an active form of self-fashioning, a manifestation of his desire to break free from societal constraints and establish himself as an extraordinary individual. This is evident when he rejects the established disciplines of divinity, law, medicine, and logic in favour of necromancy, saying, "A sound magician is a demi-god" (I. i. 61). His choice highlights his determination to fashion himself and his fate according to his desires so that Faustus eventually "pays a horrible price for his retreat from reality" (McAdam 139).

In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the interactions between Faustus and Mephistopheles directly and significantly shape Faustus's process of self-fashioning. Mephistopheles becomes Faustus's constant companion who serves as a critical and directive mirror to the latter's ambitions and desires. From their first encounter and onwards, Faustus's negotiations with Mephistopheles underscore his initial assertiveness and high aspirations. In the first scene, he boldly bargains with Mephistopheles agreeing to exchange his soul for twenty-four years of service from the demon that demonstrates his urge and quest for self-governance. Mephistopheles, however, is not merely a servant to Faustus but a demonstration of his overreaching ambition and ill-guided desires. This

relationship grows increasingly concerning as Faustus begins to grasp the implications of his pact. For instance, Faustus commands Mephistopheles to fetch him books of knowledge, a request that highlights Faustus's thirst for power and control. However, Mephistopheles's replies frequently act as a forewarning of the looming catastrophe that overshadows Faustus's endeavors:

> *Mephistophilis*. That I shall wait on Faustus whilst he lives,
> So he will buy my service with his soul.
> […]
> *Faustus*. I think hell's a fable.
> *Mephistophilis*. Ay, think so still, till experience change thy mind.
> *Faustus*. Why, dost thou think that Faustus shall be damn'd?
> *Mephistophilis*. Ay, of necessity, for here's the scroll
> In which thou hast given thy soul to Lucifer. (II. i. 32-33, 128-32)

As Faustus's doom approaches, the dynamics between him and Mephistopheles further expose the self-delusions and despair inherent in Faustus's self-fashioning. In his desperate mourning: "Ah, Faustus, / Now hast thou but one bare hour to live, / And then thou must be damn'd perpetually (V. ii. 130-133); Faustus remains no longer the confident scholar but turns into be a man struggling with the consequences of his choices. This dramatic shift underlines his tragic realisation of the costs of his ambition and his distorted self-fashioning. Thus, through his interactions with Mephistopheles, Faustus's journey of self-fashioning unfolds revealing the tragic consequences of his overreaching ambition and the illusory nature of the power he has attained.

Throughout the play, the acquisition and use of forbidden knowledge are proved to be empowering as well as being destructive. Faustus seeks to transcend human limits but enters a realm beyond his understanding and control. His relentless quest for knowledge and power becomes his undoing that reflects the tragic consequences of self-fashioning that disregard moral and spiritual boundaries. Also, his breakdown "arises from Faustus's willingness to let the pleasures of imagination ultimately blind him to his true circumstances and the consequences of his actions, as if art were a surrogate for experience and not in various ways a mirror of the real world" (McAdam 134). Furthermore, manipulating social hierarchies functions as a critical element of Faustus's self-fashioning process.

The transition towards dissatisfaction and a movement from established academic knowledge to an unconventional one can be read as a radical change in the character development in the course of the story during which Faustus's mindset, beliefs and actions alter dramatically. This shift also marks Faustus's aspiration to subvert established norms and assert his individual authority. Throughout the play, Faustus's newly acquired powers allow him to manipulate social hierarchies to his advantage which enable him to perform and display his self-fashioning. A striking example of this is where Faustus uses his magical powers to deceive and ridicule the Pope who is still one of the highest religious authorities as the head of the Catholic Church although he has begun to lose the favour and authority in England during the period. He employs his powers by making himself and Mephistopheles invisible while he is disrupting the feast and boxing the Pope's ears to have mischievous fun. Faustus's making himself and Mephistopheles invisible to strike the knight who doubts his abilities and mocks him, further illustrates his purposeful conduct. The act of Faustus boxing the Pope's ears can be read as a dramatic and symbolic act of defiance against the Catholic Church's authority. This is not merely a comedic scene but a clear manifestation of Faustus's aspiration to assert his dominance over traditional authority figures and demonstration of his ignorance concerning his damnation:

> *Mephistophilis*. Now, Faustus, what will you do now? For I can tell you
> you'll be cursed with bell, book, and candle.
> *Faustus*. Bell, book, and candle; candle, book, and bell;
> Forward and backward, to curse Faustus to hell! (III. ii. 93-96)

Additionally, Faustus's capability to employ magic underlines his desire for distinction from and dominance over the average person. Faustus's interactions with Charles V, Emperor of Germany are also emblematic of this manipulation of social hierarchies. Even though the Emperor holds a higher social rank, Faustus takes charge in their meeting. Faustus offers to execute extraordinary feats and even brings forth a vision of Alexander the Great upon the Emperor's request just to boast of his power and show off (xii). Although this act momentarily brings forth laughter and astonishment among the audience in the Emperor's court, it is short-lived and fails to contribute any meaningful elevation to Faustus's standing. Instead, it serves as a striking illustration of the extent of his decline. He resorts to childlike tricks to gain fleeting moments of admiration

portraying the superficiality of his powers. However, these manipulations do not bring about any substantial or lasting change in Faustus's social status. Instead, they serve to stress the transitory and illusory nature of the power he has been granted. As the play progresses and as his condemnation approaches, Faustus's manipulation of social hierarchies emerges as a hollow and ultimately futile aspect of his self-fashioning illustrating the tragic consequences of his misguided ambition and overreaching desire for power. Moreover, during these acts of superficial grandeur, Faustus's true identity becomes explicitly evident shedding light on the profound gap between his worldly desires and the spiritual consequences he faces. This scene epitomises Faustus's use of magic and spectacle as tools of self-fashioning, as tools that help him to construct an image of himself as a man of unique abilities and talents.

Within this context, as the tools he needs for his process of self-fashioning, magic and performance in *Doctor Faustus* become two entwined facets of his journey towards developing his own identity. Fascinated with the charm of magic and drawn to the magical world of the forbidden, Faustus decides to pursue necromancy as his starting point of self-creation that stands out to be a field despised by society. This choice not only goes against accepted conventions but also grants him an unmatched kind of power elevating him to an unorthodox level of authority. In essence, this decision lays the groundwork for his self-construction as an extraordinary and almost transcendent figure unlike anything seen before. His choice to specialise in necromancy becomes a deliberate, bold move in re-shaping his destiny as well as his personal identity. It is through this forbidden art that he seeks to create his unique place in a world restricted by traditional norms and beliefs. In this practice, he skillfully uses the creation of a persona as a means to develop his larger-than-life image. In the end, Faustus discovers that although magic may initially appear useful for shaping oneself, it ultimately proves to be temporary and unsatisfying. Faustus's decision to use necromancy in his process of self-fashioning places him at the core of his own autonomous realm, while on the other hand situates him on the edge of the established societal order. By daring to confront and undermine the current status quo, he takes on a persona that is both fascinating and terrifying serving as a compelling and an unusual Renaissance man who chooses to go against the grain. In

Marlowe's presentation, Faustus emerges as a martyr standing in for the very goals and principles that the Renaissance era highly praised. In Bevington's words,

> [t]he division of these functions in *Faustus* between vicious and tragic character is not complete, however, and it is the bifurcation of Faustus'[s] own personality between base physical desires and Promethean aspiration that arouses dispute concerning the message of the play. If one dismisses as unworthy and irrelevant the comic material involving both Faustus and the 'digressive' characters, it is natural to dwell upon the noble mind here overthrown. Even though his quest for unlimited knowledge is blasphemous, it is a quest of impressive daring and intellect; and insofar as Faustus aims at this enlargement of human power his overthrow may be interpreted as a martyrdom for a great cause. (254-55)

Therefore, his decision to pursue necromancy not only impacts his environment but also initiates his journey of self-definition and self-creation, shaping the trajectory of his life in significant and ultimately tragic ways.

Conclusively, the story of *Doctor Faustus* offers a profound exploration of the complexities of self-fashioning and the inherent challenges of overreaching one's boundaries in pursuit of power and identity. Faustus, as a literary character, appears as the ideal manifestation of a self-fashioned overreacher when examined through the lens of Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory. Faustus's fashioning is ideal in the sense that it refers to the most representative or definitive example of a self-fashioned overreacher as a literary character who ambitiously shapes their own identity and defies conventional limits or societal norms in line with Greenblatt's theoretical framework. Within the perspective of Greenblatt's theory, the play remains a valuable example for understanding the construction of the self in Renaissance literature. Despite the grave consequences, Faustus's audacious choices and attempts into the forbidden realms of necromancy offer profound insights. They reveal the lengths to which an individual might venture while shaping his own identity by way of disregarding societal restraints and norms. Faustus's path is both a tribute to the persistent power of human ambition and a sharp reminder of the dangers such ambition may lead to especially when uncontrolled by ethical and moral considerations. When applied to Faustus's character, Greenblatt's theory emphasises the complexity of Faustus's path from his initial rejection of social standards to his tragic end, recording his dilemma of excessive ambition and its cost. *Doctor Faustus* stands as a cautionary tale that sheds light on the intricate fluctuation

between self-assertion and the larger societal framework underscoring the timeless relevance of the self-fashioned overreacher in literature and beyond.

CHAPTER 3

"AMBITION, MADAM, IS A GREAT MAN'S MADNESS, / THAT IS NOT KEPT IN CHAINS AND CLOSE-PENT ROOMS,"[5]: THE DUCHESS AS A SELF-FASHIONED OVERREACHER

Renowned for his play, *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623), John Webster (1580?- 1632?) remains an enigmatic literary figure due to the limited information available about his life. Born and raised in London, Webster was named after his father, a well-respected coach-maker and a member of the prestigious Merchant Taylors's Company, known for its historical significance and influential role in the city's commerce and trade. This upbringing provided him with a stable and respectable environment, exerting significant influence within London's societal circles. Although it is not evidenced, Webster most likely "attended the Merchant Taylors'[s] School, among the most esteemed schools in sixteenth-century London" (Coleman 5). Its influence extended into his adult life as he served as the official poet for the Company. This role provided him with the opportunity to design festivities for the investiture of Sir John Gore as the Lord Mayor of London (Henke 181). His career in the theatre began early in the seventeenth century, a time when English theatre was undergoing significant transformation. This period was characterised by the emergence of multifaceted characters, a shift from the simplistic morality plays of previous eras and the growing popularity of tragedies and comedies that mirrored the social and political landscape of the period. Webster was initially involved in collaborative playwriting as it was the common practice of the time. As Coleman states,

> [t]he earliest evidence of Webster's writing for the stage comes in the 'diary' of Philip Henslowe. In the entry for 22 May 1602, Henslowe notes a payment to the collaborative team of Michael Drayton, Thomas Middleton, Anthony Munday, and Webster for a play called *Caesar's Fall*. […] Later in 1602, Webster was part of another large playwriting team (along with Henry Chettle, Dekker, Thomas Heywood, and one Mr. Smythe), who received payment for a two-part play known as *Lady Jane*. Also that year, he collaborated with Chettle, Dekker, and Heywood on *Christmas Comes But Once a Year*, which has also been lost.
>
> […] His next dramatic undertakings seem to have been at a slightly more senior level. In 1604, Webster's name appears, along with that of John Marston, on the title page of *The Malcontent* [.] […] Also in 1604, Webster collaborated with Dekker on *Westward Ho*, a city comedy written for performance by the

[5] (I. iii. 124-125)

> Children of Paul's. Following Jonson, Chapman, and Marston's 'sequel', *Eastward Ho*, Webster and Dekker responded with a 'sequel' of their own, *Northward Ho*, performed in 1605. (14-16)

Webster's contributions to English drama are notably profound and multifaceted. Celebrated for his unique and dark insights into human nature, Webster's works offer readers/ playgoers a profound and occasionally unsettling exploration of humanity. Webster's plays are distinguished by their dark tone, a stylistic choice mirroring the political and religious unrest of his time. The blend of beauty and harshness in his language not only adds a captivating depth to his plays but also vividly portrays the era's complexities. Furthermore, the richness of metaphors and symbols in his works both transcends mere decoration of the dialogue and enhances their dramatic effect and reveal complex emotions and themes. In addition, Webster's ability to combine eloquent verse with lively images establishes a distinctive poetic style that distinguishes him among his peers. His plays impressively capture the unsettled atmosphere of the period by leaving a lasting mark on his readers/ playgoers and influencing his contemporaries. This impact is vital in understanding Webster's contribution to the evolution of English drama. Through his works, which offer readers/ playgoers a profound and occasionally unsettling exploration of humanity, Webster's proficiency in seamlessly integrating various elements – such as complex character development, masterful use of language, characters with psychological depth**,** and intricate plots – ensures his lasting relevance in the literary world.

Recognised primarily for his tragedies, John Webster's most acclaimed plays, *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* are exemplary of Jacobean tragedy in their unique exploration of the themes of power, corruption and revenge on a personal level. The plays are fundamentally embedded in the classical traditions of the genre that reflect the distinctive darkness of Jacobean drama. Occupying a prominent place in the canon of Renaissance drama, they possess "tradition of analysis and debate, while at the same time moving toward new conventions of verisimilitude and narrative tautness" (Belsey 116) along with its early-modern attributes; they are also noted for their critique and reflection of the social and cultural norms of the era. Webster's works give strong voice and agency to his female characters. Especially, *The Duchess of Malfi* uniquely explores the

"questions of gender ideology, but its employment of various, often contradictory, literary and social discourses regarding gender relations makes it difficult to analyze" (Jankowski 224). Firstly, women in Jacobean society were expected to be submissive and deferential to men. By portraying complex, defiant women like the Duchess and tCorombona, Webster challenges socio-cultural norms and presents a different perspective on womanhood. By giving voice to the desires and sufferings of women, Webster points out the power imbalances of the time and the depth of characterisation allows the audience / playgoer to connect with them on a deeper level.

Featuring an ambitious female protagonist who defies the patriarchal norms of the time through her marriage, the play exemplifies the Renaissance tragedy and heroism demonstrated through her brave and dignified acceptance of destiny. The story follows the typical tragic pattern of the era's drama in which high-ranking characters suffer a downfall due to a combination of external pressures and personal flaws. This narrative arc establishes the Duchess as an iconic tragic figure. The extensive use of dark symbolism and imagery – particularly in the 'echo' scene in Act V, where Antonio and Delio discuss the ephemeral nature of life and fame – corresponds to the Jacobean fascination with themes of death and the supernatural. At its core, the play is a tragedy centred on the Duchess's defiance against oppressive social norms that lead to her tragic downfall. This catastrophe of inevitable fate, particularly in the case of the Duchess whose efforts to assert her autonomy are brutally crushed by the tyrannical actions of her brothers, imitates "a fallen mankind in a fallen world" (Allison 273). Additionally, the play slightly resembles morality plays with its exploration of the stark contrast between good and evil and the corruption of power leading to destruction.

Set in the early sixteenth-century Italian court, the play vividly depicts its eponymous character as a "heroine in Jacobean tragedy [who] is frequently a victim of the two activities of painting […]: man painting woman as a lifeless, dismembered object and painting herself to conform – pathetically – to the tragically double image men have of her" (Finke 361). In terms of her presenting herself as a fashioned character as opposed to the external oppressive influences, Stephen Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning offers a framework to interpret the Duchess's deliberate crafting of her identity in the

face of the rigid social structures of her time. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Webster portrays the Duchess grappling with this concept. While societal pressures, embodied by her controlling brothers, push her towards a preordained role, the Duchess defies expectations by pursuing a secret marriage and expressing her own desires. This clash between societal pressures and individual agency exemplifies Greenblatt's theory as he states that "a new stress on the executive power of the will, […] [in other words] a new assertion of power by both family and state to determine all movement within the society" (Greenblatt, *Renaissance* 1-2). The Duchess controls and manipulates her identity and destiny often transgressing the societal and moral boundaries of her time. This chapter aims to present how the Duchess embodies the archetype of the Renaissance individual who overreaches**,** and examine the Duchess in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* through the lens of Stephen Greenblatt's self-fashioning theory which emphasises the interplay between personal autonomy and social constraints.

John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, widely regarded as his masterpiece, premiered in 1614 and was performed by the King's Men, an acting troupe known for staging many of William Shakespeare's plays, before being published in 1623. Accepted as one of the pinnacles of English tragedy, the play, along with *The White Devil*, is "poised, formally as well as historically, between the emblematic tradition of the medieval stage and the increasing commitment to realism of the post-Restoration period" (Belsey 115). However, as opposed to the medieval moral tradition it

> deals in the much more generalized psychology of representative moral types (in the cycles) or of "Mankind" (in the moralities), and develops a structure which promotes moral understanding in the audience rather than suspense. Realism [as in *The Duchess of Malfi*] invites close audience involvement in the action; the medieval tradition distances the audience from the narrative, repeatedly arresting the action for the sake of moral analysis or debate. (Belsey 116)

Furthermore, these elements that are combined with Webster's use of brutal and often violent imagery position the play within the tragedy genre illustrating the constant weakening of aristocratic power in the face of overwhelming villainy and societal pressure. In this sense, as Luckyj states, *The Duchess of Malfi* is a tragedy enriched with court intrigue and dark psychological elements and is interpreted by some critics "as a

cautionary tale against marrying an inferior; other critics and directors invariably treat it as melodrama with a heroic martyr at its center" (267).

The tragedy of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* unfolds a narrative of passion, power and betrayal via focusing on its titular protagonist. Set in the court of Malfi (Amalfi), Italy, the play presents "a two-fold plot with separate strands of action and separate catastrophes for the title character and her adversaries. Herein, like most Elizabethan tragedy, it partakes of the nature of melodrama or what Aristotle calls tragedy of the second rank, differing from it chiefly in that the catastrophes befalling the good characters and the bad are parallel rather than opposed" (Allison 263). The young and widowed Duchess defies societal norms by secretly marrying her steward, Antonio, who is "represented as a worthy person whose nobility of character validates the Duchess's free choice of him as a husband" (Jankowski 231). Her brothers, the Duke Ferdinand and the Cardinal, oppose this act with the aim of controlling her wealth, political influence and body as they "wish to destroy [her], by the controlling power of the voyeuristic gaze, by fetishizing her, by symbolic rape, and finally by murder" (Ronk Lifson 49). As the narrative progresses, the Duchess and Antonio manage to keep their marriage and children hidden, but her brothers, growing suspicious, employ Bosola, a former convict, to spy on her. Bosola's discovery of the marriage leads to brutal consequences. The Duchess is imprisoned and subjected to psychological torture, culminating in a cruel scene where wax figures simulate the deaths of Antonio and their children. Despite her fortitude, she is ultimately strangled. This murder triggers chaos: Antonio returns to Malfi and is accidentally killed by Bosola, who feels betrayed by the brothers and subsequently furthers the narrative towards tragedy. The play spirals into a violent conclusion: Ferdinand, consumed by guilt-induced madness, murders the Cardinal. In a final act of retribution, Bosola kills Ferdinand but succumbs to his injuries. The play concludes with the court of Malfi in ruins and the line of succession thrown into uncertainty.

Produced during the reign of King James I, *The Duchess of Malfi* emerges as an exemplary work of Jacobean drama, distinguished by its portrayal of tragedy set against a backdrop of political and social unrest. The era that the play belongs to is characterised

by patriarchal dominance, inflexible class structures and strict social norms. The play, thus, explores these themes through the characters' attempts to reposition themselves in a social context in which "the human origin of rank was gradually revealed, [and] it became clear that the power to confer it was freely available to those who could pull the strings of influence or purse" (Whigham 177). This era in English history also witnessed a transition from a system where social status was predominantly predetermined by birth and aristocratic lineage, to one where status could be achieved through individual efforts, personal connections or corrupt practices. Within this context, the play captures the prevailing skeptical views on political and religious institutions offering insights into the cultural and social dynamics of Early Modern England.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, John Webster's exploration of the ambitious lives of the nation's young men is vividly depicted through the character of Antonio. His journey from the Duchess's steward to her husband and then to a fugitive, reflects the inconsistent nature of social mobility during the Renaissance and reflects the rigid class structures and the risks involved in transgressing these societal boundaries. In Early Modern England, the remarkable increase in social mobility led to tensions between the traditional aristocracy and the newly emerging class that was comprised mainly of lawyers, merchants and administrators. In the play, "Antonio and Bosola are represented as members of the new class of instrumental men, functional descendant of fifteenth-century retainers who fought the Wars of the Roses for their masters" (Whigham 175). Particularly, Antonio's rise and fall attract attention and show his capacity as an individual in opposition to the established aristocratic order. Likewise, Oakes contends that "the Duchess is so easily within the bounds of her society in remarrying that her widowhood is not the cause but the context for her martyrdom" (51). Her status as a widow sets the stage for her struggles and eventual martyrdom that positions her decision to marry her steward not just as a personal defiance but also as a broader social statement challenging the rigid class structures of her time. This interpretation shifts the focus from her widowhood being the main cause of her rebellion instead of seeing it as an important factor that influences her journey and destiny. The Duchess's pursuit of happiness despite social or domestic restrictions, her struggle for autonomy against oppressive authority, the corruption of

power, the social limitations placed on women, the complexities of human desire and the severe repercussions of revenge stand out as the key themes of *The Duchess of Malfi*.

In addition to these central themes, the complexity of Webster's characters significantly contributes to the exploration of these ideas. In the realm of Renaissance tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi* prominently features the corrupt aspects of Renaissance court politics, epitomised by the vicious and power-hungry brothers. Despite their "noble" status, the brothers embody the evil in aristocracy, clergy and the Duchess artfully deceives those around her in a relentless pursuit of freedom that reveals the speculative nature of power and the moral degradation that often accompanies authority. For instance, while portrayed as a dignified character throughout the play,

> Webster manages to synthesize the 'two alternatives' (stylization and naturalism) in presenting [the Duchess's] character, so that we are aware simultaneously of her cultivating a certain neo-stoic constancy, acting with panache, and of her responding from an individual center of consciousness. It is through this conception of her character, and the way that she confronts the sinister, idiosyncratic world of her court, that Webster presents an important dramatic insight into the human condition. (Lord 306)

Her actions, despite being sinister, reflect a strong, willful personality challenging the constraints of her societal role. Further illustrating the character complexities, Ferdinand's unhealthy obsession with his twin sister and the Cardinal's ambitious nature and political machinations as a churchman render them multidimensional characters. Most importantly, Webster's treatment of these characters not only provides a reflection of the societal context of seventeenth-century England but also refers to universal aspects of human nature, making the play a timeless piece of literature.

Furthermore, the Duchess distinctively embodies Renaissance Humanist values. Her traits of compassion, intelligence and moral integrity are highlighted as qualities of the Renaissance Humanist movement which contrasts with Machiavellian politics and the moral decay of her brothers with her kindness, self-sacrificial nature and love for her family. In stark contrast to her brothers, the Duchess emerges as a unique and resilient tragic heroine unlike the conventional characters of the era. Her dignified stance in the face of death underscores her resilience and steadfast adherence to her identity and

values, the traits that are highly praised in Renaissance tragedies. Webster's portrayal of the Duchess "not only exonerates her but also uses the dynamics of her marital status to construct and then deconstruct a female hero within the genre of tragedy" (Oakes 51). This portrayal highlights the multifaceted nature of her character and the societal implications of her status as she embodies both the strengths and vulnerabilities of a Renaissance individual who transcends the constraints of social hierarchy and gender norms.

Renaissance literature, marked by a growing interest in the complexities of human nature and the exploration of individualism, notably addresses "the Renaissance's cultural repression of the feminine and its concomitant assertion of masculine power" (Finke 360). In this context, John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* emerges as a quintessential example, with the Duchess's character embodying the principles of autonomy and personal agency. Her act of defiance, by marrying whom she chooses, is not only a personal statement but also a challenge to the patriarchal authority of her brothers. Moving from individual struggles to the broader cultural and social context of Early Modern England, the play explores themes of gender, class and the nature of marriage. It specifically addresses societal beliefs about women, particularly widows, who were viewed as, in Duke Ferdinand's words for his sister, a "lusty widow" (I. iii. 65) condemned be the embodiment of living tyranny who "intends to violate her vow never to remarry is also confronted by the action that follows (Luckyj 5). Further emphasising her complex character, the Duchess is portrayed as "a woman of sexual energy and vulnerability"; her "wooing of Antonio is profound and convincing precisely because it is not 'chaste,' as she herself points out" (268, emphasis in original). This dimension of her character challenges the traditional expectations placed on women of her status. Additionally, her poignant response to her impending death, "I am Duchess of Malfi still" (IV. ii. 125), encapsulates her resilience, her assertion of identity and her defiance against the oppressive forces seeking to suppress her. This statement not only symbolises her resistance and dignity but also enhances her respectability and identifiability as a tragic heroine, marking a memorable and impactful moment in the play. This perception of female sexuality is powerfully depicted through the character of the Duchess.

Her brothers, the Cardinal and Ferdinand, display deep concerns over her marriage. This is highlighted in the dialogue where the Duchess and Ferdinand argue over "whether she will be the late Duke's Duchess or a living man's wife. At the end she is, she says, the Duchess of Malfi, and with that title she negates her relationship with Antonio: she becomes the woman carved in stone that Ferdinand wanted her to be" (Oakes 52). This scene illustrates the battle over female agency and identity, portraying the Duchess as "an object of commerce who – passed from father to husband – sealed a bargain of greater or lesser economic significance" (Jankowski 228). The play not only challenges the patriarchal view that marriages should be arranged by families for strategic purposes but also ties the concept of marriage closely to class dynamics and prospects for upward social movement. The brothers' fear that the Duchess might marry someone of lower status echoes the period's concern with the erosion of a rigid social hierarchy.

The Duchess of Malfi mirrors a society where power and authority are pivotal in shaping individual identities. John Webster's dramatic focus "is with the way that a character adopts a particular role. This is more than the obvious convention of an actor adopting a persona on stage; it is the exploration of what happens when a dramatically created character consciously experiments with or accepts a new role, and is changed or modified by it" (Lord 307). This exploration is particularly evident in the Duchess's self-fashioning process which is deeply influenced by the power dynamics of the patriarchy. The restrictive attitude of the patriarchal power, exerted by her brothers, becomes a significant factor she must confront as an independent and strong-willed woman of noble birth. Despite the societal norms and expectations of her class, the Duchess's decision to marry a man of lower social standing stands as a bold defiance of these class-oriented power structures, hence specifing her determination to assert her autonomy.

Set against the backdrop of a hierarchal and patriarchal Renaissance society, Webster's play delves into how this society both with its cherishing tradition and embracing innovation, shapes its characters, particularly the Duchess. Facing significant constraints due to her gender, the Duchess's defiance of these norms through marriage is a strong assertion of her will against the expectations of her time. The play insightfully

> challenges the basic concept of the early modern marriage, a marriage in which the woman was completely objectified, used only to serve the physical needs of her father, her husband, or either joint families. The Duchess is represented as reacting against this social construct of marriage by creating an entirely new concept of the estate, one in which men and women are companions, equal partners, friends, and lovers. (Jankowski 243)

This portrayal of the Duchess's marriage not only stands as her personal resistance but also as a significant challenge to the social organisation that links class structure and personal autonomy. Her assertive role and tone in her courtship with Antonio, along with his rise to the position of her husband, provide a critical commentary on the struggle for personal agency within the confines of Renaissance societal norms. Additionally, the Duchess's proposal to Antonio subverts the conventional gender roles and courtship rituals of her time, reflecting her challenging societal expectations and her pursuit of equality and companionship in marriage.

The initiating force for drama in *The Duchess of Malfi* "arises from the refusal of a strong-willed woman to submit to the irrational demands of her male relatives" (Baker 345), which underlines the period's conflict between individual desires and societal norms. While her brothers adhere to traditional norms, "the Duchess can be seen as challenging that discourse either by creating a new one or by consciously harking back to a tradition which, at least philosophically, granted women a certain measure of autonomy" (Jankowski 232). In this light, Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning provides a crucial framework for understanding the complex character development in the play and highlights the impact of societal and personal influence on identity. This theory is particularly evident in the Duchess's ambitious choice to fashion her own identity, which sets in motion the events of the play. Her decision significantly influences other characters. As Ronk Lifson notes, they "are visually sketched by other characters, who emphasize likeness or dissimilarity to themselves and/or others" (48). This interaction is a key aspect of self-fashioning reflecting societal and personal dynamics at work.

Antonio's transformation from a steward to the husband of the Duchess and his eventual downfall, illustrate the complexities of transition in social standing within rigid class structures. Whigham describes Antonio's position and its limitations, in his words: "[h]er steward holds an achieved status of considerable power and security: the skilled manager

was a Jacobean eminence. […] But his horizon of mobility is clearly circumscribed for a society open to the top" (175). Antonio's journey, thus, not only reflects his personal growth but also the societal constraints that shape his identity and actions.

Meanwhile, Bosola is depicted by Ronk Lifson as "a prime example of a character who is disembodied, double, counterfeit, contradictory. […] Bosola is also the melancholy satirist of the court, a stance which implies alienation from self; he castigates the superficial and disgusting in life, and finally life itself, especially in his own loathsome person" (55). His character embodies a profound philosophical reflection on the vanity and transient nature of life, as he affectingly observes: "Though we are eaten up of lice, and worms, / And though continually we bear about us / A rotten dead body, we delight / To hide it in rich tissue:" (II. i. 50-53). This reflection underscores the struggle between ambition and moral integrity as a critical aspect of his character. The peak of Bosola's internal conflict and moral struggle occurs towards the end of the play in relation to his involvement in the execution of the Duchess and her children. This action draws him into deep guilt and regret, that marks the tragic outcome of his ambition and his failure to adhere to moral principles. Bosola becomes a representation of the dangers of unrestrained desire and the tragic consequences of sacrificing personal integrity for self-advancement. In addition, his story enriches the narrative and serves as a warning about the costs of compromising moral values in the process of self-advancement.

More importantly, Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning provides an insightful lens for analysing the character of the Duchess in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. His theory refers to the process through which characters in the Renaissance period crafted their identities and social roles often as a reaction to and in negotiation with the cultural and political constraints of their times. The Duchess's character embodies Greenblatt's theory as a woman who actively shapes her identity, particularly in her unrevealed personal life. The drama of this period "displays a conflict of interest between the new search for the reproduction of outward appearances and the concomitant commitment to narrative form, and the inherited tendency to interpretation and analysis of what seems to lie behind appearances" (Belsey 117). In other words, the Duchess's self-fashioning is represented as a complex interplay of appearance versus reality that is

intricately woven into the fabric of the play. Despite the societal norms regarding her status, the Duchess "herself is less obviously an 'actor' in this way, yet Webster is still concerned to suggest an element of conscious role-playing in her behavior" (Lord 309). She adheres outwardly to societal expectations while inwardly striving for personal autonomy and love while challenging the constraints imposed on her. This duality in her character highlights the tension between external appearances and internal truths as a central motif in the play.

This emphasis on the duality in the Duchess's character sets the stage for a broader exploration of duality throughout the play where it is manifested not only in the characters but also in various symbolic elements. The prevalent duality also "appear[s] on stage or in the language of the play in the forms of shadows, familiars, second faces painted on cosmetics, sculptured figures on tombs, portraits, echoes, mirrored images, vizards, seconds in duels, stand-ins, graveyard apparitions, wax figures, written texts (e.g., the horoscope and the will), and parallel worlds" (Belsey 123). The interplay between opposing forces in the narrative "establishes a polarity between the values of life and death, fertility and destruction" (Belsey 126). The play also features character duplicates through the twins Ferdinand and the Duchess (Ronk Lifson 47). This thematic dichotomy is central to the narrative's exploration of social norms and individual identity during the period depicted in the play that further emphasises the struggle between authenticity and artificiality in the social norms of the time. Ferdinand's dying words, "Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust, / Like diamonds we are cut with our own dust" (IV. v. 87-88) provide a profound commentary on the nature of human ambition and the self-destructive consequences that can arise from our desires and actions. This quote can be interpreted as highlighting the artificiality of ambition and the constructs of power and desire that individuals pursue, often at great cost to their authentic selves and moral integrity. The metaphor of diamonds being cut with their own dust suggests a self-reflexive process of shaping one's identity or fate by means of one's own actions and choices that foreground the inherent value and consequences of those actions.

Nevertheless, the Duchess's agency is limited by her brothers's patriarchal control. Her attempts to fashion her identity are hindered by their attempts to "circumscribe the

Duchess within their definitions of her: for example, she is perceived as a stock lascivious widow; as an unattainable beauty; as a whore" (Baker 347). Nevertheless, she insists on defining herself, refusing conventional perceptions, which ultimately reveal the restricted scope of self-fashioning for women in Renaissance society. The Duchess actively constructs and reconstructs her identity by challenging societal norms and restrictions, exemplifying a complex and multi-layered narrative around her body, "a spectacle of corporeality that announces her position as a political, sexual, maternal, suffering, and dying figure" (Ronk Lifson 49). Her body, described as "threatening because [it is] ever-changing and cannot be confined to a single shape" (Jankowski 239), distinctly exemplifies her acts of self-fashioning. Through the agency of her choices, the Duchess announces herself as a "heterogenous: sexual, maternal, youthful, aged, dominant, subservient, canny, coy, dedicated to private life and yet astute about political matters, eager to live and prepared to die, fallen and holy" (Ronk Lifson 53). This multifaceted quality of the Duchess exhibits her complex identity which is especially crucial in a society where social status and gender crucially determine an individual's freedom and agency.

The Duchess's complexity is not just a feature of her character but a praiseworthy quality stressing the consistency in her personality amidst the turbulent and often deceptive environment she navigates. This complexity is a consistent thread in her character, as she remains steadfast in her values and desires even when faced with adversity and betrayal. To put it differently, the play features "the static nature of its central figure. The Duchess does not develop, or grow, or learn anything significant from her experiences" (Baker 343). Introduced early in the play as a woman of strong will and constant character, the Duchess is both an active and a confident figure. Her decision to remarry is a defining act of her fashioned self and rebellion that challenges traditional expectations of female passivity and obedience. She asserts her own authority and dismisses another's control over her when she says, "Shall this move me? If all my royal kindred / Lay in my way unto this marriage, / I'd make them my low footsteps"; (I. iii. 66-68). Through the lens of Greenblatt's theory, the Duchess's story emerges as a compelling narrative that displays both the strengths and limitations of self-fashioning in a society constrained by rigid societal structures.

Throughout the play, the Duchess of Malfi exhibits a degree of agency that is uncommon for women of her time; this proves her ability to manipulate and navigate challenging circumstances. This is especially evident in her ability to keep her marriage and children a secret. By asserting her desires and making her independent choices, she embodies the identity of a powerful independent female governor whose "pregnancy is a rebuke to her brothers" (Ronk Lifson 52). Martha Ronk Lifson further elaborates on this theme, stating that "[t]he child with whom she is pregnant and who closes out the play as heir to the dukedom may alter the political future, but the Duchess's appearance on stage in an advanced state of pregnancy is also political, as it asserts and embodies values counter to those of her brothers" (52). Her assertiveness concerning her marriage, her control over her sexuality and her role as a female ruler exerts a woman who "has directed her talents to creating a new discourse of rule, one which does not simply replicate the patriarchal conventions determined by her society and its male rulers, but which attempts to fuse a traditional female role – wife and mother – with a non-traditional one – ruler" (Jankowski 234).

The Duchess's self-fashioning is sharply contrasted with other characters in the play. She is described as "always whole, an emblem of wholeness, especially as contrasted with Ferdinand, who dismembers dead bodies and who is dismembered himself, fractured into poniards" (Ronk Lifson 53). This comparison not only highlights her moral and ethical integrity but also subtly suggests that, given the chance to rule, she would most probably exercise her power with a sense of justice and compassion unlike her brothers. In the play the Duchess's brothers play a crucial role in shaping her self-fashioning. Their restrictive attitudes and controlling nature act as a forceful foil which push the Duchess to define herself through rebellion. Their disapproval of her remarriage compels her to craft a secret life and identity in opposition to their suffocating expectations. By representing the rigid societal norms of the time, they highlight the Duchess's defiance and her desire for agency. Their constant interference fuels her determination to forge her own path, while their tyrannical behavior provides a clear target for her rebellion, justifying her independent choices.Her brothers represent the corrupting influence of power, while Antonio's identification of Ferdinand as someone who "speaks with others tongues, and

hears men's suits / With others' ears" (I. ii. 95-96) provides a stark contrast that highlights Ferdinand's personal integrity as he relies on external influences and opinions rather than his own judgment. The Duchess's distinct approach to leadership and governance, rooted in personal integrity and a holistic view of power, starkly contrasts with the corrupt practices of her brothers. Webster "shows that the great are like the (morally) base only to display that they are far from 'the same.' Similar behaviour springs from antithetical impulses – to protect or to destroy" (Belsey 128). This notion reinforces the idea that the Duchess, with her protective impulses, diverges significantly from the destructive tendencies of her brothers, suggesting a vision of her governance that remains untapped and potentially benevolent. In this light, the Duchess's resistance emerges as a defining character trait, portraying her not merely as a victim of her ambitious nature but as someone proactively striving to assert her dignity and liberty in a world inherently hostile to such aspirations for a woman of her standing. Her resistance, therefore, is not just a personal struggle but a political act against the patriarchal denial of her right to rule, further illustrating her potential to offer a benevolent and just governance. By resisting her brothers, the Duchess challenges not just two individuals but the entire patriarchal structure that seeks to confine and define her. This act of defiance not only highlights her strength and autonomy but also underscores a critical commentary on the gendered limitations of power, suggesting that her approach to rule would be fundamentally different and arguably less corrupt than that of her brothers.

Furthermore, the interpretation of Cariola's and Julia's subplots serve to highlight the Duchess's virtues. Cariola serves as the Duchess's loyal maid and confidante who plays a pivotal role in supporting her mistress's secret marriage and subsequent struggles, while Julia, the Cardinal's mistress, becomes entangled in the web of court intrigue and her illicit affair revealing the moral corruption and power dynamics within the court. These subplots are "intended as a parody or ironic reflection […] [that] involves moral judgement of the Duchess" (Luckyj 269). For example, as Belsey notes, "Cariola's terrified efforts to escape death emphasize the Duchess's fortitude. On the other hand, Julia acts consistently as a foil for the Duchess. Her relationship with the Cardinal forms a (rather slight) subplot which intensifies by contrast the effect of the main plot, drawing attention to the moral distance between Julia's fruitless and distrustful adultery and the

Duchess's marriage" (125). This contrast further underscores the Duchess's role in challenging gender norms and societal constraints that emphasise her moral fortitude and independent spirit.

On the other hand, Duke Ferdinand's and the Cardinal's actions throughout the play are driven by their high social and political positions and reflect a complex interaction of personal identity and societal expectations. They are patriarchal figures exerting control over the Duchess's life to maintain familial honour and social status. Allison's analysis which "represents the [D]uchess as like her brother Ferdinand in temperament but opposed to him in character; she is opposed to her other brother, the Cardinal, in both temperament and character" provides insight into the dynamics of Webster's character definitions (265). The Cardinal and the Duke Ferdinand's brutal attitude towards the Duchess which culminates in their decision to murder her and her family, stems from their belief in the necessity of her remaining unmarried. This belief is intensified by their resentment towards her as a woman and a widow. Duke Ferdinand's extreme reactions, in particular, demonstrate his perverted attachment to his sister and his role as a male authority. His obsession with his sister is not just a display of familial concern but borders on the limits of incestuous desire. This unhealthy fixation becomes increasingly apparent as the play progresses. His inability to tolerate her marriage leads to his descent into madness that he employs as a facade to appear empowered. This decline is epitomised in his murder of the Cardinal, a scene which can be seen as Duke Ferdinand's projection of his internal conflicts that lead to the destruction of a symbol of patriarchal and religious authority. Allison describes the Cardinal's role and downfall as his being the representative of old norms as "[t]he Cardinal is hence typed from the first as the Machiavellian villain. And he is, in fact, chief architect of the schemes against his sister: it is he who first suggests that Bosola be placed in her household as spy; it is by his secret instigation that she is finally murdered" (266). The Cardinal's death, at the hands of his own brother, symbolises the moral decay within the church and the aristocracy. In essence, each character's journey underscores the intricate relationship between individual agency and the constraints of their social and historical context.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the characters of Ferdinand and the Cardinal play crucial roles in shaping the Duchess's self-fashioning. Their influence is not one of support or encouragement but rather of opposition and control which in turn drives the Duchess "to [reject] the contaminated public life represented by her brothers" (Ronk Lifson 50). Ferdinand and the Cardinal's oppressive control over the Duchess is evident at the very beginning of the play. They explicitly forbid her from remarrying after the death of her husband that sets the stage for her defiance and self-fashioning. As the representatives of patriarchal dominance

> Ferdinand and the Cardinal cannot understand the Duchess, but they can legitimize their destruction of her through references to all the stock arguments against a widow's remarriage, to notions of blood, honor, and duty, and to her 'blasphemy' in feigning a pilgrimage. The Duchess's characteristic response to this cultural narrowing of possibilities can be seen in her wedding ceremony. Caught in a society which excessively constrains marriage within a variety of cultural prescriptions and proscriptions, a society which elaborates ceremonial form at the expense of spiritual content, the Duchess simplifies the marriage ritual and returns it to its essence – the union of a man and woman before God. (Baker 352)

This prohibition is a key factor that drives the Duchess to secretly marry her steward. Her rebellion by way of marriage is crucial to her self-fashioning as an independent and autonomous individual. Another significant scene that highlights their influence on the Duchess's self-fashioning is when the Duchess is forced to reveal her second marriage and the existence of her children to her brothers. Ferdinand responds to her revelation with rage while the Cardinal reacts with a cold, calculated demeanor. These contrasting reactions serve to intensify the conflict even further and display their deep-seated desire to exert control over the Duchess's life and choices. The Duchess's resilience in the face of this confrontation and her determination to protect her children and husband illustrate her strength and commitment to her fashioned self.

Furthermore, the psychological torment Ferdinand subjects the Duchess to during her imprisonment profoundly impacts her self-fashioning. Her strength, dignity and resilience are put to an ultimate test, particularly through Ferdinand's cruel machinations which include presenting wax figures resembling her husband and children as if they were deceased. Despite her brothers' efforts to degrade her, she remains an embodiment

of an unbroken spirit and identity. Ferdinand and the Cardinal's oppressive control and attempts to dominate her life paradoxically motivate her to assert her own autonomy and identity. As Baker notes, "about the Duchess and her motives, the order in which events occur places emphasis on her defiance, of which the marriage seems dramatically to be an immediate consequence rather than a cause. Recognising the priority of the Duchess's self-definition to her marriage enables us to see the remainder of her actions as reenactments of her informing choice" (346-47). Her actions throughout the play, ranging from her secret marriage to her stoic endurance of her brothers' cruelties are direct responses to their restrictive authority.

The Duchess's fashioned self and her actions in the play have been subject to various interpretations. As a tragic heroine, her downfall is a result of her opposition to the oppressive system. She embodies courage and integrity in a corrupt world. Her character remains a powerful example of a self-fashioned overreacher who "represents a pursuing female subject disrupting the masculine hegemony that structures the social organization of the play by leveraging emotional appeal with material benefit" (Laperle 26). The concept of overreaching in these works explore the heights of human achievement as is the case with the Duchess who endures considerable pressure to secure her essential self and

> preserve that essence against the onslaughts of exigency. Those efforts with their ultimately painful consequences provide the play's gross structure as, in scene after scene, the integrity of the Duchess, her commitment to a self-defined identity, is challenged and affirmed. The Duchess begins by controlling the wooing and wedding scene, but each of the succeeding scenes in which she appears increases the magnitude of the threatened encroachments on her integrity. She parries Bosola's attempts to lead her into an admission of her pregnancy; she stands up bravely to Duke Ferdinand's cruel accusations; she faces imprisonment, torture, and finally death – all with dignity. (Baker 347)

This fact not only offers insight into the mindset of the Renaissance but also poses timeless questions about the consequences of transgressing moral, social, and cosmic boundaries. These boundaries refer to the limits set by the universe, or venturing into realms of knowledge or power thought to be beyond human reach in the mindset of the era.

The interplay between ambition, societal expectation and tragic downfall of an ambitious individual in Webster's play provide a compelling lens through which to examine the concept of the Renaissance overreacher. Despite her impulsiveness, the Duchess's actions reveal a deeper layer of steadiness and dignity. Throughout the story, she consistently demonstrates wise judgement and a disciplined course of action. Furthermore, the Duchess's preparedness for the potential consequences of her decisions is a critical aspect of her character. This forehandedness underlines her resilience and strategic thinking. For instance, her response when she is subjected to psychological torture with wax figures is remarkably and advertently composed. Instead of showing excessive reactions as might be expected from a woman, she exhibits a remarkable composure and strategic thinking. This response is not only a defiance of the expectations placed upon her but also a testament of her inner strength and her capacity to maintain her integrity in the face of adversity. In conclusion, the Duchess's character is a complex blend of her emotional depth and strategic skills. Her ability to navigate and manipulate with foresight despite challenging circumstances is a significant aspect of her role which offers a nuanced perspective on her character that goes beyond the stereotypical portrayal of women driven solely by emotion.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess stands out as a character of profound ambition with strategic skills in the context and aim of her self-fashioning. Driven by mutual love and respect, she chooses a partner "below her in estate to be, not her consort, but her husband: not a man to support her as a ruler, but a man to support her as a woman" (Jankowski 230). Upon making her decision, she not only asserts her personal agency but also actively confronts and subverts the established social hierarchy. By means of her disobedient conduct, she reflects her willingness to prioritise personal happiness and fulfillment over societal expectations and norms. In a society rigidly structured by class and status, her choice to marry beneath her status is not just her own choice but a radical statement of "her own value – and she positions this value in her own body by asserting her right to dispose of it as she chooses, not her brothers would choose for her" (Ronk Lifson 50). This fact is illustrated in the scene where her leading part in her relationship with Antonio is revealed in her words: "This is flesh and blood, sir; / 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster / Kneels at my husband's tomb" (I. iii. 369-71). Here, she rejects the

conventionally passive role of a widow but claims her physical being and "appetites, ones which demand a forthright participation in life far different from the voyeuristic stance adopted by Ferdinand, the Cardinal, and Bosola" (50). This fact demonstrates her determination to seek happiness and love rather than adhering to the societal expectation of perpetual mourning. She asserts her right to choose a partner for love and her declaration effectively contrasts her actual sentient reality with the lifeless inanimate alabaster statue, symbolising a widow's expected life of perpetual mourning. Her pursuit of individual happiness through this act of defiance defines her as a proto-feminist figure in Renaissance literature.

When read from a feminist perspective, the Duchess's strong attachment to her personal autonomy and self-governance stands as the central and provoking motif of the awaiting tragic events. During an era when women were largely expected to be passive, obedient and subservient, the Duchess distinguishes herself through her proactive, decisive and assertive nature, and also as a political figure who "rules Malfi as Regent for her son, the minor heir to the Duke of Malfi, her dead husband" (Jankowski 223). Another compelling example for her challenge aimed at the gender norms is seen in her management of the dukedom. Concerning the Duchess's representation as a political figure, the play

> thus participates in the discursive construction of women in the early modern period and helps to reveal the contradictions in the notion of a female ruler. These contradictions are explored in the ways in which the Duchess is represented as using her body natural and body politic. Webster's Duchess of Malfi establishes a system of rule in which she fails to consider her body's potential, either as a means to power or as a means by which she can lose power. This widow attempts to secure herself politically by divorcing her natural body from her political one by creating a private second marriage that exists simultaneously with – but hidden from – her public life as a ruler. In this double position of wife and ruler, then, the Duchess becomes an uneasy and threatening figure. (222)

Her diplomatic and leadership qualities are quite unconventional for women of her status in that period as the Duchess not only partially rules her realm but does so with her competence and forward-thinking capability. Rather than being a mere figurehead, she actively engages in the co-governance of her dukedom which displays a strong and informed sense of sovereignty. Antonio presents her "as an ideal ruler who differs in some essential way from her brothers and insists upon the necessity of her occupying a political space" (Jankowski 225). Her political stance is also particularly evident when

she discusses the principles of good governance. These instances in the play highlight the Duchess's character as a revolutionary figure in Jacobean drama. Through her portrayal, Webster not only crafts a narrative that challenges the norms of his time but also introduces a character whose strength, independence and defiance resonate through the centuries. Her character becomes a symbol of resistance against the rigid gender roles of the era that makes *The Duchess of Malfi* a work far ahead of its time in its portrayal of a potential female ruler focused on her goals and dedicated to her independence.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess and Antonio discuss effective rulership, which reveals her deep understanding of and commitment to a just and responsible governance. This conversation starkly contrasts with the corrupt and tyrannical practices of her brothers who are solely driven by personal gain and with malice. The Duchess's dialogue with Antonio is crucial, as it demonstrates her openness to counsel and her desire to govern wisely which illustrates her intelligence and willingness to engage in statecraft. This interaction highlights her progressive approach to leadership, the trait that is not typically ascribed to women at the time or to female characters in literature of that era. The Duchess's potential to rule if a chance has been given is displayed during the tragic episode of her imprisonment and subsequent execution that has been orchestrated by her tyrannical brothers. Her response to this ordeal, where she is subjected to a series of macabre tortures including a parade of madmen, reflects her inner strength. She engages with the madmen not with fear or disgust, but with a poignant understanding of their shared humanity that starkly contrasts with her brothers's cruelty and elevates her moral stature above their depravity. The peak of her courageous spirit is famously captured in her confrontation with death, where she utters the iconic line, "I am Duchess of Malfi still" (IV.ii.125). While traditionally interpreted as an affirmation of dignity in the face of degradation, this declaration goes beyond merely stating her noble status; it is a powerful affirmation of her unbroken spirit and intrinsic identity that has remained unspoiled despite the tortures she has suffered. The play poignantly "explores, too, the power of evil, challenging the audience to question the extent of its capacity to destroy. Ferdinand orders Bosola to murder the Duchess but he cannot damn her. A corrupt world can darken the Duchess's outward behavior but it cannot touch her soul" (Belsey 132). Furthermore, in her final moments, the Duchess "refuses to respond to the [theatrical

performance] designed to provoke a response. Rather, she continues in her own theatrical mode to imagine herself as the Duchess, the Mother, the Saint. If this is a delusion, it is one of her own making, not one thrust upon her by the man who wants to see her mad, subservient, penitent – who wants some (read 'sexual') response" (Ronk Lifson 54). Ultimately, her character, also with its blend of political insight and personal strength, challenges the traditional literary depictions of female characters and rulers during that era.

In addition, the Duchess undergoes a significant transformation as a mother and loving wife apart from her final representation "as martyr, as woman idealized through suffering comes actually from a much more traditional discourse of womanhood than previous representations of the Duchess as ruler" (Jankowski 242). Although her portrayal as a domestic figure contrasts sharply with her earlier depiction as a decisive potential ruler with a strong and active agency, her self-fashioning includes her role as a mother. In a context where women of noble birth were expected to be submissive and adhere to the decisions of male relatives, the Duchess's portrayal as a mother is especially significant for the reason that she bravely asserts her role as a mother and protector in a revolutionary sense. A pivotal example of this is her decision to have children with Antonio despite the grave risks involved. This choice is not only difficult for her but it also reflects her deep-seated desire for a normal family life, considering her political status as a Duchess and her social status as a widow. Therefore, within the societal context of her era, the Duchess's pursuit of a family life also becomes an act of both personal desire and defiance that highlights the complexities and contradictions in her fashioned self.

The Duchess's motherhood further exemplifies her strategic self-fashioning and resistance in the face of societal and familial pressures. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess employs several strategies for self-fashioning that would help her accomplish her desire for autonomy and personal and political agency. These strategies are evident in her dialogues and actions throughout the play. The Duchess's strategic self-fashioning is initially exemplified in her secret marriage to Antonio. Conducted in the privacy of her chambers and witnessed by a few, this clandestine wedding manifests "her political authority by engaging in an 'irregular' marriage – one that is not sanctified by any

representative of the church" (Jankowski 232). This act of concealment is not just for protection; in fact, by keeping the marriage hidden, the Duchess creates a personal sphere to exercise her will and desires, defying cultural and religious authority and disdainfully challenging "the church's ability to have power over her as a secular ruler" (233). In addition to her marriage, her managing her brothers' oppressive surveillance and her attempts to protect her family, demonstrate her strategic capability of self-fashioning. In an era where woman's role was largely confined to domestic responsibilities such as childbearing, her decision to found a family with an "inappropriate" man transcends these conventional expectations. She carefully orchestrates the concealment of her marriage and her children's well-being to a certain extent. For example, when she plans to send Antonio and their children to safety, her plan provides a clear demonstration of her foresight and maternal instinct. Her dialogue with Antonio, "I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy / Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl / Say her prayers ere she sleep," (IV.ii.183-85) is a strategic blend of immediate maternal concern and a larger plan to safeguard her family's future. It is an intimate moment that highlights the Duchess's dual focus and her capability to navigate complex situations.

Furthermore, the Duchess's decision to feign madness is another strategic move aimed at deflecting her brothers. Understanding the danger posed by her brothers' relentless pursuit and control, she feigns madness to create a diversion. The Duchess's act of feigned insanity is her planned effort to manipulate Bosola and protect her family through her guise as being mentally unstable. This strategy subverts the typical understanding of what is the madness in the hands of the Duchess who turns it into a tool of deception and self-preservation. This act is not only a calculated resistance against gender norms and family dynamics but also a manipulation of the period's stereotypes regarding women's mental health. Her "'[m]adness' is her marriage, [she is] mad only in terms of the world she lives in" (Belsey 130), reflects this strategic calculation. Unlike the destructive madness of Duke Ferdinand, she employs feigned insanity to be underestimated by her brothers. She seeks to overturn the prejudice that people with mental health issues are less capable, less dangerous and more dismissible than those considered sane by using it to her advantage and demonstrating her awareness of the power dynamics of her time. In the scene with Bosola, her performance of madness is a deliberate strategy to mislead

and manipulate him. Her feigned madness is part of her larger self-fashioning strategies which include disguise and performance.

By the end of the play, the Duchess's decisive actions ultimately result in severe consequences that are most starkly depicted in the scenes of her imprisonment and execution. These scenes portray "a death-oriented world of the play, where, as the poetic images suggest, death is entrance to a prison, birds in the wild are brought to captivity and then to death, and the human body is a 'box of worm-seed' even during life – a contemptible and fragile receptacle, fit only to nourish worms in the grave" (Lord 316). Through the Duchess, Webster develops a method for challenging and controlling the stark fact of death and the prospect of blank futility offered by the play's skeptical framework that necessitates questioning of traditional beliefs; thus, emphasising human experiences in an unjust world. The Duchess's dignified and composed demeanor in captivity starkly contrasts with the inhumane treatment she receives as a result of her brothers and their agents. Her unyielding attitude while facing the psychological tortures underscores her resilience and represents the good opposing the evil embodied in her antagonists, especially the Cardinal, "the prime mover of the schemes against her, who is a virtually satanic figure" (Allison 271). The most evident and impactful illustration of the consequences of her self-fashioning is her execution. It is the culmination of her defiance and a testament to the tragic cost of her ambition and desire for self-determination. Briefly stated, her story "is set in motion when she secretly marries Antonio, rises to crisis when she is confronted with her supposed immorality, and declines to catastrophe as she is separated from her husband and harried to her death" (264). Her death symbolises the destructive power of a society that subjugates individual freedom and integrity, and "each succeeding catastrophe, bringing self-knowledge and moral insight to the character whom it befalls, is a diminished echo of this affirmation" (272).

The Duchess's determination to live and rule according to her own terms sets off a chain of events that ultimately lead to her downfall and that of her family's. The conclusion of *The Duchess of Malfi* emphasises the profound implications of the Duchess's self-fashioning and ambitious efforts to construct an independent identity. Her actions and

decisions assert her autonomy and desire for personal happiness but they lead to tragic consequences. The play, through its protagonist, reveals the constraints imposed on women's autonomy in a male-dominated society and examines the tragic outcomes of challenging these rigid boundaries. The consequences of the Duchess's overreaching are multifaceted, encompassing personal tragedy, familial destruction, social turmoil and moral questioning. In the context of Greenblatt's theory, the Duchess's story is interpreted as a narrative of resistance and agency that explicitly exhibit the tension between individual autonomy and societal constraints that is integral to self-fashioning. She actively shapes her identity and destiny amidst the perilous landscape of a society that seeks to control and diminish her, and her tragic story reveals the complexities and challenges of self-fashioning in a restrictive and patriarchal world as well as situating her as an enduring figure in drama continuing to resonate with modern readers/ playgoers.

CONCLUSION

The Renaissance, a period of profound cultural and intellectual rebirth which heralds a significant shift in European thought is characterised by a growing emphasis on Humanism and individualism. Rooted in the rediscovery of classical arts and literature, this era marked a departure from the medieval focus on the Church and moral doctrines. This shift in perspective played a crucial role in shaping the social, political and artistic landscapes of the time. Renaissance Humanism, particularly in England, emerged not just as a philosophical movement, but also as a literary one and influenced the creation of works that adhered to the standards of classical antiquity. Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning, introduced in his seminal work, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (2005), resonates deeply with this era's ethos. Greenblatt describes self-fashioning as the process of crafting one's distinct personality, style and approach to the world. His theory acknowledges how family, state and religious institutions significantly fashion individual identity. The Renaissance's emphasis on the individual and their capacity for self-definition and transformation underlies Greenblatt's theory that provides a lens through which to examine the era's drama and its portrayal of complex, self-fashioned characters.

Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning, a foundational concept in Renaissance studies, offers a profound understanding of the construction of identity during the Renaissance period. Greenblatt's theory delves into how individuals in the Renaissance era crafted and expressed their identities. Central to this theory is the idea that self-fashioning is not merely an inward, personal process but one that is deeply intertwined with the social, political and religious contexts of the time. At the heart of Greenblatt's theory lies the recognition that individuals in the Renaissance period actively constructed their identities in response to various external pressures and influences. These included family dynamics, state politics, and religious doctrines, all of which played significant roles in shaping a person's sense of self. Greenblatt argues that this process of self-fashioning was particularly evident among ambitious protagonists in Renaissance literature who often manipulated these influences to carve out their own distinct places in society.

William Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1597) emerges as a compelling study in the construction of an ambitious, self-fashioned character, aligning closely with Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning. This play not only examines the political machinations of its era but also serves as a profound examination of the individual's quest for power and identity in the face of societal and moral constraints. The characterisation of Richard III explores the darker facets of Renaissance Humanism and ambition, embodying a complex interplay between self-construction and manipulation. Richard III, depicted as a cunning and Machiavellian figure, exemplifies the Renaissance individual's ability to craft their identities to achieve their objectives. His journey from a marginalised nobleman to the King of England is a testament to his skill in self-fashioning aligning perfectly with Greenblatt's concept of individuals shaping their identities in response to external pressures and influences. Richard III's self-fashioning is less about intellectual transcendence but more about political ascendancy, employing deception, theatricality and strategic manipulation as tools to redefine his place in the social hierarchy.

Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III as a master of political maneuvering and deceiving reflects the potent influence of individual agency in shaping destiny which appears as a key theme in Renaissance thought. Richard III's relentless pursuit of power that is characterised by his ability to assume and perform various personas, underscores the play's exploration of the malleability of identity. His actions, while driven by personal ambition, also highlight the moral ambiguities and ethical dilemmas inherent in the process of self-fashioning. Despite being driven by ruthless strategies, Richard III's rise to power presents a stark contrast to the humanist ideal of the enlightened Renaissance individual. His actions stand in direct opposition to the humanist ideal which reveals a character motivated by personal ambition and a readiness to forsake ethical principles. This contrast underscores the disparity between the humanist ideals of self-improvement and moral integrity and the more malevolent facets of human nature and political ambition that are embodied in the character of Richard III.

Greenblatt's theory, when applied to Richard III, emphasises the multifaceted nature of self-fashioning in the context of Renaissance politics and morality. Richard III's character

arc demonstrates the intricate relationship between personal ambition and ethical boundaries. His path of self-creation is marked by a strategic rejection of conventional moral codes and a manipulative reshaping of his public persona and provides a critical insight into the lengths an individual might go to change their destiny. This pursuit, while presenting the extent of human ingenuity and will, simultaneously serves as a story about the perils of unbridled ambition and the necessity of ethical considerations in the quest for power. Eventually, *Richard III* stands as a work that intricately explores the concept of self-fashioning within the framework of Renaissance drama. Shakespeare's depiction of Richard III as a cunning overreacher who skillfully manipulates the socio-political landscape to shape his own destiny, complies with Greenblatt's theory of identity formation. The play remains a pivotal study in understanding the dynamic construction of the self in Renaissance literature and discloses the empowering yet perilous journey of defining one's identity in a world of shifting moral and societal norms. Richard III's story, through the lens of Greenblatt's theory, reveals the complex balance between self-assertion, societal expectations and moral responsibility.

This concept is particularly evident in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus or the Modern Prometheus* (1616), a play that not only critiques the religious and educational institutions of its time but also vividly illustrates the Renaissance man's dramatic shift from medieval constraints to a newfound assertion of individual identity. The first chapter of this study delves into how Faustus, as a character, embodies the quintessence of Renaissance Humanism and ambition for forbidden knowledge. Portrayed as a learned man, Faustus, distinctively stands out for his secular education, paralleling Marlowe's own background as one of the University Wits. Faustus's crafted persona, unlike his counterparts, harbours a deep-seated desire to surpass the limitations of human existence. This aspect of his character aligns with Greenblatt's notion of self-fashioning wherein individuals actively construct their identities often pushing against the boundaries imposed by societal norms and expectations. Faustus's journey from a revered scholar to a practitioner of necromancy encapsulates the essence of self-fashioning as he redefines his identity and purpose for challenging established norms beyond the conventional religious and academic boundaries of his time.

Through Faustus's ambitious quest for knowledge and power, Marlowe explores the inherent risks and moral dilemmas associated with the pursuit of individual greatness. Faustus's defiance of the established order and his ambition to explore and master the arcane represents a radical form of self-fashioning. It is a clear departure from the collective ethos of the medieval period, steering towards a more individualistic and human-centric worldview. Greenblatt's theory, when applied to Faustus's story, focuses on the complex interplay between personal ambition and the wider societal framework. It brings into focus the nuanced process of identity formation in which the protagonist's choices reflect a deep-seated conflict between the desire for autonomy and the inherent limitations of human nature. This pursuit, while emblematic of the relentless human spirit, also serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked ambition and the ethical considerations that must temper it. In essence, *Doctor Faustus* stands not just as a remarkable piece of Renaissance drama but also as a profound exploration of self-fashioning. Marlowe's protagonist exemplifies the archetype of the self-fashioned overreacher as a figure that continues to resonate in Renaissance literature and beyond. The play remains a critical framework for understanding the nuanced construction of the self in Renaissance literature that indicates both the empowering and perilous facets of human endeavor to define one's identity against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving society. Faustus's story, through the lens of Greenblatt's theory, reveals the intricate fluctuation between self-assertion and societal constraints.

In the realm of Renaissance drama, John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623) stands as a poignant illustration of Stephen Greenblatt's theory of identity construction. This play explores the complexities of individual agency against the backdrop of rigid societal norms and gender politics and presents a profound narrative in the pursuit of autonomy and identity. The Duchess, as the central character, becomes a striking embodiment of self-fashioning in a society marked by patriarchal constraints and moral strictures. The Duchess of Malfi, a character of profound depth and resilience, represents the Renaissance woman's struggle to assert her individuality and autonomy in the face of overwhelming societal and familial pressures. Her bold decision to marry for love, defying the norms and expectations regarding her status and gender, exemplifies the essence of Greenblatt's self-fashioning. Her actions reflect a profound understanding of

self-identity and agency foregrounding the Renaissance Humanist ideals of individualism and self-determination.

Webster's portrayal of the Duchess illustrates the complexities and challenges of self-fashioning within the restrictive confines of gender and societal expectations. Her journey is emblematic of the tension between personal desires and societal norms, revealing the intricate dynamics of self-construction in a world that often opposes individual autonomy. The Duchess's pursuit of personal happiness and love, in defiance of her brothers' wishes, underscores the play's exploration of the malleability of identity and the human desire for self-realisation. She crafts her identity not through intellectual pursuits, as Faustus, or through political machinations, as Richard III, but through personal choices that challenge the patriarchal structures of her time. Through the lens of Greenblatt's theory, the Duchess's character arc reveals the multifaceted nature of self-fashioning as it pertains to gender and power dynamics in the Renaissance era. Her path of self-creation is marked by a courageous rejection of societal constraints and a heartfelt embrace of her own desires and values and offers a critical insight into the lengths an individual might go to claim their identity. This pursuit, while showcasing the resilience of the human spirit, also serves as a tragic reminder of the dangers and sacrifices inherent in challenging entrenched social norms. At its core, *The Duchess of Malfi* presents a compelling study of self-fashioning within the context of Renaissance drama particularly in terms of gender politics and societal expectations. The play remains a vital exploration of the dynamic construction of the self and puts forward the empowering yet often tragic journey of defining one's identity against a backdrop of rigid societal norms. Through the lens of Greenblatt's theory, the Duchess's story reveals the complex interplay between self-assertion, societal constraints and the enduring quest for personal autonomy.

Thus, the characters Richard III, Doctor Faustus and The Duchess of Malfi stand out as representative self-fashioned overreachers each employing distinct strategies to struggle against societal limitations. Each character's unique strategy reflects their personal ambitions and the thematic concerns of their respective narratives in their pursuit of power, knowledge or autonomy. William Shakespeare's Richard III's machinations are grounded in political cunning and ruthless ambition. Richard III's strategy is one of

manipulation and deceit; he uses his intelligence and rhetorical skill to navigate and eventually dominate the political landscape as well as betraying and eliminating anyone who stands in his way. Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus embodies the overreacher through his insatiable thirst for knowledge and power. His strategy is one of intellectual arrogance and hubris; he employs his vast learning not for the betterment of humanity but to seek godlike powers. On the other hand, The Duchess of Malfi, in John Webster's play, presents a more multi-faceted picture of self-fashioning. Her overreaching is not for power or knowledge but for personal autonomy and love, defying the strictures of her brothers and societal norms. Her strategy involves a blend of defiance and secrecy as she performs her will by marrying beneath her class and striving to live a life dictated by her choices rather than societal expectations. While Richard III's, Faustus's and ultimate downfalls are due to their overreaching ambitions, the Duchess's downfall is a result of her radical assertion of agency in a world that severely limits a woman's autonomy. In essence, while all three protagonists are united in their roles as overreachers, their political power and motivations expose the diverse forms of overreaching from the pursuit of forbidden knowledge to the manipulation of this power and the assertion of personal freedom against societal constraints.

In conclusion, the Renaissance, emphasised Humanism and individualism as a shift from medieval Church centred doctrines to a focus on individual potential and classical ideals. This period saw the flourishing of literature and arts, as exemplified in William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* each exploring themes of self-fashioning against societal expectations. Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning, as elaborated in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, suggests that Renaissance individuals crafted their identities influenced by their social and political contexts illustrated in these dramatic works. These works collectively highlight the tension between individual agency and external pressures, portraying complex characters who navigate, manipulate and sometimes fall victim to the Renaissance ethos of self-definition and transformation.

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APPENDIX 1. ORIGINALITY REPORT

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		Yayım Tarihi *Date of Pub.*	04.01.2023
	FRM-DR-21 **Doktora Tezi Orijinallik Raporu** *PhD Thesis Dissertation Originality Report*	Revizyon No *Rev. No.*	01
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HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞINA

Tarih: 04/07/2024

…."Rönesans İngiliz Tiyatrosunda Öz-Biçimlendirmenin Başkaldırı Unsuru Olarak Sergilenmesi"……

Yukarıda başlığı verilen tezimin a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 119 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 05/12/2023 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 5 'dır.

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Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Merve Afacan

Öğrenci Bilgileri				
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	Programı	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı		
	E-posta/Telefon			
	Statüsü	**Doktora** ☒	**Lisans Derecesi ile (Bütünleşik) Dr** ☐	

DANIŞMAN ONAYI

UYGUNDUR.
Prof. Dr. A. Deniz Bozer

*Tez **Almanca** veya **Fransızca** yazılıyor ise bu kısımda tez başlığı **Tez Yazım Dilinde** yazılmalıdır.
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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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	Programme	English Language and Literature		
	E-mail/Phone Number			
	Status	**PhD** ☒	**Combined MA/MSc-PhD** ☐	

SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL

APPROVED
Prof. Dr. A. Deniz BOZER

APPENDIX 2. ETHICS COMMISSION FORM

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	FRM-DR-12 **Doktora Tezi Etik Kurul Muafiyeti Formu** *Ethics Board Form for PhD Thesis*	Revizyon No *Rev. No.*	01
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HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞINA

Tarih: 04/07/2024

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04.07.2024

Öğrenci Bilgileri				
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HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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My thesis work with the title given above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on people or animals.
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I respectfully submit this for approval.

04.07.2024

Student Information				
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	Programme	English Language and Literature		
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	Status	**PhD** ☒	**Combined MA/MSc-PhD** ☐	

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