Demoni u vjerovanjima i dramskim tekstovima elizabetanskog razdoblja

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1. Introduction

This thesis aims to give insight into the Elizabethan society and their beliefs, as well as their view on demons and the influence of such beliefs on ordinary people, which will be analyzed through a reading of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Ben Jonson's *Volpone*. This analysis will show certain similarities between both of the demonic characters as well as differences in their personalities and relationship with others. Additionally, it is shown how versatile the demonic character can be and how it can be represented by a demon or embodied by a human being.

The Elizabethan era lasted from 1558 to 1625, during which England underwent a period of rapid economic and cultural progress. This was one of the most fascinating times in British history since it was marked by cultural developments such as those in theatre, literature, politics and education. Before Queen Elizabeth I's rule there was significant tension between Protestants and Catholics, but she ensured that peace was restored in England and other countries under her rule. As a result, political tensions eased, and what is considered the Golden Age began. This period is also known as the English Renaissance. England experienced enormous cultural development throughout Elizabeth I's reign, with names such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. Literature flourished during the Elizabethan era, primarily in the field of theater. Since the Renaissance was a period of rebirth, new discoveries, rediscoveries, and the development of philosophy and science, there were numerous new themes explored by playwrights at that time. One could say that the flourishing of literature happened because more people could afford tickets for plays, and interest in theatre was increasing. Theatres were no longer restricted to only aristocrats and nobility but also a lower-ranking class, which led to increased production of plays. Theatrical plays were, in a manner, a new form of entertainment, but at the same time people could educate themselves on various themes which were portrayed in the plays.

Regarding the beliefs of the era, John D. Cox argues that “[i]n pre-Reformation England, the devil was as much a part of the sacred outlook as God was.”. He was omnipresent because his antagonism to God was responsible for everything wrong, not just in apparent moral and religious terms, such as committing seven deadly sins, but also in social arguments, sickness and death. From baptism to last rites, one of the main purposes of religious practice was to reject the devil. “In the traditional society that produced early religious drama, encounters with the devil were deeply involved in the ritual life of the community. Indeed, everyone first encountered the devil without being aware of it and without being able to do anything about it.” The concept of original sin was interpreted to indicate that infants actually belonged to the devil, and the baptismal process thus included an exorcism aiming to remove the devil from the infant to be baptized, whom the rite claimed to be Christ and the Christian community instead (Cox 2004, p. 11). Starting with God and the devil, there was a number of parallels: good and evil, belief and heresy, truth and illusion, community and chaos (Cox 2004, p.6).

This thesis will show how Elizabethan beliefs in demons were reflected in *Doctor Faustus* and *Volpone, or The Fox*. In *Doctor Faustus*, a play by Christopher Marlowe, Elizabethan beliefs were reflected in a number of ways. Most notably, the play tells the story of a scholar, Doctor Faustus, who sells his soul to the devil, Mephistopheles, in exchange for worldly knowledge and power. This reflects the belief of many Elizabethans that demons could be summoned and bargained with for knowledge and power. Additionally, the play features a number of other supernatural creatures, such as the Good and Bad Angels, which serve to further emphasize the presence of the supernatural in Elizabethan beliefs. Furthermore, *Doctor Faustus* presents the consequences of making a deal with the devil, showing that such actions can lead to tragic consequences. This reflects the Elizabethan belief that any interaction with demons could result in serious repercussions.

In Volpone, Ben Jonson paints a picture of the devil as a powerful force that can control and manipulate people in the pursuit of its own goals. The character of Volpone himself is a representation of the devil, as he is a master of deception, manipulating those around him for his own gain. Elizabethan beliefs in the power of the devil and his ability to corrupt are mirrored in the actions of Volpone, who uses his cunning and guile to get what he wants. The play also explores the

consequences of such demonic influence, as the characters' lives are ruined because of their dealings with Volpone. Ultimately, like *Doctor Faustus*, *Volpone* teaches the consequences of the danger of dealing with the devil.

2. Elizabethan beliefs

“Demonology was the study of a natural order in which the existence of demonic actions and effect, was, largely presupposed” (Clark 1999, p.187).

The Elizabethan period in English history is characterized by Queen Elizabeth I's reign from 1558 to 1603. King Henry VIII supported the Protestant Reformation in England, but it was not until Elizabeth's reign that Protestantism became fully established as the national religion. Even though it was a religion based on the worship of God, another entity was a part of Elizabethan beliefs: the Devil. To Elizabethans, the Devil's impact on human life was almost as powerful as God's. While God was a positive force, the Devil was a negative one. The Devil was said to be capable of taking whatever appearance he desired, human or animal, to persuade his victims to commit evil. Many people thought that ghosts were also the Devil in disguise. It was assumed that some people could summon the Devil by magical means and sign a contract with the Devil in exchange for wealth and power. This is the theme of Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus*. Witches were widely thought to have signed such pacts, as shown by the “Devil's Mark” that was said to appear on their bodies. Some even claimed that Queen Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, had the “Devil's Mark”: “It is known that the wretched woman was marked with the devil's mark in a secret place upon her back” (Summers 2000, p.124).

Elizabethans were deeply influenced by their religious beliefs and the prevailing superstitions of the era. The concept of demons and their influence on human lives was a topic that captured the imagination of many. In Elizabethan England, demons were believed to be malevolent supernatural beings who had the power to possess individuals and wreak havoc in their lives. These beliefs were rooted in religious teachings, particularly those of Christianity, which emphasized the existence of evil forces that sought to corrupt and tempt humanity. The devil was seen as the ultimate embodiment of evil and temptation, constantly seeking to corrupt souls and lead them astray from the path of righteousness. Furthermore, demons were often associated with witchcraft during this era. Witch hunts were prevalent as people believed that witches made pacts with malevolent beings in exchange for supernatural powers.

This led to widespread fear and paranoia surrounding witchcraft, resulting in numerous trials and executions. Laghi (2021, p.104) comments on witchcraft: "…the difficulties in obtaining and interpreting the evidence, and the high degree of uncertainty in the trials, made witchcraft one of the most feared crimes, since not only did people dread being hurt or demonically possessed as a consequence of witchcraft, but also being accused of sorcery, because mere gossip in the neighbourhood could lead to a conviction. "The influence of these beliefs extended beyond individual experiences.

Demons were also thought to have a hand in natural disasters, illness, and other misfortunes that befell communities. It was believed that these malevolent entities could cause crop failures or bring about plagues as punishments for sinful behaviour Sands (2004, p.3) argues that "human afflictions of any type had come to function as confirmation of the existence of evil, both spiritual (sin) and physical (disease)."

The devil reflected one side of the contrast of good and evil by antagonizing God. The opposition was a vital aspect of demonology in Elizabethan era and this opposition played a crucial role in Protestantism. As Render (2016, p.10) argues, "The opposition was important because the definition of evil was not only relevant to Elizabethan scholars in order to gain a better understanding of the devil, it was a necessary component of the definition of the good and sacred as well." Furthermore, Clark (1999, p.53) observes:

> The clearest case of correlation and the sharing of attributes occur when dual classification systems rest on primary polarities that are so dominant that they inform the whole field of relations. Obvious examples are the absolute moral and religious dichotomies between good and evil.

Demons were also thought to possess incredible intellectual and physical abilities, such as "extraordinary strength and speed" (Clark 1999, p. 199). Owing to their inherently celestial nature and the fact that they were present since the creation of the world, it was widely believed that demons possessed superior knowledge regarding the functioning of nature compared to that of humans. On the other hand, regarding social hierarchy, Cox (2004, p.11) states that demons are nothing more than superhuman, thus assigning them a higher place in the social hierarchy. Moreover, the devil's ability to trick others and impersonate animals or other human

beings was thought to have helped the devil and demons to pretend to have supernatural abilities. According to Clark (1999, p.203) “the devil was allowed enormous skills as a deceiver.”

3. Elizabethan theatre

Prior to Elizabethan theatre, inn yards were places where people would watch theatrical performances. Inn yards were designed in the shape of a square encircling an open court. The stables and the kitchen had direct access from the court; above both of these were one to three floors of bedrooms and sitting rooms, entered by galleries running around the court. For theatrical performances, a platform on one end was built to function as a stage. The area behind the platform was closed off by the curtain and became a dressing room. The section in the gallery above it served as a second stage, which could portray the walls of a city or a balcony. On the other hand, since their layout was narrow and long, there were many seats from where it was impossible to have a good view of the stage. To improve this flaw, they took inspiration from bear-baiting and bull-baiting rings. Such rings also had a place for the public to sit as well as to stand (MacCracken, Pierce, and Durham 1910, p. 35-37).

James Burbage built the first theatre near the city's northern borders in 1576. It was based on similar models mentioned above and he named his theatre simply The Theatre. Soon after The Theatre, the Curtain, the Swan, the Rose, and the Globe were constructed. According to MacCracken et al., “It is impossible to speak of “Elizabethan theaters” or of the “Elizabethan stage”, as if there were one type to which all theaters and stages conformed”. MacCracken et al. (1910, p.38) continue:

> While the Globe and the Curtain were round, other theaters were hexagonal or octagonal, and the Fortune was square. Likewise, there were certainly differences in size. In spite of these facts, it is, however, still possible to describe the theaters, in general terms which are sufficiently accurate for our present purpose.

Durham describes the Elizabethan theatre as a wooden or half-timbered three-story structure, with three stories that created three galleries for the public. The first gallery was slightly higher than ground level, whereas the pit appears to have been recessed. The galleries were held up by oaken pillars, which were frequently

beautifully carved. While the galleries were roofed, the yard was exposed to the weather. Regarding the stage, it had a front and backstage divided by a curtain. The backstage included a fixed structure that resembled the exterior of a house, together with an upper balcony and a door. All or part of the stage was covered by the roof to shield the performers from the weather. It also functioned as a place from which divinities could arise (MacCracken et al., 1910, p. 35-37). Elizabethan theatres could only achieve limited special effects in terms of stage technology. To create theatrical effects, early amphitheaters such as the Theatre (1576), the Curtain (1577), and the Rose (1587) employed equipment formerly used in late medieval mystery plays, such as a floor trap, braziers of fire, pyrotechnics, windlasses, and any number of large barrels. Windlasses were used to raise big objects onto the platform, while barrels and pyrotechnics were used to mimic weather conditions such as thunder and lightning. Fireworks were also a common feature of stage demons. Braziers of fire assisted in the decorating of a scene as the last touch: when put on top of the stages, their qualities defined location, and when placed underneath, they depicted the burning of Hell (Boecherer 2007, p. 28).

4. Christopher Marlowe: *Doctor Faustus*

The aim of this chapter is to explore the power dynamics between Faustus and the devil and how this play illustrates the consequences of Faustus's ambition to become a powerful magician. Despite Faustus's ambitious intentions, he ultimately fails to achieve his goals and must rely on his demonic counterparts to perform tasks. Through his depiction of Faustus's interactions with the devil, Marlowe emphasizes the power of the spiritual world and the consequences of challenging it. The devil's power is made clear in the way he controls Faustus's destiny and ultimately leads him to damnation.

Christopher Marlowe based *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592, first published 1604) on German stories about the astrologer Faust. This is an Elizabethan play first staged by the Admiral's Men in 1592. According to Cox, Marlowe was the first playwright who made a change in the history of early dramatic devils, describing him as “the most brilliant and successful of the university wits.” As stated by Cox, Marlowe was “revived on stage many times over the next half-century, and he exerted an incalculable influence on subsequent plays, even when they parody him as old-fashioned.” Regarding Marlowe’s devils, he again says how it is not overstated to argue that Marlowe’s devils represent the second important change in the history of early dramatic devils, following the Protestant Reformation (Cox 2004, p.110) and that *Doctor Faustus* creates links between sacred and secularized, commercial theater: “For Marlowe's play is, so to speak, the conduit through which this stage device made its way from religious drama to the commercial stage” (Cox 2004, p.127).

Faustus is well on his way to becoming acquainted with natural magic even before his tragedy begins. He is described as having attained the pinnacle of medicine, philosophy, astrology, and religion, and he embodies all of the characteristics associated with the Renaissance magus. The high ambitions of the white magician, however, are not what Faustus wants and has in mind. Faustus, no longer content with being a mere man, aspires to money and power by immersing himself in “words of art” and “ceremonies” linked with magic (Scene I, p.160-161). Faustus believes he will become “as great as Lucifer” by taking the “shortest cut for conjuring” and selling

his soul to Satan (Scene V, p.50, Scene III, p.52). Not unexpectedly, Faustus's doings have the opposite effect; as the drama develops, Faustus's prominence will be constantly dominated by the demon.

The power shift between the devil and his victim is depicted in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. This principle is immediately visible when comparing dialogues between Faustus, Mephistopheles, and numerous other devils that inhabit the stage throughout the play. Faustus asks about hell, specifically Lucifer. We might expect Mephistopheles to entice the scholar by avoiding the topic. Instead, Mephistopheles points out the fact that he and Lucifer can no longer see “the face of God” and reveals that all damned souls are “tormented with ten thousand hells” regularly (Scene III, p.79-81). Faustus interprets the devil's words as a sign of weakness and chooses to prove the demon who is truly superior character. Faustus does this by dismissing Mephistopheles According to Faustus: “What is great Mephostopheles so passionate / For being deprived of the joys of heaven? / Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude / And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess” (Scene III, p.85-88). Thus, Faustus asserts his dominance over a demon who is first portrayed as inferior.

The scholar's connection with his familiar devil changes as the play unfolds and the demonic contract is signed. He feels helpless against Mephistopheles and his fellow demons. This becomes clear when Faustus begins to repent in order to preserve the “distressed soul” (Scene XIII, p.57). Faustus is on the edge of renouncement when he is approached by Lucifer and Mephistopheles. Faustus is easily distracted from his goal of repentance by the terrible look he receives from the devils:

> LUCIFER: Christ cannot save thy soul
> We come to tell thee thou dost injure us
> Thou talk'st of Christ, contrary to thy promise.
> Thou shouldst not think of God.
> Think of the devil.
> And of his dame, too.
> FAUSTUS: Nor will I henceworth.
> Pardon me in this
> And Faustus vows never to look to heaven
> Never to name God or to pray to him
> To burn his sculptures, slay his ministers
> And make my spirits pull his churches down.
>
> (Scene VII, p.84; 90-93; 94-98)

This conversation shows how quickly power shifts between Faustus and the devil. Faustus, who no longer embodies the sorcerer's authoritative manner, is easily intimidated by the presence of Lucifer. The change in Faustus's attitude and position becomes clear when he vows devastation to God's “scriptures”, “ministers”, and “churches”, commitments that sound quite extreme (Scene VII, p.97-98).

Despite Faustus's promises that he would destroy God's “scriptures”, “ministers” and “churches”, it should be emphasized that these actions do not happen in the play. This realization is certainly not unexpected, especially given that Faustus never achieves the great goals he sets for himself. He shares the fate of other early modern witches, becoming nothing more than an illusionist after selling his soul, and is both lured and tricked by the Devil's false promises. Deluded into believing he would hold authority, Faustus reveals the constraints of his immaterial magic in some ways such as by turning “invisible” in order to steal a dish from the Pope (Scene VIII, p.55-56), by conjuring Alexander and Diana's spirits for the German Emperor's amusement, by putting horns on a knight's head. In fact, Faustus is completely reliant on his demonic counterparts for power and must ask Mephistopheles to undertake all tasks now that he has set aside his book of sorcery and fallen into witchcraft.

This reveals how the power dynamics within the plays shift between Faustus and the devil. Faustus initially believes that he can bargain with the devil for knowledge and power, only to be quickly overpowered and intimidated by Mephistopheles. Faustus is left dependent on the demon to undertake his tasks once he has set aside his book of sorcery and fallen into witchcraft. Marlowe’s play shows that, not only does Faustus lack the power to bargain with the devil, but he is also unable to control the consequences of his decisions. This reflects Elizabethan beliefs as it portrays the idea of the devil’s power being superior to that of humans, and the consequences of attempting to bargain with him. The play also highlights the repercussions of Faustus’s decision to sell his soul, ultimately leading to his downfall.

4.1. Demonic character: Mephistopheles

Mephistopheles is a symbolic character of major significance in *Doctor Faustus*. He is Faustus's continuous companion from the beginning of his rapid rise and anti-Christian career until the dreadful catastrophic end, and he is the source of Faustus's success as well as his damnation. Mephistopheles is portrayed in the play as Lucifer, the Prince of Hell's assistant. He is also a fallen angel who joined Satan's rebellion against God. He admits to Faustus that he is well aware of his sufferings in hell and that the loss of Heaven and God's benefits cause him great suffering. He is, without a doubt, Faustus's demonic genius, but he has not been proven to be the true cause of his deterioration and downfall. Faustus was the first to reject God and the Trinity on his own. After Faustus questions Mephistopheles whether his conjuring speech has not summoned him, Mephistopheles responds:

That was the cause, but yet per accidens. For when we hear one rack the name of God, Abjure the Scriptures and his Savior Christ, We fly in hope to get his glorious soul Nor will come unless he uses such means Whereby he is in danger to be damned. Therefore, the shortest cut for conjuring Is stoutly to abjure the Trinity And pray devoutly to the prince of hell.

(Scene III, p.46-54)

In his answer quoted above, Mephistopheles warns Faustus of the impending catastrophe that awaits everyone who deviates from the correct path and rejects God and the Saviour. Also, Lucifer, “most dearly loved of God”, fell as a result of pride and arrogance (Scene III, p.67). But Faustus, the victim of his pride and insatiable drive to achieve limitless knowledge and power, ignores his timely warning and confidently says: “Think'st thou that Faustus is so fond / To imagine that after this life there is any pain? / Tush, these are trifles and mere old wives' tale” (Scene V, p.134-136). Faustus fantasizes about being as powerful as Lucifer and thinks: “A sound magician is a mighty god” (Scene I, p.64). Therefore, he will exhaust his mind until he obtains divinity, i.e., “gain a deity” (Scene I, p.65).

Mephistopheles has an important role in *Doctor Faustus*. He does not persuade Faustus away from the path of virtue; rather, he chose to do so. But it was

Mephistopheles who surely set the road for his tragic fate and eternal suffering. Besides the protagonist, he is the most significant character in the play and makes the greatest contribution to the development of Faustus's character. That is why we see him being Doctor Faustus's constant companion till the end.

Mephistopheles's theatricality defines him as a demonic persona and his ability to execute amazing special effects is one of his most notable theatrical qualities. His persuasive powers also capture the audience's attention. His linguistic capabilities help him to dominate and manipulate Faustus: “Yet even this claim may merely be a demonic feint in Mephistopheles's incessant battle to control Faustus because Mephistopheles always seeks to dominate Faustus rhetorically and always succeed” (Cox 2004, p.116). When Faustus is set to react to his suspicions regarding his agreement with Lucifer, Mephistopheles cleverly distracts him. For instance, when Faustus accuses Mephistopheles of depriving him of the pleasures of paradise due to his damnation, he answers cunningly: “Why Faustus / Think'st thou heaven is such glorious thing? I tell thee, 'tis not half so fair as thou / Or any man that breathes on earth / It was made for man, therefore is man more excellent” (Scene VII, p.36-42). Nevertheless, the originally pleasant tone changes to verbal aggression at the end: “…I arrest thy soul / For disobedience to my sovereign lord. / Revolt, or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh” (Scene XIII, p.65-67). Faustus, visibly frightened, quickly apologizes and swears obedience to the devil once more; “Sweet Mephistopheles, entreat thy lord / To pardon my unjust presumption…” (Scene XIII, p.68-69).

He is eventually questioned why he never told scholars about his pact with the devil, even though they can pray for his redemption; his response is that he was not able to because of Mephistopheles's threats that he will physically hurt him. Mephistopheles's verbal terror over Faustus demonstrates his dominance and control, which results in Faustus's damnation.

In the Elizabethan era, beliefs in demons were prevalent and deeply ingrained in society. These supernatural beings were often associated with evil and mischief. Mephistopheles is portrayed as a tempter who preys on human weaknesses. He entices Faustus with promises of power and knowledge, exploiting his desire for more than what mortal life can offer. This mirrors the Elizabethan belief that demons sought to corrupt individuals by playing on their desires and weaknesses.

Mephistopheles exhibits a mischievous nature throughout the play. He enjoys tormenting Faustus as well as Faustus's suffering. This aligns with the idea that demons derived pleasure from causing chaos and distress among humans. Additionally, Mephistopheles is depicted as an agent of Lucifer himself, further solidifying his association with demonic behaviour. He carries out Lucifer's bidding, embodying the malevolence typically attributed to demons during this period.

In conclusion, connecting Elizabethan beliefs in demons with Mephistopheles's behaviour reveals a correlation between societal perceptions and literary representation. Through his temptations, mischievousness, and allegiance to Lucifer, Mephistopheles portrays the essence of what an Elizabethan demon was believed to be.

4.2. The relationship of Faustus and Mephistopheles

Faustus has traded his soul in exchange for unlimited knowledge, power, and a luxurious life for twenty-four years. Mephistopheles's role is to ensure that the deal is fully completed and to inform him seriously: "But, Faustus, thou must bequeath it solemnly, / And write a deed of gift with thine own blood / For that security craves great Lucifer / If thou deny it I will back to hell" (Scene V, p.34-37). When the blood congeals, Mephistopheles is waiting with his "chafer of coals" to make the blood flow and hence smooth Faustus's path to hell (Scene V).

In his relationship with Faustus, Mephistopheles plays a dual role. When Faustus respects the terms of his deal with the Devil, Mephistopheles is his most obedient slave. Mephistopheles strives to fulfill his desire for knowledge by answering all of his inquiries. However, he refuses to respond when Faustus asks: "Tell me who made the world" (Scene VII, p.65). Then once again when Faustus confesses his strong desire "…to see the monuments / And situation of the bright splendent Rome" (Scene VIII, p.46-47). When Faustus desires to marry the most beautiful lady in Germany, Mephistopheles successfully discourages him from marrying as a good Christian; yet, to satisfy Faustus's sexual need and craving for youth and beauty, Mephistopheles summons Helen "whose heavenly beauty passeth all compare" (Scene XIII, p.29). But when Faustus's soul is torn between heaven and damnation, and he considers prayer and repentance in order to obtain God's forgiveness, Mephistopheles appears like a cruel master to intimidate him: "Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul / For disobedience to my sovereign lord. / Revolt, or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh" (Scene XIII, p.65-67). Oddly and tragically, Mephistopheles comes in the closing scene with other devils to take Faustus's soul to hell for eternal damnation, and the last phrase forced out from the depths of his frightened soul is "Ah, Mephistopheles!" (Scene XIV, p.120).

All of this further demonstrates Mephistopheles's demonic characteristics. He is a cruel master, intimidating Faustus when he considers repentance and threatening to tear his flesh if he does not obey. He is also a manipulator, successfully discouraging Faustus from marrying as a good Christian and instead summoning Helen to satisfy his sexual needs. Additionally, Mephistopheles is a faithful servant to Lucifer,

ensuring that Faustus's deal with him is fulfilled and his soul is taken to hell for eternal damnation. His demonic nature is further emphasized in the closing scene when he appears with other devils to take Faustus's soul. The devils drag Faustus away to be tortured in hell, mocking him and taunting him as they drag him away. Mephistopheles takes particular pleasure in Faustus's misery, relishing his role in damning Faustus's soul to hell. He is a powerful embodiment of evil, and his maliciousness further reinforces his demonic nature.

5. Ben Jonson: *Volpone, Or The Fox*

Volpone, Or The Fox (1606, first published 1607), a comedy by Ben Jonson, is a depiction of human avarice, lust, and selfishness that was first presented by King's Men in 1606. The play, which is set in Venice, is both a comedy and a sort of fable in which the cunning and gold-obsessed protagonist Volpone (fox) cons Venetians with the help of his smart servant Mosca (parasite). The three greedy gold-diggers Corvino (crow), Voltore (vulture), and the elderly man Corbaccio (raven), who think they have a chance at being appointed heir to his great fortune, are courted by Volpone, who poses as a wealthy old man who is ill and on the verge of death. He convinces Corbaccio to disinherit his son, Bonario, in favor of Volpone and coaxes lavish presents from Corvino and Voltore. After learning that Corvino has a gorgeous wife named Celia, Volpone decides to visit her in disguise and try to seduce her. He persuades Corvino that the only way to get well is to have a sexual encounter with a young woman. Because Volpone promises to make him his heir, the avaricious Corvino decides to give him Celia. When Volpone's offers of wealth fail to persuade Celia, he makes an attempt to rape her but is stopped by Bonario. Mosca and Voltore plot to have Volpone cleared during the court proceeding and Celia and Bonario are detained for infidelity.

The analysis of Ben Jonson's *Volpone* will discuss Volpone's role in the drama. It should be mentioned how all of the characters are human beings, so it is important to put an emphasis on Volpone's personality in order to examine him as a demonic character. The following chapter discusses his strong personality, manipulation, and wit, all of which allow him to stay in his position of supremacy in comparison with other characters. Considering Volpone’s demonic characteristics, the chapter also explores how he uses his cunning and intelligence to gain power and wealth, and how he uses his position of power to exploit and manipulate the other characters in the play. Secondly, this chapter will discuss anti-Catholic views present in the drama. Lastly, some of the demonic traits represented in *Volpone* will be mentioned, such as greed, theatricality and the moral implications of avarice.

5.1. Volpone's demonic personality

Readers can see Volpone's real personality from the beginning. He starts the play calling his gold "'the best of things" (Scene I, p.8), and with that, it is apparent that the core of his true personality is an unhealthy obsession with money. In comparison with other characters, although there is no formal hierarchical structure, Volpone is in a higher position given the prestige and benefits that come with wealth. Knowing that characters who want to be Volpone's heir are greedy and ready to give all they have for his wealth, it is not hard for Volpone to accomplish his devilish plans. At the end of the play, Volpone is forced to admit his intentions after Mosca challenges his master's place in the hierarchy. The protagonist, who portrays the demonic figure, is the play's most theatrical character.

One of the demonic character's traits is the ability to allure, which is best demonstrated in Jonson's play when Volpone tries to seduce Celia. Since Corvino has an avaricious desire to become Volpone's heir, Volpone is successful in getting Corvino to willingly give his wife Celia to him. When Volpone and Celia are alone, he immediately makes his lustful intentions known. Initially, he makes an effort to attract her by emphasizing his vitality and fertility while claiming to be a greater lover than her spouse, which displays Volpone's sense of superiority in comparison to other characters, in this case that is Corvino. Furthermore, he attempts to persuade her with his speech, trying to show her how her life may be:

> If thou hast wisdom, hear me, Celia. Thy baths shall be juice of July-flowers, Spirit of roses, and of violets. The milk of unicoras, and panthers' breath Gathered in bags, and mixed with Cretan wines. Our drink shall be prepared gold and amber; Which we will take until my roof whirl round. With the vertigo: and my dwarf shall dance. Where we may so transfuse our wandering souls. Out at our lips, and score up sums of pleasures.
>
> (Scene III, p.78 – 79)

He also compares himself to gods from Roman mythology, Jove and Mars: "…and I like Jove, / Then I like Mars" (Scene VI, p.79). This comparison shows how big his ego actually is and his place in play's social hierarchy. Volpone understands exactly what he is doing. He believes that all of his suitors' desire to gain money with little effort will eventually ruin them. Volpone actually perceives the suitors as fools since they fail to recognize his malicious motive, and he believes that ignorance will not be rewarded, but rather punished, requiring them to give him gifts; "Poor wretches! I / rather pity their folly and indiscretion, than their loss/ of time and money; for these may be recovered by/ industry: but to be a fool born, is a desease incurable" (Scene I, p.44). He feels entitled because of his wealth. His ownership of multiple servants also indicates his high position in the social hierarchy. Besides being higher in the social hierarchy, which is one of the characteristics of demons, he uses his power to manipulate and deceive people for his personal gain. Demonic personality traits in Volpone's character are recognizable in a few instances. Firstly, the emphasize is on his maliciousness and lack of empathy for the suitors. Volpone enjoys manipulating them and watching them waste their possessions and resources in an attempt to win his wealth. Volpone also sees them as fools, which implies his superiority and a sense of entitlement. Ultimately, his ownership of multiple servants demonstrates his status within social hierarchy, as well as lack of morality in exploiting those beneath him. Combining all this factors together help to create a picture of demonic character who manipulates and takes advantage of those around him.

Even though Jonson's Volpone has entirely human characters, Volpone is positioned at the top of the play's structure as the demonic figure. He can control and manipulate the other characters through his fortune and theatricality, which helps him to retain his dominant position. Volpone can take advantage of their greed by fueling their misconception that if they send him gifts on his deathbed, they will inherit his money. They are oblivious that Volpone's deathbed is a theatrical performance for him to increase his wealth through their gifts rather than intending to share it with them. The men will follow whatever instructions are given to them by Volpone or by Mosca acting on Volpone's behalf because of their avarice and desire to be Volpone's successor. The two villains with all of their manipulations are the causes of

corruption. Volpone embraces his gold; “Hail the world's soul, and mine! more glad than is / The teeming earth to see the longed-for sun / Peep through the horns of celestial Ram, / Am I, to view thy splendour darkening his; / … O thou son of Sol, / But brighter than thy father, let me kiss, / With adoration thee” (Scene I, p.8) at the opening of the play, placing wealth before God and faith. He claims gold is brighter than the sun, elevating material benefits above divine aspects.

Mosca opposes Volpone's dominant position towards the end of the story by switching his original theatrical tactic. While claiming to be Volpone's sole heir, he begins playing out his lies. He parades through Venice in luxurious clothes leaving the other characters envious. Eventually, as Mosca begins to take precautions to preserve his acquired fortune and reputation by replacing the locks on Volpone's house, act and actuality begin to merge (Render 2016, p.38). Volpone is thought to be dead as a result of the convincing performance, and Mosca is considered to be the heir as a result of the contract agreement. With fear of losing everything as a result of Mosca's actions, Volpone does not have a solution except to uncover his plans in an attempt to retrieve his fortune. The play finishes with the consequences of all those participating in Volpone's plans being announced. Such punishments demonstrate how Justice is at the top of the play's natural order, as well as that all characters, along with the demonic persona, must follow her laws.

5.2. Greed, avarice, theatricality, desire, and anti-Catholicism as demonic traits

This comedy is about ethics, greed, and the lengths people will go to, regardless of the costs to themselves and others, to achieve their goals. When *Volpone* was written, greed, deceit, and credulity were widespread in London. These characteristics were used by Ben Jonson to illustrate the foolishness of avarice and the benefits or disadvantages it brings to people who are just interested in increasing their wealth. The focus of the play is avarice, or the desire for anything a person wants, not simply wealth. We can tell right away where Volpone's mind is: “Good morning to the day; and next, my gold! / Open the shrine, that I may see my saint…With adoration, thee, and every relic / Of sacred treasure in this blessed room” (Scene I, p.8) However, what motivates him to continue accumulating fortune through deception is the desire to do so: “Yet I glory / More in the cunning purchase of my wealth, / Than in the glad possession, since I gain” (Scene I, p.9). *Volpone* illustrates the negative impact that a passion for money can have on corrupting individuals and causing them to act unethically and immorally. Greed plays an essential role in the plot since it enables Volpone to control other characters who are oblivious due to their avarice.

Furthermore, Volpone's implicitly anti-Catholic theme is visible throughout the play in various ways. A few examples suggest that the Catholic community is corrupted and also warn that anyone who prays to the Catholic saints will not receive help from God. As Celia is coerced into sleeping with Volpone, she prays to God and the saints for help, but she still has to deal with the unfairness of a false charge. When the Avocatori ask her to testify in court to clear her name of false allegations, she claims that heaven is her witness, to which they respond that heaven cannot be it. In the end, she is saved not by divine intervention, but by evil winning over itself. One can conclude that the text ridicules the Catholic Church and their rituals with the depiction of demonic possession in a theatrical and satirical tone (Render 2016, p.35).

On the subject of theatricality, it is important to say that the demonic Volpone and his servant Mosca exhibit it more than other characters, given that their theatricality is seen throughout the play. It is noticeable that neither character stops playing a role

except when speaking to the other, their interactions revolve around either preparing for future performances or talking about their prior theatrical accomplishments. They are operating with the intent to deceive everyone else for their amusement. Because of their malicious purposes and theatrical skill, theatricality starts to have a negative connotation. Jonson encourages the audience to link performance and theater with immorality and corruption because Mosca's and Volpone's theatrical performances are only intended to benefit themselves by bringing about the destruction of others (Render 2016, p.40).

Corvino, who is fueled by jealousy for other men, shows his hatred by imagining horrendous situations involving Celia in an attempt to coerce her into full celibacy and submission. Although these thoughts portray violent acts in gruesome detail, the aspect of embarrassment in public is what makes them so dramatic. Corvino berates her and threatens to perform a public dissection of her body because she has paid attention to the mountebank and let herself be noticed by those surrounding him; "Dissect thee mine own self, and read a lecture / Upon thee to the city, and in public." (Scene III, p.52). When he tries to persuade Celia to have intercourse with Volpone and she refuses, he is enraged, which leads to further horrid threats:

> Be damned! Heart, I will drag thee hence home by the hair; Cry thee a strumpet through the streets; rip up. Thy mouth unto thine ears; and slit thy nose, Like a raw rochet! And at my window hang you forth, devising Some monstrous crime, which I, in capital letters. Will eat into thy flesh with aquafortis, And burning corsives, on this stubborn breast.
>
> (Scene VI, p.74-75)

Corvino's words above demonstrate how enraged he is and how wicked his mind is. He is very contradictory because he is verbally abusing her while at the same time demanding from her to do something against her will i.e., to sleep with Volpone for his own interest and profit.

To conclude, in Ben Jonson's play *Volpone,* the focus is on avarice, or the desire for anything a person wants, not simply wealth, and the negative impact that passion for money can have on corrupting individuals, causing them to act unethically and immorally. Greed is a key theme as it enables Volpone to control other characters who are oblivious due to their avarice. The play also contains an implicitly anti-Catholic theme by showing how the Catholic community is corrupted.

6. Conclusion

The Elizabethan Era lasted from 1558 until 1625. This period is also known as the English Renaissance, as well as the Golden Age. During Queen Elizabeth I's reign, England experienced enormous cultural development, with names like Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, and at the same time, literature flourished, especially in the sphere of theatre.

When it comes to Elizabethan theatre, it is important to say that the roots of it were miracle and morality plays. Morality plays are allegorical dramas which were popular in Europe, particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries, in which individuals represent moral virtues and teach the principles of morality. Furthermore, miracle plays portray the true or fabricated story of saint's life, miracles, and suffering. In the beginning, plays were performed in courtyards of inns and the private homes of noblemen and great lords. The earliest London outdoor public theater was established by James Burbage in 1576 and was named The Theatre.

In Elizabethan England, Protestantism was the national religion based on worshiping God. Besides believing in God, the Elizabethans believed in the devil and that he has as important and powerful influence on their lives as God.

Both of these plays portray the demonic figure in two different ways. Mephistopheles is fully a demon, whereas Volpone is human. Comparing Mephistopheles and Volpone, it is evident that they share demonic personality characteristics. One of the many such characteristics is hiding one's true demonic essence from others, thus cleverly manipulating and misleading them into believing that they are siding with them. For example, Volpone pretends to be ill in order to receive gifts and gives a false promise that someone will inherit his fortune, but his true motives were to raise his own wealth. Mephistopheles, on the other side, tricks Faustus into thinking that he is on his side and his servant, while in reality he lures him into a trap and in fact only serves Lucifer. Another demonic personality trait is the character's position in a hierarchy. Since Mephistopheles is a demon, he is, according to natural hierarchy, above Faustus, and Volpone is in a higher position in social hierarchy considering his wealth.

Even though there are many similarities in Mephistopheles's and Volpone's thinking and behaviour which characterizes them as demonic figures, there are also some clearly noticeable differences, the first one being that Mephistopheles is not the main character in the play, unlike Volpone. To conclude, the most distinctive demonic personality traits are deceiving, manipulating, and tricking others who are on a lower position in a certain hierarchy. As this paper demonstrates, Elizabethan beliefs in demons are reflected in the works of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Ben Jonson's *Volpone*. Both plays demonstrate the dangerous consequences of bargaining and the importance of resisting the temptation of the Devil’s promises. Doctor Faustus's pursuit of knowledge and power, as well as Volpone's greed and deception, ultimately lead to their downfall, demonstrating the power of the forces of evil.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Elizabethan society's beliefs and demonic characters which occur in Elizabethan theatre. It also briefly mentions Queen Elizabeth I reign and the growing culture of the time. Queen Elizabeth I ruled from 1558 to 1625. Elizabethan Era, also known as the Renaissance, was period when theater, politics, and education flourished. Culture also prospered, with names like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe.

Since there were no theatre buildings in the beginning of the Elizabethan era, performances were staged in the courtyards of inns and the private homes of nobles. The earliest theatre, known as The Theatre, was established in 1576 by James Burbage.

Elizabethans believed in two equally powerful supernatural forces, God and Lucifer. Demons were thought to be malicious supernatural beings with the power to possess people and wreak havoc in the lives of the Elizabethans. These ideas were based on religious teachings which emphasized the existence of evil trying to corrupt and entice people. Their beliefs were incorporated into texts and drama of the period, and demons became one of the things that attracted the audience's interest.

Both *Doctor Faustus* and *Volpone, or the Fox* introduce readers and audiences to two demonic figures, Mephistopheles and Volpone. Mephistopheles is a demonic character who tempts Doctor Faustus with money and knowledge in exchange for his soul. Volpone, on the other hand, is a sly man who tricks those around him in order to gain wealth and power. Both Mephistopheles and Volpone are depicted as highly manipulative and deceitful characters whose demonic personalities are central part of their portrayal in the dramas.

KEY WORDS: Elizabethan age, beliefs, *Doctor Faustus*, C. Marlowe, *Volpone*, Ben Jonson

SAŽETAK

Ovaj rad obrađuje temu vjerovanja elizabetanskog društva i demonskih likova koji se pojavljuju u elizabetanskom kazalištu.

Stanovnici Engleske tog doba vjerovali su u dvije jednako snažne nadnaravne sile, Boga i Lucifera. Demoni su smatrani zlonamjernim, nadnaravnim bićima koji posjeduju moć opsjedanja ljudi i izazivanja razornih šteta u životima Elizabetanaca. Te ideje su se temeljile na religijskim učenjima koja su naglašavala postojanje zla koje pokušava iskvariti i namamiti ljude. Njihova vjerovanja prenesena su u tekstove i drame tog razdoblja te su demoni postali jedna od tema koje su fascinirale publiku.

Tema demonskih figura u ovom radu obrađena je kroz djela Christophera Marlowea *Doctor Faustus* i Bena Jonsona *Volpone, or the Fox*. U oba djela čitatelji i publika susreću se sa dvije demonske figure, Mephistophelesom i Volponeom. Mephistopheles je demonski lik koji Doktora Faustusa dovodi u iskušenje novcem i znanjem u zamjenu za njegovu dušu. Volpone je lukav čovjek koji vara ljude oko sebe kako bi stekao bogatstvo i moć. I Mephistopheles i Volpone prikazani su kao manipulativni likovi čije su demonske osobnosti središnji dio njihovog prikaza u dramama.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: elizabetansko doba, vjerovanja, *Doctor Faustus*, Christopher Marlowe, *Volpone*, Ben Jonson

ASTRATTO

Questa tesi esamina il tema delle credenze nella società elisabettiana come anche le figure demoniache presenti nel teatro elisabettiano.

Gli abitanti d'Inghilterra dell'epoca credevano in due forze soprannaturali ugualmente potenti, Dio e Lucifero. I demoni erano considerati esseri malevoli e soprannaturali che possedevano potere perseguitando le persone e causando danni devastanti nella vita degli Elisabettiani. Queste idee erano basate su insegnamenti religiosi che sottolineavano l'esistenza del male che tenta corrompere e adescare le persone. Le loro credenze furono trasmesse nei testi e nei drammi, dove i demoni divennero uno dei temi che affascinarono il pubblico.

Nella tesi, il tema delle figure demoniache è stato esaminato in due opere, *Doctor Faustus* di Christopher Marlowe ed *Volpone or the Fox* di Ben Jonson. In entrambe le opere, i lettori ed il pubblico incontrano due figure demoniache, Mefistofele e Volpone. Mefistofele è un personaggio demoniaco che porta Dottor Faustus nella tentazione promettendogli denaro in cambio della sua anima. Volpone è un personaggio furbo che truffa la gente per ottenere ricchezza e potere. Sia Mefistofele sia Volpone sono dipinti come personaggi manipolativi e le loro personalità demoniache sono il centro nella presentazione nei drammi.

PAROLE CHIAVE: età elisabettiana, credenze, *Doctor Faustus*, Christopher Marlowe, *Volpone*, Ben Jonson