

In red and black: the dark shadow of evil. Nature and aesthetics of the Devil

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Abstract: To understand the representation of beings, it is necessary to know their nature in depth. In a way, form and color are the visible gesture of an invisible essence. Material beings possess an ontological condition that facilitates their perception since they are formed by a matter that has a certain external aspect and thus a volumetric and chromatic configuration. But what happens with those beings whose nature is purely spiritual? Can a being be represented that is not a material being, that is to say, that lacks extension, a 'hyle'? It is precisely there that the aesthetic dimension becomes an avenue that aids the understanding of metaphysics and even of theology; it is there that art comes to the aid of philosophy; it is there that the capacity to imagine allies itself with a whole set of facts, beliefs and ideas to convert what might appear to be something absolutely opaque into a perceptible experience. But there is a more arduous enigma that appears when we try to find the shape and color of evil, of the Evil One and of the spirits that second him.

Keywords: Color; Devil; Red; Black.

ES En rojo y negro: la oscura sombra del mal. Naturaleza y estética del Diablo

Resumen: Para comprender la representación de los seres conviene conocer a fondo su naturaleza. De alguna manera la forma y el color son el gesto visible de una esencia invisible. Los seres materiales poseen una condición ontológica que facilita su percepción puesto que están formados por una materia que comporta un determinado aspecto exterior y con ello una configuración volumétrica y cromática. ¿Pero qué sucede con aquellos seres cuya naturaleza es puramente espiritual? ¿Puede representarse un ser que no es un ser material, es decir, que carece de extensión, de 'hyle'? Es justamente ahí donde la dimensión estética se convierte en una vía que ayuda a la comprensión de la metafísica e incluso de la teología; es ahí donde el arte viene en auxilio de la filosofía; es ahí donde la capacidad de imaginar se alía con todo un conjunto de hechos, creencias e ideas para convertir lo que podría parecer algo absolutamente opaco en una experiencia perceptible. Pero hay un enigma más arduo que aparece cuando intentamos dar con la forma y el color del mal, del Maligno y de los espíritus que le secundan.

Palabras clave: Color; Maligno; rojo; negro.

Sumario: 1. An angelical nature...2. A 'clair-obscure' epiphany. 3. Conclusions: Luminous beings that turn into shadows . 4. Sources and bibliographic resources

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1. An angelical nature...

Our existence may often seem as unpredictable as a French roulette game. Everything is either red or black, except for the pocket reserved for the bank: number zero, which is green. Still, what characterizes the play is not the pockets but the clinking and random landing of a white ball... Red, black, green,

white... Like the ball, the devil moves between these chromatic poles. Human life is in colors. Light¹, as time, cuts across all...We open our eyes and directly experience the blue skies and the white clouds... As we recite the Catholic Creed, we affirm that God is "Light from Light"... As we come closer to the numerous works of medieval art, we see that angels

¹ *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, c. 1430, GKS, 79 2°, f. 13r.

are luminous beings² with a glowing trail...The entire universe is an overflowing stage of various kinds³ of beings: some appear to be entirely material, others seem to have no matter at all and yet others are a combination of the former and the latter. In question 50 of the First Part of *The Summa Theologica* Thomas Aquinas claims: "Now we consider the distinction of corporeal and spiritual creatures: firstly, the purely spiritual creature which in Holy Scripture is called angel; secondly, the creature wholly corporeal; thirdly, the composite creature, corporeal and spiritual, which is man" (Aquinas 1980).

To fully understand the representation of beings, one needs to become well acquainted with their nature. In some way, shape and color are the visible gesture of an invisible essence. Material beings possess an ontological condition that facilitates their perception. Before anything else, they are composed of matter, which entails a specific external appearance and thus a volumetric and chromatic configuration. But what happens with those beings whose nature is purely spiritual? *Is it possible to represent a being that is not material and, as such, lacks extension, lacks 'hyle'?* It is precisely there where the aesthetic dimension becomes useful for understanding metaphysics and theology. It is at that point where art comes to the aid of philosophy. Also, where imagination partners with a whole set of facts, beliefs, and ideas to transform something that may seem to be utterly opaque into a perceptible experience. We could argue that this even follows from a sort of ontological axiom: no creature exists that has not been brought to existence, to light, by the One who is Light itself, even if some of those creatures have crossed from the light to darkness.

The most challenging enigma appears when we try to assess the shape and color of evil, the Evil One, and the spirits who support him⁴. Not intending to make these pages into an essential or strictly theological reflection, it is still necessary to consider some aspects of the Christian conception of the devil's nature. With this, we intend to be able to grasp more profoundly the significance behind the representation of the devil within the framework of medieval aesthetics. For the contemporary man, the belief in the devil is not only a truth of faith but also of experience. The devil's existence is accepted by reason and taken as a belief that delimits and penetrates the core of the religious sentiment. According to medieval mentality, if one denies the evidence of the devil, then one is already lying in his arms. One has already fallen into his trap. The Devil is more than a mere crossroads in a corpus of beliefs. Using Tertullian's words, it is something more than a *simia Dei*. Against God's creative power, against Christ's redemptive mission, and against the Spirit's breath of life, the devil embodies destruction, damnation, and death.

For medieval Christians and believers of many other religions, the devil exists in such a transparent way that failing to recognize him implies more than

just intellectual ignorance. It entails a risk for the soul, which may get lost and drift away from light and into darkness and may thus lose its life and grace: the grace of eternal life. To consider the medieval imagery of the devil in its own depth, it is essential to reconstruct the devil's condition. It is also necessary to consider the Christian vision which attempts to answer prophet Isaiah's question, formulated many centuries ago: "How did you come to fall from the heavens, morning star, son of the dawn?" (Isa: 14, 12).

Christian tradition highlights the *angelical condition of the devil* as a fundamental point. The Teaching of the Catholic Church has validated this claim since the High Middle Ages. Even if not simple, the stance is firm: the devil is, in its origin, a creature of God: it is even a privileged being, an angel of the highest lineage. The Council of Braga, under the papacy of John III, celebrated on May 1st, 561, solemnly highlights: "If anyone says that the devil was not first a good angel made by God, and that his nature was not a work of God, but says that he came forth from darkness, and does not have any author of himself, but is himself the origin and substance of evil, as Manichaeus and Priscillian have said, let him be anathema" (Denzinger & Hünermann 2002, 237 [457, 7]).

Among other things, the previous reflection highlights the absolute power of God, creator of all that exists. At the same time, it presents the devil as a being devoid of any creative capacity. Due to its divine origin, the devil was initially a good being since its nature is a work of God itself, who is nothing but infinite Goodness, radiant Beauty, indubitable Truth, absolute Justice, eternal Purity, and endless Love. In its very core, and as any creature coming from God, the devil has an extraordinary potency. This potency links him in origin to the affirmation and the imitation of Goodness. Nevertheless, the devil chooses to be the Opponent. He chooses not to follow the way of affirmation but that of denial. The negation of divine nature makes him become a contradiction of the love of God. It makes him want to be God.

Indeed, the cunning Evil One repeats this deification argument once he approaches the first men in the Garden of Eden⁵ and begins his workings as a great tempter⁶: *eritis sicut dii...* The most excellent angel reveals himself, loses sight of the face of God, and begins to desire to be who he is not. Then, he also begins to lose who he is. An almost perfect spiritual creature that is the fruit of love becomes pure denial, the fruit of hate, ambition, and pride. Goethe makes his *Faust* say: "I am the spirit that negates." Thus, it accurately pins down the negative and contradictory condition of a being confronted with the divine power, contrary to the Light of God.

In medieval understanding, the devil is forged as the enemy of God, as the extreme evil who wishes that the providential plans fail⁷, and as the symbol of impiety, sin, profanity, hate, and despair. Thus, its face could

² *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, c. 1430, GKS, 79 2°, f. 14v.

³ *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, c. 1430, GKS, 79 2°, f. 14r.

⁴ *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, c. 1430, GKS, 79 2°, f. 17r.

⁵ *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, c. 1430, GKS, 79 2°, f. 16v.

⁶ *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, c. 1430, GKS, 79 2°, f. 16r.

⁷ *Divina Commedia*, The British Library, c. 1370, Add MS 19587 f. 58r.

not be anything but an image of ugliness⁸, filth, horror, and darkness. Yet, all of those are features not of its external physical appearance but traits of its internal entrapments. The inner corruption of its nature confers Satan its perverse aspect. The rottenness of his spirit causes its manifestations to distill rage, lies, and ugliness.

Nevertheless, God conferred the Devil with ontological and epistemological excellence by making him a good angel⁹ in origin. For this reason, the Devil possesses an overwhelming power that surpasses human forces and has preternatural gifts. Its understanding is analytic and sharp. Its wit is significant. Its seductive skills are as if infinite, and its ability to detect the desires of mankind is extraordinary. The Opponent is not just any rival but someone specially equipped, full of resources to the service of twisting God's salvific plans.

While in some passages of the Scripture – as in the texts of Zachary or Job – the Devil is portrayed as God's collaborator, who moves freely around the world and who remains in the council of heaven as a divine agent, the Middle Ages will remark more and more his condition of an opponent, of inverted being, of a malefic entity which has its own plans which are nothing but making men go astray, the perdition of souls, and the perversion of the world. Medieval thinkers reflect on the desires of the Devil and consider that it may be assisted by a sizeable entourage given that its interests are cosmic and its presence is overwhelmingly broad. "My name is Legion" – he says in Saint Luke, 8, 30 – thus providing reasons for theologians and philosophers who attribute an immense cohort of co-religionists to him.

To be so, the Prince of this World requires the services of a good number of subordinates. Like himself, these subordinates are beings who are incapable of love, who live out of hatred, deceit, and confusion. They are beings of torture, worshipers of Evil, under the patronage of Satan, the Angel of Light, Lucifer. To be a perfect image of Power, the Devil makes his followers believe that he is the almighty and the creator. Because of this, ever since the High Middle Ages, demonological thought points out the Devil's condition as a creature. Prudence (Patrologia Latina, 59, 1007-1078), in *Hamartigenia*, recounts how the Devil pretended to show himself as the Supreme, trying to deceive the angels following him. Further, he talks about how the Devil postulated himself as the creator of matter – having taken it out of his own body-. In the 11th century, six centuries later, this opinion was brought back by Rupert Deutz in *De victoria verbi Dei* (Patrologia Latina, 169, 1215-1502), who highlighted that the Devil was its own creator.

Be that as it may, Christian orthodoxy kept, and still maintains, the claim of the divine origin of the diabolical nature. This orthodoxy depicted the Devil leading an empire of demons composed of 1.111 legions of 6.666 demons each. This makes a total of 7.405.926 beings dedicated to malefic tasks appointed by their Prince. The exactitude of the number should not be of primary importance. There are many calculations and estimates, all of which were arrived at from symbolic reconstructions. Some rabbis talk about 301.655.172

angels, from which a third may have rebelled, that is, 100.551.724. Indeed, in the second century, Maximus of Tiro already referred to more than thirty thousand demons, a whole universe of monsters.

By means of these numerical reflections, one can see that the presence of the Evil One in the world is almost ubiquitous. Salvianus, a disciple of Saint Augustine, had written *ubique daemon*, thus portraying a disturbing presence of evil. Indeed, in the Middle Ages, it was firmly believed that the Devil was, like God itself, everywhere. This omnipresence of Satan –similar to the Creator's– inspired a continuous terror in Christians. If the Devil was hidden and present everywhere, as Salvianus and the people of the Middle Ages thought, who could save men from his contact, from his contagion, from his poisonous breath? Satan could nest even in the miniatures of the prayer books, in the image painted above the altar, and even in the very rope that girds the ascetic's robe. Further and even more justified, given that God is everywhere, is it not adequate to think that One and other are together, always, in the same subject, in a man's very soul? Then, each of us would have two invisible inhabitants: Eternal Love and Eternal Hate, and every heart would be a battlefield between these two Antagonists. Yet, is such a cohabitation of opposites in every place in the universe conceivable? Is it feasible? (Papini 1954, 43-44).

Satan is a rebel whose wickedness, pride, and arrogance were directed against God yet also against mankind – as we could see in the stories of the *Book of Henoch* – towards whom he is envious, jealous, and unleashes his lust. The Devil is constantly plotting a battle against the God of Genesis and the created man. He opposes both tenaciously, full of hate. He makes, out of conflict with both, a way of being.

There is a curious theory that tries to explain the rebel nature of Satan without resorting to pride in opposition to God but to resentment. The Devil¹⁰ might have wanted to be Christ, the redeemer, but God did not choose him, allegedly the most excellent created being, the bearer of light. Instead, he chose Jesus. The Devil rebelled since he was not chosen as the instrument of incarnation, the Incarnation of the Divine Word. The usual luciferin pride translates here into a tantrum against God's plans,

⁸ Matfre Ermengaud. *Breviari d'Amor*, The British Library, s. XIV, Royal Ms 19 C. I. f. 33r.

⁹ *Missale et horae ad usum Fratrum Minorum*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, c. 1385-1390, Latin 757, f. 357v.

¹⁰ The legends of the descents to hell are common and among them we could highlight those of Saint Brandan, Saint Valerius, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Theophilus, Tundal, Ganchelin, Malatesta, Guido Casi, and Santa Teresa de Jesús... Caesarius of Heisterbach tells us about *pix, nix, nox, vermis, flagra, vincula, pus, pudor, horror...* (Gardiner 1993). The issue of conversion to the right faith is an obsession in Middle Ages. The doctrine of the Pope Eugene IV points out in the Bull *Cantate Domino* (1442): "It firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart 'into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' [Matt. 25:41], unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock; and that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is so strong that only to those remaining in it are the sacraments of the Church of benefit for salvation, and do fastings, almsgiving, and other functions of piety and exercises of Christian service produce eternal reward, and that no one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church" (Denzinger & Hünermann 2002, 714 [1351]).

perfectly planned *ab eterno*. Apart from other considerations, it does not seem appropriate for a purely spiritual creature to become flesh, to incarnate. For this reason, God chose his Son, not created, of his same nature, to carry out the Redemptive mission.

Lucifer was thus a good angel in origin, a pure spirit, a magnificent creature, holder of the highest level of natural and preternatural gifts. From Saint Thomas to Suarez, every medieval thinker recognizes his high position in hierarchy: according to some, he belongs to the order of the seraphim, and according to others, to the *supremus angelus*. Given his excellency, only his own choice took him along the tortuous paths of pride and lust. In the Letter "*Eius exemplo*" to the Archbishop of Terraco, dated December 18th, 1208, Innocent III firmly highlights:

"We believe that the devil was made evil not through creation but through will. We sincerely believe and with our mouth we confess the resurrection of this flesh which we bear and not of another. We firmly believe and affirm also that judgment by Jesus Christ will be individually for those who have lived in this flesh, and that they will receive either punishment or rewards" (Denzinger & Hünermann 2002, 427 [797]).



Saint Michael Triumphs over the Devil
c. 1468
Bartolomé Bermejo

And the Lateran Council IV (1215) proclaims:

"Firmly we believe and we confess simply that the true God is one alone, eternal, immense, and unchangeable, incomprehensible, omnipotent and ineffable, Father and Son and Holy Spirit: indeed three Persons but one essence, substance, or nature entirely simple. The Father from no one, the Son from the Father only, and the Holy Spirit equally from both; without beginning, always, and without end; the Father generating, the Son being born, and the Holy Spirit proceeding; consubstantial and coequal and omnipotent and coeternal; one beginning of all, creator of all visible and invisible things, of the spiritual and of the corporal; who by His own omnipotent power at once from the beginning of time created each creature from nothing, spiritual, and corporal, namely, angelic and mundane, and finally the human, constituted as it were, alike of the spirit and the body. For the devil and other demons were created by God good in nature, but they themselves through themselves have become wicked. But man sinned at the suggestion of the devil¹¹. This Holy Trinity according to common essence undivided, and according to personal properties distinct, granted the doctrine of salvation to the human race, first through Moses and the holy prophets and his other servants according to the most methodical disposition of the time" (Denzinger & Hünermann 2002, 428 [800]).

The devil's nature is like a gorge: heights and vertigo at the same time as if manifesting both its excellence and its doom, which led him to rebel against God, against man, and which led him to want to be Christ. Tradition says that Lucifer and his angels rose against God saying: «Non serviam: erimus sicut Deus [...]». Then, Saint Michael¹², taking up arms against them, said: «Who is like God?» – indeed, this is the Hebrew meaning of the word Michael, which is taken to be his name – and the loyal angels followed him. Then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it (Rev: 12, 7-9) (Risco 2003, 48-49).

The timing of this celestial battle, which resulted in the expulsion of the Enemy and his exile to earth,

¹¹ Bartolomé Bermejo in his artwork *Triunfo de San Miguel sobre el diablo con don Antoni Joan*, 1468, currently in the National Gallery. There are details of extraordinary delicacy and expressive richness: the symbols of the knight and the Book of Psalms of Joan; the armor of Saint Michel vs the claw of the dragon; the reflection of Jerusalem in the chest of the archangel; the crystal shield as if to represent the fragility of the defense against the attacks of the Evil One; poppies in red and black as a symbol of death; the devil himself all black with red eyes...

¹² One of the masters in the fight against the temptations of the devil is, without a doubt, Saint Anthony. We can see the *Book of Hours*, c. 1485-1490, Avignon, The Morgan Library, Ms. M 348, f 6v.



Hell
Beato de Santo Domingo de Silos
The British Library, Add. Ms. 11695, f. 2

remains unknown. The descent brings us to another imagery, that of hell. In a way, Satan's fall is an analogy to another fall, a fall deep into the abyss. Following this analogy, it is possible to explain the condition of the devil and hell comparatively: both are the lowest, the deepest, and the darkest level. From Saint Athanasius to Saint John Chrysostom or Saint Prosper, the old rabbis and the Fathers of the Church carry out a theological inquiry regarding this place where souls descend. Some locate it in the air, others in the dark depths of the sea, others in the center of the earth, as a product of the violent perforation of the fall, others even locate it on the sun, alluding to the punishment of fire, but that location would be contrary to the imagery of darkness.

The ancient Greeks had a precise place – better said, many precise places – where the gates of hell presumably stood, such as Laconia, at the foot of the Tanaro, Sicily, or Libya's desert. The Romans placed them in Campania, on Lake Averno and the Christians thought those doors could be in many places in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, and even Spain. It is unavoidable to recall the story of Sir Owen's travels who, as a knight of Catholic Ireland at the service of Stephen of England, explains how he entered Saint Patrick's Purgatory at Lough Derg, in County Donegal. In addition, in the texts of Jacques de Vitry, Hugue of Saltrey, or William Stanton, we can read how their prayers opened the doors of hell so that the parishioners could contemplate the hardships of purgatory and hell and thus convert to catholic faith¹³.

The Angel of Light ends up, in a total inversion of its primary nature, being the Angel of Darkness, the Lord of the Shadows. His life is pure conflict, constant confrontation with the power of God and

human forces. Everything is the other way around in the world of the devils: white is the color of angels, black and red¹⁴ for the devils; we traditionally talk, and so do the Sacred Books, about the right hand of the Almighty while the left hand is the relevant hand for the devils, it is the left side of things and beings that which belongs to them; angels live in the light, devils in the shadows; angels up, devils, down; among the angels, order, among the devils, confusion; between angels love and goodness, and between devils hate and envy (Risco 2003, 61-62).

There is a whole range of well-established coordinates, norms, and colors that are perfectly fixed, gestures, forms, attitudes, and positions, an entire referential universe in which medieval artists only had to lend their hand to make the demonic reality visibly available, in all its strength and mystery, to the eyes of men. The devil ends up being a special, separate being who is neither a beast nor a man and, still less so, God. Nevertheless, such a being uses beasts, enslaves men, and dares to compare himself with God. According to Christian dogma, he is an angel who leads a legion of angels but is a fallen angel himself, distorted and cursed (Papini 1954, 17). Let's have a look at the form of this de-formed being....

2. A 'clair-obscur' epiphany

Only the righteous have the right to contemplate the face of God. No mortal has been able to see, with mortal eyes, the face of the God of life. This face is pure light. Not even Moses, when picking up the Tablets of the Law, had the privilege of seeing it. To see God face to face, one needs to be dead and chosen for the matter. In contrast, the face of evil and its

¹³ *Taymouth Hours*, s. XIV, The British Library, Yates Thompson MS 13, f. 142r.

¹⁴ Saint Dominic of Guzmán preaching while a black cat climbs a rope to hang ... in Vicent de Beauvais *Le Miroir Historial*, The Hage, KB 72, A 24, f. 313v.

nuances are visible, as if the devil's power depended on its manifestation or as if his arrogance kept him from remaining hidden from human eyes. The devil becomes visible in many complementary areas. By combining these areas, one can obtain the most authentic and complete image of him. These areas include the powers he is endowed with and the forms he takes. Indeed, the Opponent has many powers available, which he uses to cause a rough and long-lasting battle. He responds to numerous names that delineate the different nuances of his condition. He is also portrayed assuming various forms, thus showing the ever-changing plasticity of a being for whom metamorphosis is one of the boldest tricks.

The power of evil

"Evil is directly experienced and directly intuited" (Russell 1988, 1). The power of Satan is unquestionable. He possesses a great leadership capacity and induces, invites, and forces willingness until he makes men sin. His followers and the souls he embellishes obey him. While God's power is centralized in heaven, the devil rules over the world, and the kernel of its power lies in hell. While faith recognizes divine omnipotence, it does not deny diabolic jurisdiction in hell. The Empire of the Devil comprises a territory, a culture, a jurisdiction, and a hierarchy. All of them harmoniously ensembled, composing a perfect *pseudomonarchia daemonum*. To obtain citizenship in this empire, one needs only to give in to temptation¹⁵, to turn one's sight away from the light of the love of God. To become a member of such a state, one needs only to pay the price of sin.

The Devil makes himself present in the world in every instant, in each deviated action, in each soft spot, and shows its majesty using deception. He acquires wills that surrender to pleasures and wealth. The latter are substitutes of simple and pure love, disguised and hidden underneath the garments of welfare and intellectual and sentimental comfort. The first to seek reliance under Satan's power are his angels-minions. The demons dominated by the Devil, in the very act of their voluntary surrender to him, become mutilated, perverted, devoured, deprived of grace; its nature is worn out to the point of being incapable of love; its condition becomes that of impiety, of rebellion, and they become beings who are incapable of repentance and virtue.

The matter of the conversion of the Fallen Angel has yielded extensive theological discussions: is it possible for the devil to repent and go back to God's arms? Taking the view of Christian orthodoxy, the answer is simple: no. To be forgiven, one needs the explicit forgiveness of God but also the personal act of repentance. Satanic worshipers and Satan himself fail to fulfill the latter. Angels of evil are beings without grace who have voluntarily chosen to give up their nature and for whom the constant desire of evil rules out the possibility of receiving any goodness, whichever the form. Attuned to the appearances of evil and grafted into the merits of the powers that the devil offers them, they forgo Good.

Demons still possess extraordinary abilities even under a perverted and corrupted angelical nature. They have absolute freedom of mobility since they are purely spiritual –even if they choose the evil path, such a condition is unavoidable–. Their motor virtue stands out for its lightness. It allows them to move instantly around the globe, thus appearing ubiquitous and sometimes performing multilocation phenomena reported in the testimonies of the mystics and some individuals who live a delicate spiritual life.

Moreover, demons have an extraordinary ability to take multiple and diverse forms. They metamorphose their appearance into animal¹⁶, human and hybrid forms, and they coat their spirit with matter in order to affect the depths of the soul of men. Their spiritual nature does not prevent them from contacting the material universe. Since ancient times and until today, the Devil has chosen and seized bodies and places for his manifestation. The Scripture extensively elaborates on this issue. Indeed, Jesus himself confronted devils which were inhabiting some men. He casted them away thanks to the power of the Father. Jesus talks with them, confronts them and ultimately defeats them.

Satanic possessions are a fact recognized by the Church. Middle Ages provide uncountable examples of this battle against the Devil which transcends theology and ends up being captured by the attentive sight of artists. Artists broadcast the battle on capitals, stained glass windows, and scrolls. The carnal contact between the spirits of evil and human beings reaches even the most intimate level. In some of the pages above, we could see the refinement with which Adso de Montier-en-Der described the conception of the Antichrist. The role that incubus and succubus play as a manifestation of the relationship between men's bodies and demons' spirits is commonplace in art and medieval thought.

Additionally, seduction is yet another skill where the Opponent is especially virtuous and according to which he presents himself as extraordinarily powerful. Temptation is the most sophisticated instrument used by the followers of evil.

It attempts to cut the thin and weak thread that keeps us linked to the will of God. That link with the divine is thin because it does not want to interfere with our freedom of thought and action. The link is also weak because it reflects our will's condition. While in the hands of God, God liberates our own hands so that we can follow our own will. The devil is well aware of such a gift from God and also knows how to corrupt it, to contaminate it little by little until it forcefully disappears. Falling into temptation is ultimately an act of freedom avoidance; it implies gifting our freedom to the malefic plans of the devil.

Evil is engaged in constant action, and it does not rest nor sleep. It can increase its ability to seduce under resources that go well beyond our own awareness: it can take over a man's soul without him effectively consenting. To see this, one does not need big phenomena or grandiose shows: the best seduction of the devil is that which happens in a simple, quiet way, without thundering or shrillness. Evilness can

¹⁵ Guiard des Moulins, *Bible Historiale Complétée*, The Hague, KB 71, A 24, f. 23, c. 1320-1340.

¹⁶ *Beato de Liébana*, Santo Domingo de Silos, c. 1091-1109, The British Library, Add. MS 11695, f. 2r.

devour our body and our soul barely without notice. It may even end up being impossible to get rid of it. Money, fame, pride, disbelief... These are all pathways of simple yet potentially devastating deterioration of the thin and weak cord that connects us to goodness.



Psalter, c. 1200-1225,
The British Library, Arundel MS 157, f. 5v-6r.

The latter abilities, and many others which are not exposed here, are reflected in medieval iconography (García Mahiques 2019, vol 5). The devil's extraordinary power makes him an authentic enemy, a traitor, a being that agitates and distracts the soul of men¹⁷. Saint Bernard complained in sorrow upon the realization that the cloisters, consecrated to God, were full of imagery that distracted and seduced monks' attention from the peaceful contemplation of the scriptures. It could almost look like medieval artists were the cunning and skillful hands of the Evil One. Indeed, some iconoclasts associated the multiform and expressive capacity of Romanesque and Gothic sculptors and painters with a direct action to disturb the hearts of men. Nevertheless, medieval aesthetics took the path of instruction and demonstration as a suitable manner to illuminate the most profound areas of the soul. To teach and delight with the Scriptures put in images was a big challenge in which the pedagogy of faith was willing to bring together the angels of heaven and the beasts of hell.



Capital of Sainte-Foy de Conques in Aveyron, XIth century.

The figure of evil

We always look for the form behind the concept. We chase for an image as if we could identify the Enemy by doing so. Even under a terrifying image, at least we can objectify our fears. As if the battle was easier like that. The battle is radical, between life and death, yet not life and death in the abstract: a battle between our own life and our own death. "The Devil is the personification of the principle of evil" (Russell 1981, 23).

Throughout the Middle Ages, one can find uncountable stories of demonic apparitions which hunt and harass not only people within the cloisters and

¹⁷ *Decretals of Gregory IX with gloss of Bernard of Parma* (the 'Smithfield Decretals'), c. 1300-1340, The British Library, Royal MS 10 E IV, f. 221r.

monasteries but also men of any class and condition. The main issue lies in the fact that demons and the devil himself are beings of spiritual nature and thus lack a sensibly defined form. That may be the reason why medieval artists created a manifold and varied imagery. They provided an answer to the enormous virtuality that theologians recognized in these beings, who, without losing their spiritual condition, like to manifest themselves in the eyes of men.

All the previously discussed names are characterized with precision and have a series of physical features identifiable within the satanic imagery. Given that among the powers of Satan and his followers we recognize the possibility of assuming any form, it seems natural that among all the available forms, the ones preferred for its representation are those that present demons as beasts and monsters, as hybrid animals of terrifying appearance. Under these forms, their "incarnation" reflects their ugliness and the villainess of evil.

From Eastern traditions to Christian aesthetics, all these beings intend to convey the image of corruption and horror, rebellion and impiety, blasphemy and darkness. "Blackness and darkness are almost always associated with evil, in opposition to the whiteness and light associated with good" (Russell 1988, 10). From Tiamat, as an image of destructive chaos, to the coiled and enraged Dragon of the Apocalypse, all the imagery of the beasts of evil reveals a daunting expressiveness. It translates a radical and invisible evil into a visible form. The gestures and attributes that plastically define the perception of evil act like material support for this satanic characterization.



Speculum Humanae Salvationis, Alsace, c. 1400, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Latin 9585, f. 46v.

Beyond mere observation, intellectual reflection, or positive objectification of beliefs, some representation elements are held constant across many religious frameworks and appear multiple times in different places and creeds. There is a constant in representation¹⁸ that leads to a sort of universalization of the sensible forms that evil takes. The horns are one of those elements: they generally express power, yet they also reflect a structural predisposition towards evil. The horns of demons and the devil are a cue to their evil spirit. They are a signal of the deviation of their spiritual nature. The claws are also another fundamental feature: malefic beings are endowed with claws to make clear that they destroy that which they touch. They trap and hurt by mere contact. For some hybrid beings representing the devil, the extremities end up in claws and induce a feeling of violence. Presumably, these claws come from the icons of harpies, yet from the perspective of Christian aesthetics, the devils' claws are nothing but the antithesis of the arms of God.

Just as horns and claws are animal attributes, a demon's face is also bestial (García Mahiques 2019, vol. 6). Wild eyes without orbit, rough features, a bitter gesture, large ears, half-open jaws as if ready to gobble up whatever moves, or otherwise a bird of prey's beak, strong enough to destroy carrion. Their look is usually tenacious, direct, and at the same time burlesque and intimidating. The most exotic and ferocious animals have lent their face to the devil, from the roaring lion to the haughty basilisk, from the distant and proud griffin to the serpent dragged from paradise, from the grumpy boar to the most voracious pig.

In medieval art, we may find a striking gesture in the devil's characterization: he mocks his victims by sticking his tongue out. The latter is an image of despicable mockery¹⁹, and ridicule, which conveys a feeling of scandal close to that generated by heresy. The devil sticks his tongue out at us from the capitals²⁰ with the same impunity as the executioners laughed at the emaciated face of the Nazarene. Opposite to the sober and serene countenance of Christ or the apostles, or even of kings and noblemen, the demons make faces to try to get our attention, seize our gaze, and thus penetrate our interior.

There is still another remarkable feature that defines the devil's body. The devil's body is usually hairy, hirsute as if that of a wild being. In Christian art, hair symbolizes the presence of evil (it serves as a distinction device between good angels and demons)²¹. Also, in the devil's case, the hair takes the form of flames resembling fire on top of the head. This flaming mane is to the devil as the tonsure is to the monk. The messy and flaming hair is yet another image of its rebellious nature and evilness. His hairy appearance resembles that of a monkey, that of a mocking and twisted ape. Further, the devil usually presents a tail. Following the analysis of the lion

¹⁸ Cf. James le Palmer, *Omne Bonum*, c. 1360-1375, The British Library, Royal MS 6 E VI/1, f. 90v.

¹⁹ Vicent de Beauvais, *Le Miroir Historial*, c. 1332-1335, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5080, f. 10v.

²⁰ *Antithesis Christi et Antichristi*, Jency Codex, c. 1490, National Museum Library, Prague, IV B 24, 71v.

²¹ *Bestiarius*, s. XIV, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, Gl. Kgl. Saml. 1633 4^o, 42v.

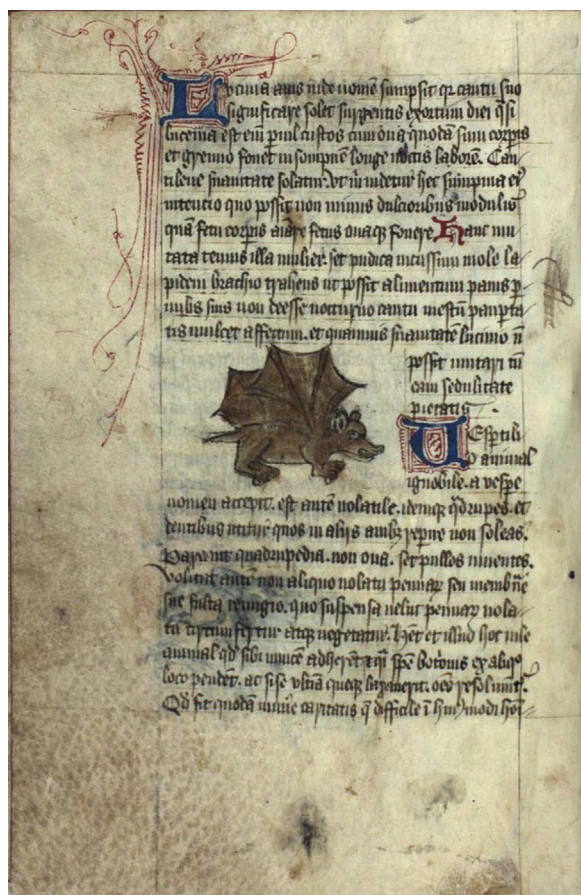
on the Bestiary, the tail serves to clear the steps taken, and it is used to make trails disappear. In this way, the devil misleads and deceives its enemies, which can be later on mortally surprised.

Additionally, hooves²² are also a key attribute. The lower limbs show us a cloven hoof, as in the usual characterization of fauns and satyrs, which derive from the representation of Pan. Hooves are an image of lust, of filthy nature. They symbolize irrepressible desire but also contradiction, duplicity, and confrontation. One can think of goats and billy-goats, rough and wild beings that only approach others to fight and annoy, beings that like living on the heights to better check on their victims. The billy-goat is the one that presides over the coven, and because of this, it becomes clear that everything that will happen is brutal, uncontrolled, chaotic, and rebellious. Opposite to him, we may find the Lamb, a symbol of fidelity, generosity, piety, sacrifice, and the mystic image of God's redemption.

On many occasions, demons also present wings²³. This is reminiscent of their angelical origin and it is an expression of their preternatural powers. Wings elevate them into spirits that move freely and without bounds around the earth. Although, given that they are spirits of darkness, they may adopt the shape of the bat, an animal that is forever linked to the night. Since bats live in caves and dark places, bats' wings are the most common wings used in satanic iconography.

Bats²⁴ do not need their eyes to direct their flying, and their appearance is that of filthy beings, half-birds, half-rats. The Bestiary tells us that they are disgraceful animals that use the darkness of the evening – given this, its denomination *vespertilio* – to fly in search of their bloody food. At the end of its *Inferno* and in its last chant, Dante tells us that the devil's wings *non avean penne, ma di vipistrello / era lor modo* (vv. 49-50). Lucifer's wings, as addressed in the Italian poets' verses, allow us to distinguish the Fallen Angel from the rest of heaven's angels, given the contrast between the feathered wings of the creatures of good versus the membranous wings of the Prince of Evil²⁵.

As has become clear, many different animal creatures, real or fictitious, serve as 'matter' for the diabolic 'spirit'. We shall emphasize another fundamental aspect, complementary to the symbolical aspect of the form, namely: color. We may build on the following axiom: much like the animal symbology is ambivalent since one animal can represent both God and the Devil, color also exhibits a double meaning, divine and infernal (Portal 1999). The 'basic' colors of the devil are red (Pastoureau 2016, 98-101) and, above all, black (Pastoureau 2009, 51-56).



Bestiarius, s. XIV, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, Gl. Kgl. Saml. 1633 4°, 42v.



Book of Hours, c. 1440, The Morgan Library, MS M 917/945, f. 97r.

²² Giotto in one of his frescoes presents us the demons with bat wings, perhaps inspired in Dante's Purgatory (XI, 95).

²³ *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Alsace, c. 1400, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Latin 9585, f. 46v.

²⁴ *Psalter*, c. 1200-1225, The British Library, Arundel MS 157, ff. 5v-6r.

²⁵ *Book of Hours*, c. 1440, The Morgan Library, MS M 917/945, f. 97r.

Black²⁶ is the color of the negation of being, of falsehood, error, and nullity. "Why is the Devil black? His blackness contrasted with the beautiful white of angels. The blackness represents evil and pollution. Satan seated on his throne in Hell is always black. When he falls from the sky, he is usually black" (Link 1995, 52). If God is light, whiteness, Satan must be black because its intention is always to be the other, the opposite, the contrary. In medieval Christian aesthetics, white represents the absolute truth, identified with God. Black is the denial of that truth. Even further, it is deception. As the book of *Genesis* illustrates, such opposition is documented since the very first moment. Black is the color of the spirit that worships darkness, the emblem of impiety, the light of chaos. Black is the color of death, the texture of the abyss. When the pain is infinite, it is a black pain; when the soul is distressed and withered, it is black. Black sails dressed the ships of the Greeks when defeat had mutilated and annihilated their white sails. Pain, despair, denial, insult, temptation, and deception are black as the devil's heart...

Egyptian and Nubian gods were black. Some Christian apocrypha from the 2nd to 5th centuries portray the devil as a black Ethiopian. Ethiopia was considered a dark and remote region that sheltered the beasts which inhabited hell. Anubis was a hybrid between a man and a jackal, both black. As applied to demons, blackness transmits an image of filthiness, although moral rather than physical. It is the direct correlate of that which is rotten and contaminated, in contrast to the purity of the whiteness of angels and God himself, who is pure light.

The red color represents the rebellion against God, further, the temptation to Christ himself²⁷. Given its reddish manifestation, we know that Lucifer wants to be God. The archangel's words 'who is like God' reveal that Satan stands up to God, wants to take its place, its rank and dignity, and thus dresses in red. Red is the color of the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life. Therefore, it is the color of the very Spirit of God. The devil wears red to deceive and show off as a heavenly being (Pastoureau 2001). Red is also the color of heat, light, love, divine wisdom, and fertility.

In eastern traditions like Syria, Babylon, and India, as well as Egypt or Greece, red is the color of revival and sacrifice but also of eternal fire²⁸. According to some stories within these traditions, fire was responsible for creating the world, and it follows that it should also be accountable for destroying it. In the beginning, and from both a cosmic and universal and a personal and individual point of view, red was a color symbolizing purification and deep catharsis. Yahveh would manifest himself from within the flames. This is, fire was like an attention call, a path that led to the divine oracle. That is why the devil dresses in red, to insert his word of death on a symbol of life.

The natural significance of the red color includes sanctification and spiritualization. Yet once touched by the Opponent, it becomes a symbol of sin and

corruption, death, and lust. What had once been the radiance of divine sovereignty then becomes a witness of illicit and deceitful power. The devil presents himself in red, as if a fake sage, a fake governor, a fake prophet, or a fake God²⁹. Also, the Middle Ages associated red with funeral rites. By examining some of the miniatures of the *Salisbury Breviary*, preserved in Paris' Bibliotheque Royale, one can appreciate coffins covered by red cloaks³⁰.

Red is the color of crime and punishment, blood and combat. It is the color of Mars, the color of the warlike Spartan's shroud. It is also the color of excessive passions and of desire. It is the color of dignity, as it is worn by priests and kings, patricians and noblemen, senators and emperors. Still, precisely because of that, it is also the color of ambition, pride, lust, and rage... Black and red³¹, the Devil, deception, and horror...

3. Conclusions: Luminous beings that turn into shadows

From the 5th century until the end of the Middle Ages, the devil's role in sermons, stained glass windows, capitals, frescoes, or manuscripts is none other than explaining and reinforcing faith. For this purpose, all the aesthetic resources available to art, philosophy, and theology were unleashed. Grotesque beasts, dragons, repulsive creatures, strange beings, like Fra Angelico's³² Black Satan, the Maremagnum of Bruegel's *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, Trier's *Apocalypse* or Lorenzo Lotto's *Michael and Lucifer*, and let us not forget the bestiaries sculpted in the Romanesque or the sacred spaces of the Byzantine icons. "The Devil's function in Christian theology was to provide an explanation of evil which avoided laying responsibility upon the good Lord" (Russell 1981, 219).

Thus, the result is an infinite catalog that overcomes the invisibility of spirits and puts a face and a body on the Evil One. I want to end this voyage across the imagery of the beasts of hell by highlighting two plastic moments in the representation of the devil. These two moments may serve as a compass to guide the way across the space and time that connects the original place, the Garden of Eden, with the end of the Middle Ages. Respectively, each moment can be embodied in a snake and a satyr, an infernal monster.

Within the Christian tradition, the first scene where we can see the devil takes place in paradise. The appearance with which he is represented is that of a snake, symbolizing the most sophisticated deceit. "The serpent³³ was the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made. The serpent asked the woman, «Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?»». The woman answered the serpent: «We may eat of the fruit of the

²⁹ *Last Judgement*, c. 1431.

³⁰ *Beato de Liébana*, Santo Domingo de Silos, c. 1091-1109, The British Library, Add. MS 11695, f. 40r.

³¹ *Heures*, Rohan-Montauban, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, s. XV, Latin 9471, f. 13v.

³² *Bréviaire de Louis de Guyenne*, c. 1414, Bibliothèque Municipale, Châteauroux, MS 2, f. 1v.

³³ Matfre Ermengaud, *Breviari d'Amor*, The British Library, s. XIV, Royal MS 19 C. I. f. 29v.

²⁶ *The Massacre of the Witnesses by the Beast*, c. 1255, The J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig III 1 (83.MC.72), f. 17r.

²⁷ The manuscript c. 1430-1440, Bibliothèque National de France, Latin 17294, f. 22r.

²⁸ *The Pilgrimage of the Soul*, c. 1413, The British Library, Egerton 615, f. 34r.

trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die'. But the serpent said to the woman: «You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad» (Gen: 3, 1-5).



Bestiarius, s. XIV, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, Gl. Kgl. Saml. 1633 4°, 11r.

There is only one truth among the words uttered by the snake: by eating from the prohibited fruit, Adam and Eve could get to know good and evil. However, above all, they would suffer due to the latter. The perfidious serpent lies and dares to put deception in God's mouth. This event is not left unpunished. The first trial, a definitive trial against lies and evil, against the rebel disguised as a serpent, takes place. «Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; On your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life» (Gen: 3, 14). The verdict is ruthless: Evil is despised for all eternity. The serpent will crawl for life. It will slither forever through the dust. It will be stepped on and repudiated as long as it lives.

«The snake (*serpens*) takes its name because it creeps (*serpere*) by secret approaches; it crawls not with open steps but by tiny thrusts of its scales. But those animals that support themselves on four feet, like the lizard and the newt, are not snakes, but are called reptiles (reptile). Snakes are also reptiles, because they crawl (*repere*) on their stomach and breast. Of these animals there are as many poisons as there are kinds, as many varieties of danger as there are of appearance, and as many causes

of pain as there are colors» (Isidore 2006, XII, 4, 3).

Moreover, Saint Isidore notes that the serpent is a twisted, angular being that never goes straight. He also mentions that it is a being of the shadows; thus, it may be referred to as *colere umbras*, since it likes darkness. The serpent is also tremendously elusive (*lubricus*), and as such, it escapes from our hands. Finally, the Spanish encyclopedist also points out its coldness and its poisonous character.

Thus, the serpent represents venom, corruption, and also inner destruction. The latter because, as the *Bestiary* remarks, its poison is only effective when it comes to contact with blood. Further, the serpent is associated with death. Isidore highlights this link when he closes one of his chapters by saying:

«Pythagoras says that a snake is created from the spinal cord of a dead person. Ovid mentions this in his *Metamorphoses* when he says (15.389):

There are those who believe the human spinal cord is changed to a snake when the spine, in the sealed sepulcher, has rotted.

This, if it is believed, occurs with some justice, in that as a human's death comes about from a snake, so a snake comes about from a human's death» (Isidore 2006, XII, 4, 48).

There is an evident interest in combining knowledge and beliefs, natural questions and moral principles. Thus, the world view of the medieval man is a combination of a naturalist interest and a religious consciousness, a combination of reason and faith. The classics are -for Saint Isidore, Pythagoras, Ovid...- the authority that sets up the criteria. Their criteria endorse, if not the scientific and empirical observation of the natural world, the whole framework of beliefs in the architecture of a supernatural world. It may seem irrational to neglect experience or put faith in a higher position. Nevertheless, we often accept and leave many hypotheses from physics, astrophysics, or claims of advanced math as unquestioned. Before being a good man of faith, the medieval man is, above all, a man of faith aspiring to be a man of good faith.

The evil action of the serpent comes to an end with the expulsion from paradise. The Garden of Eden is emptied from human beings, and its doors are guarded by the «cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.» (Gen: 3, 24). The preventive measures against the Evil One are thus established. The power of the spirit of God, represented by the image of his angels, and the strength against temptation and deceit, represented by the vibrating sword. The devil does not directly attack the tree of life. It uses the weakness and the silliness of men to confront God. It may seem that the devil loses this first battle, given that God despises and degrades him. Nevertheless, the devil has had some success: he has taken over the human being, he has twisted him with the result of misplacing his will and thus the plans of God. What other mission can the devil have than to trick God by gobbling up the will of man? And like this, he reveals his perverted majesty (Muchembled 2000).



*Last Judgement, Giotto di Bondone
Scrovegni Chapel, 1306*

The devil starts as an angel and ends up as a monster, insatiable and terrible. Even so, it is still a spirit capable of performing wonders, a prodigious being.

"Varro defines portents as beings that seem to have been born contrary to nature – but they are not contrary to nature, because they are created by divine will, since the nature of everything is the will of the Creator [...]. A portent is therefore not created contrary to nature, but contrary to what is known nature" (Isidore 2006, XI, 3, 1-2).

One of the pedagogical tasks of medieval aesthetics is to broaden the knowledge about the spiritual universe. The case of the representation of the devil is especially complex. There is no original, preestablished plastic model to build on, no pictorial model which can serve as a guide for artists. Although there are already some works in the 5th and 6th centuries which try to find an image that works. His presence is not evident until the 9th century. Hellenistic thought, religious theater, the Scriptures, and theological reflection shape him and enthrone him as Regent of Hell. From that moment on, his image is that of a half-man, a horrendous and blackish primate, smelly, naked, and, on many occasions, very fat. The typology of fatness is associated with the fact that the Devil constantly devours men, like the bluish monster that Giotto painted for the Scrovegni Chapel in Padova, which we can see on the left, the sinister left, in the underworld of the damned.

Horns denoting his power, a flaming mane that burns like hell itself, half-open jaws ready to kill, menacing claws, an extremely hairy body, a tail that entangles as only demons entangle, cloven hooves like those of the billy-goat that presides over the coven... what else could be needed to be a monster, to be represented as one? The devil's soul has become a swamp, overflowing with all the visible images that portray his evilness.

Romanesque art will imagine him as a savage, a prodigy of nature who has decided to impose his will

on that of God, trying to outwit him at every moment, trying not to be seen, crouching under the miseries of every human being. Still, he remains in line for trial for his outrages. For this reason, at the end of the Middle Ages, Giotto pins down the theological thought in his Final Judgement and closes the image of the universe perfectly. Righteous and impious souls, separated by God's verdict, angelic choirs that sing divine glory and beings devoured by a huge monster that destroys their limbs, as if showing that what it really destroys is their soul.

The expressive and terrifying Romanesque demon inspires fear in the elites of faith and tries to impose his horrible presence on ordinary Christians who spot him on a cornice, under grotesque guises in popular traditions or the theater (Mucheblend 2000, 34). The Gothic will displace the centrality of the devil and will attribute it to Christ, the incarnation of the Almighty. Nevertheless, displacing does not mean canceling. Both in the monastic world and the lay world, Lucifer continues to exercise his sovereignty and his power. He continues to act from the top of many consecrated temples, under the guise of a gargoyle, as if they were spiritual raptors who spy out the movements of his next victim.

The fear inspired by the beasts of hell and the devil himself in any of its incarnations is not a metaphor from either literary or plastic aesthetics or theology but a real feeling of a man overwhelmed by a unique, powerful, tenacious, and provocative being. The fear of hell and Satan had consequences that go beyond the personal arena and take us to the amplification of the power of the Church. In any case, medieval art was successful enough to generate an entire aesthetic linked to the Evil One and identified the satanic body with a bestial form.

The monstrous image of the devil, compiled in some books on beasts in the form of manticores, centaurs, basilisks, griffins, or dragons, becomes more and more delineated when shown under a

semi-human appearance, as is the case of the satyrs. These monsters are the precise antithesis of the Ideal being of God. Satyrs are the inversion of the original plans of the *Genesis*. They are weird creatures that have nothing to do with the excellence of the angelical beings nor with a human being shaped in the image and likeness of God. The model of the imaginary construction of the satyr is no longer teo-mimesis but satanic mimesis, in which the sacredness of the universe is broken, making of such a creature an absolute transgression.

The bestial aspect of the devil, taking the form of a satyr, makes him a creature that has undergone a mutation of nature as it is known to man. That is why the devil seems like a prodigy because it has a form that deviates from the natural course. The satyr, as depicted in the bestiary, is physically a man-animal hybrid, but theologically it is a degradation of the divine nature, to such an extent that he becomes repulsive in appearance.

It may seem immature or even ridiculous to portray the devil in the form of a monster that a child may as well have painted. Nevertheless, medieval artists want to transmit its close and constant presence to us. They are not interested in producing a clearly delimited form since what they intend to convey through art does not belong to this world but rather ideas and beliefs of another. The world of faith is depicted with the objects of this world, but its meaning is rich, and the objectivization allows readings that bring to light the most hidden and heartfelt beliefs of the spirit. "The Middle Ages seems to have thought passionately that everything can be symbol" (Sebastián 1994, 247). With the images of the devil, medieval art shows us that the Opponent is one of the most relevant passers-by walking through our soul and that it comes by daily, when we are asleep or awake, at home or on our way... always whispering in our ear as if tricking us to ignore our guardian angel. But it is true: "Evil is real and immediate" (Russell 1984, 19).

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