

**Blámenn, djöflar and Other Representations of Evil
in Old Norse Translation Literature**

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The translation works of Old Icelandic literature, especially the hagiographic, offer a wide spectrum of representations of evil, which are the result of the intermingling of indigenous tradition with the new frame of reference of Christian culture.

The introduction of Christianity in Scandinavia implies a native confrontation with a culture that in turn had integrated the Roman pantheon into the Christian dichotomy between evil and good, and relegated the pagan gods to the status of idolatry. Also the negative meaning of the Latin word *daemon* (from Greek *δαίμων*, etymologically ‘preter-human genius’), which originally designated spirits whose nature was in between the human and the divine, is due to Christianity and its attitude towards the pagan gods. In Christian texts the pagan gods are seen in the best cases as idols, ‘stocks and stones’ or they are euhemerised (Lassen 2003, 326-328), but more often they are identified with demons and evil spirits. Through the *interpretatio norræna* these same gods make their appearance in Old Norse hagiographic texts translated from Latin sources. The Nordic pantheon, with the roles and mutual relations that the gods have within it, becomes the filter through which the Roman gods in their Christian guise are re-contextualised to make them familiar to the Nordic audience. The peculiarities of the heathen Scandinavian gods are nonetheless maintained, albeit with an emphasis on the negative features in order to stress the superiority of Christianity. For instance in *Marteins saga biskups* Martin is often tempted by devils (*djöflar*) in the image of Þórr, Óðinn and Freyja, whom he characterises as *heimskr*, *deigr* and *portkona* respectively (Unger 1877, 1, 569). In this and other occurrences the descriptions of the Nordic heathen gods and even the mocking, offensive or denigrating attributes applied to them nonetheless echo and refer to their functions and characteristics in the pantheon, and can, as Lindow has pointed out (2001, 443 ff.), be a useful means by which to approach Nordic mythology. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr munkr, the devil shows up both in the guise of Óðinn (Finnur Jónsson 1932, 131-134) and in that of Þórr (173-174). The identification of Óðinn and Þórr with the devil himself, also found in several other texts, is a transposition of their prominence in the Nordic pantheon into a corresponding prominence in the Christian portrayal of the realm of evil.

Besides the gods and goddesses of the heathen pantheon, in the hagiographic sagas the apostles and holy men had to face lesser gods, idols and evil spirits in their daily striving for sanctity or during their missionary travels undertaken to spread the true faith in exotic countries. These figures, such as the demon Astaroth in *Barthólómeuss saga postula*, which I will talk about later, retain their original names in the Old Norse texts.

Unlike the heathen gods and lesser spirits, the devils as such, especially Satan, belong to Christian theology. In Old Norse prose the Christian devil makes his appearance not only in hagiographic sagas – including the texts belonging to the special

genre of the descent to Hell and visions of the other world, such as the *Niðrstigningar saga* and the *Duggals leiðsla* – but also in works of autochthonous content.

I have looked at the most significant occurrences of words that designate representations of evil, in particular those with a Latin parallel, and at some of the descriptions of demons and evil spirits in Old Norse, in order to investigate how the related concepts from Christian doctrine are integrated into the language and cultural framework of medieval Scandinavia.

The most relevant semantic and iconographic elements relating to the highest representation of evil, Satan, which are imported into Old Norse literature from Christian culture are summed up in a passage by the monastic theologian Rupert von Deutz († 1129/1130). In his treatise *De victoria verbi Dei* he underlines how the enemy of the Word of God can be known by his names, and emphasises the reciprocity of these names:

Iam nunc verbi huius adversarius suis ex nominibus agnoscendus est. Dicitur in apocalipsi draco magnus, draco rufus, habens capita septem, serpens antiquus, vocaturque diabolus et sathanas. Vocabula haec reciprocata sunt. Neque enim prius causa fuit illa, propter quam dicitur draco, quam illa, cuius intuitu dicitur serpens antiquus, neque prius accidit, cur vocaretur diabolus, quam fieret ipse sathanas, id est adversarius. Immo prius exstitit sive accidit, cur vocaretur sathanas, deinde cur diabolus, deinde cur serpens antiquus, deinde cur draco tot capitum, draco magnus, draco rufus. Denique ex eo sathanas dicitur et est, ex quo adversari coepit verbo dei et inter angelos seditionem fecit, turbator pacis, rebellisque luminis, et deinde sive proinde accepit sententiam, iuxta quam dicitur diabolus, id est deorsum fluens. (Haacke 1970, 11)

The many names of Satan reflect important facets of this figure, whose nature varies through the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament the Hebraic word *satan* is used in the meaning of 'adversary' (2 Rg 19, 22; 3 Rg 11, 14) or as 'provocateur' (Jb 1, 6). *Diabolus* indicates an 'accuser' in Psalms 109, 6. It is in the New Testament that we find Satan as a proper name for the highest personification of evil. The etymological meaning of Satan 'adversary, enemy' is found in Old Norse *ffándi* 'enemy', a semantic loan from Anglo-Saxon *fēond*, which has the same connotation as the Latin *inimicus* in a Christian frame of reference. The word *ffándi* translates a variety of Latin terms referring to the Christian devil, from the generic to the more specific: *hostis*, *inimicus*, *daemon*, *diabolus*, *satanas*, *inferus*. It is used in the definite form in the meaning of 'Satan, the devil'. There is no detailed description of a *ffándi* – only a few hints at characteristic traits, such as the expressions *ljóv sem ffándinn* (*Þorsteins saga Víkingarsonar*, Rafn 1829, 2, 390), *svartr sem ffándi* (*Sigurðar saga þøgla*, Loth 1963, 242). The Latin syntagma *antiquus hostis* is reproduced as *hinn forni ffándi*. The plural *ffándr* is found of devils in general, and in *Niðrstigningar saga* as a personification of the lat. *Inferus* (Unger 1877, 2, 11).

A similar semantic content is found in *úvinr* and *andskoti*, cf. Latin *adversarium*, which in fact occur as variant readings for each other in some texts. In bishop Árni's ecclesiastical law, where the importance of baptism is stressed *till styrks ok framgöngu móti andskotanum*, both *ffándanum* and *úvininum* are found as variants

in the same context (Storm 1890, 22). The proper meaning of *andskoti* is described by CIV as 'one who "shoots from the opposite ranks"', but in most occurrences the term is used in the definite form for Satan. The related Latin parallels are *adversarium*, *Satanas*, *hostis*, *diabolus*. In the Old Norse *Elucidarius* the Latin etymology of the name of the first angel, Sathael, *id est Deo contrarius*, is translated with *þat es goþs andscote* (Firchow & Grimstad 1989, 29). *Andskoti* is often found in connection with an adjective, a common expression being *hinn forni andskoti* as a counterpart of the Latin syntagma *antiquus hostis*, along with *hinn forni fjándi*, mentioned above. An analogous expression is *andskoti mannkyns*, which translates the Latin *inimicus humanis generis*. These expressions are also used independently of a Latin source.

While the Greek *Σαταν̄*, *Σατανᾶς* derives from the Hebraic word for 'enemy, opponent, adversary', the Hebraic is in turn connected to the Arabic *sciātana* 'to persecute'. Actually one of the Latin words used of Satan is *persecutor*, but I found only one Old Norse occurrence in which *persecutor* is translated with *andskoti*, and it is used in the original sense of 'persecutor', with reference to the apostle Paul's life before his conversion (*Alkuin*, Widding 1960, 113).

The proper Old Norse word for 'enemy' is *úvinr*, a word that both in sense and structure corresponds exactly to the Latin *inimicus*, which actually is the most common correspondence in the texts where a Latin parallel is available. Other common Latin equivalents are *hostis*, *adversarius*, while *Satan* and *daemon* are quite uncommon. When referring to Satan, *úvinr* is used in the definite form or followed by the specification (*alls*) *mannkyns*, corresponding to the Latin *humanis generis*. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* it is found alternating with *troll* (Ólafur Halldórsson 1961, 138), while the *Annales* register the birth of an *úvinr* referring to a monstrous human being, actually what seems to be Siamese twins. Here the word *úvinr* is apparently used in the sense of a monster, a creature extraneous to what is considered normality and therefore seen as fiendish, an expression of evil (Storm 1888, 303b).

In Snorri's *Edda*, *úvinr*, *andskoti* and *fjándi* are three of the first four synonyms mentioned in a series of *viðkenningar* (Finnur Jónsson 1931, 189). The fourth, occupying the second place in the sequence, is *dolgr*, while the following ones are poetic or etymologically distant from the meaning of *úvinr*. In Old Norse prose *dolgr* basically covers two semantic fields: 1) enemy, opponent; 2) ugly creature, monster, ogre, devil (ONP). It is connected to *dylgja*, used in the plural with the meaning 'enmity, conflict'. *Dolgr* does not seem to occur in hagiographic texts. Within the second meaning, there are examples of the word being used as a synonym for *jctunn*, and a few significant occurrences of the word meaning 'a fiendish, demonic figure'. In *Flyjótsdóla saga* it is used of the pagan gods Freyr and Þórr (Kålund 1883, 109). In *Karlamagnúss saga*, *dolgr* is used in a passage from the *Speculum Historiale* also found in *Mikjál's saga*, which has the variant reading *djofull* (Unger 1860, 525; Unger 1877, 1, 692).

While *fjándi*, *andskoti* and *úvinr* belong to a more abstract concept of the devil as an incorporeal being, and there are no particularised descriptions of them, an interesting description of a *dolgr* is found in *Kláruss saga*, which according to the prologue is based on a now-lost Latin poem. Here, Princess Serena awakes on the morning after her marriage to the following sight:

Til hægri handar i sænginni ser hon liggja einn dolg ægi litinn ok helldr vsyniligan; hann var svartr sem rafn, nef hans var langt ok bivgt; at öllv var hann afskapligr. Hann horfir vpp i lopt ok hrytr sem einn dverghvndr [...] hin illi hundr vaknar nu, ok litr þegar til hennar med elldlighthum augum (Cederschiöld 1879, 17b)

In this description we find some recurrent, characteristic demonic traits: the colour, black as a raven; the long and hooked nose; the resemblance to a dog; the glowing eyes.

Finally, in *Þorsteins þátr skelks* the word *dolgr* occurs once as a synonym for *púki* (Guðbrandur Vigfússon & Unger 1860-8, 1, 416), which throughout the episode otherwise alternates with *draugr* 'ghost', except for a single occurrence of the loanword from Middle Low German *skelmir*. The identification of the ghost of a dead man with a *púki* shows a Christian attitude in the short tale, which relates the meeting between Þorsteinn and a little devil (*púki*), or rather a ghost, who introduces himself as Þorkell hinn þunni. He comes directly from hell and gives an account of life there. Here is also the only occurrence of the word *drysil djöfull* 'petty devil'.

Þorsteins þátr skelks actually includes one of the few occurrences of the word *púki* in the meaning of a 'devil with the notion of "a wee devil, an imp"' (CIV). In most occurrences *púki*, a loan word from the Anglo-Saxon *pūca* (Fischer 1909, 23, possibly related to the Irish *pūca* 'fairy', Marstrander 1915, 88), is used in the singular definite form of the devil himself. Where a Latin source is available, the corresponding word is *daemon* or *diabolus*. In Archbishop Jón's ecclesiastical law the expression *at hafna fjándanum* has the variant reading *púkanum* in two manuscripts (Keyser and Munch 1848, 366). The examples from hagiographic texts are relatively few, most of them from *Mariu saga*, where we find a *púki* appearing at least twice in the shape of an ape, in full accordance with the Latin sources. In one episode a sub-deacon sees a *púki* i like einnar liotligrar ok hrædiligrar apynju (Unger 1871, 1142-3, cf. *daemonem in specie simiæ horrida et deformi*, *Speculum Historiale* VII, 118). The devil has all the scribal instruments necessary to write down what is being said in church, covering the function of a punishing moral watchman, which is also found elsewhere in popular tradition (Heggum 1958, 127-8). In the other example the word *púki* translates the Latin *daemon*, while when the ape is recognised as the devil the word used in the Latin is *diabolus*, corresponding to *fjándi* and *djöfull* in the Old Norse (Unger 1871, 1163).

Skelmir is found in the meaning of 'devil' in a couple of other examples besides the *Þorsteins þátr skelks*. In *Guðmundar saga biskups* it is told that a *skelmir* stood outside the churchyard during the burial of a man and did not dare approach because the deceased had received the bishop's blessing (Guðbrandur Vigfússon et al. 1878, 81). In *Mariu saga* the word is used in another version of the story of the sub-deacon Anselmus who sees a devil in the semblance of an ape (Unger 1871, 176; 470).

The specific word for 'devil' is the loanword *djöfull*, a form that ultimately derives from the Latin *diabolus* (from the Greek *διάβολος* 'calumniator, defamer'). It is to be found as a translation of a variety of Latin terms, the most frequent being: *daemon*, *daemonium*, *diabolus*, *malignus spiritus*, *diabolicus spiritus*. The heathen gods are often presented as devils, *djöflar*, as in the apparitions in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr munkr, mentioned above. But the word *djöfull* is also found as synonym for the supernatural beings of Nordic tradition. In the chapter following the apparition of Þórr,

called the *Trolla þattr*, two of Óláfr's men are witnesses to a troll meeting: in a single occurrence in version S *djǫfull* is used as a variant for *troll* (Finnur Jónsson 1932, 176).

In the archives of ONP there are a number of compounds of which *djǫfull* is the second element: *drambanardjǫfull*, translates *superbiae demon* in the *Vitae Patrum* (Unger 1877, 2, 385); *drysilidjǫfull* is the 'petty devil' in *Þorsteins þáttur skelks* mentioned above (Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Unger 1860-8, 1, 417), designated later in the same text as a *ffándi jafnlitill*; *hǫfuðdjǫfull* and *rikisdjǫfull* in the plural translate the Lat. *inferus* in *Níðrstigningar saga* (Unger 1877, 2, 5); moreover, *hǫfuðdjǫfull* is an extra specification of Lucifer in *Duggals leiðsla* (Cahill 1983, 73), where *hǫfuðúvinr* and *hǫfuðffándi* are also found (75, 80); *manndjǫfull* is a term assigned in *Vatnsdóla saga* (Finnur Jónsson 1934, 50) to Hrolleifr, also designated as *mannffándi* (46, 51), that is a 'devil incarnate'; *miðdegisdjǫfull* occurs in version D of *Guðmundar saga biskups* (Guðbrandur Vigfússon et al. 1878, 78) referring to Selkolla, an evil spirit in the shape of a woman, with a head like that of a seal; *smádjǫfull* is used in *Sturlunga saga* (Kálund 1906, 529). In most of these compounds, the presence of a specifying first element reduces the meaning of the word *djǫfull*, and the compounds actually refer to demonic figures of a lesser degree or are used as disparaging attributes for people.

A common expression for 'evil spirit' is *óhreinn andi*, but *andi* can also be preceded by other adjectives with a negative connotation, like *illr* or *illgjarn*, or by specifying substantives, as in *helvítisandi* 'spirit of hell' (*Vitae patrum*, Unger 1877, 2, 632).

Apart from the specific word *djǫfull*, which was directly imported with Christianity, and the terms related to the semantic field of *ffándi*, there are other words which in most occurrences are used for lesser devils or demonic, abhorrent figures, and which almost never overlap with designations for Satan, the devil. These are for example *blámaðr* and *skuggi*.

A quite famous portrait of such a figure, where *blámaðr* and *skuggi* actually occur as alternative variant readings, is the description of the demon hidden in the temple idol found in two different versions of *Bartholomeus saga*. Both translations aim at transposing into the Old Icelandic text the lively image in the Latin by use of rhetorical and stylistic devices which make the descriptions in the target text even more vivid, with extra elements of exoticism and frightfulness in comparison with the Latin original:

Tunc ostendit eis ingentem Aegyptium nigriorem fuligine, faciem acutam cum barba prolixa, crines usque ad pedes, oculos igneos sicut ferrum ignitum, scintillas emicans ex ore eius et ex naribus egrediebatur flamma sulphurea, pennarum adaeque habentem alas spineas sicut istrix, et erat uinctus a tergo manibus, igneis catenis strictus (Bonnet 1898, 146)

AM 652 4° (ca 1250-1300)

Þa syndi hann þeim mikinn skugga hræðiligan hrafnin svartara, næf hans var hvast ok skegg hans var sitt, har hans tok allt a fœtr niðr; elldr brann or augum hans, en gnæistar flugo or munni hans

AM 655 XII-XIII 4° (ca 1250-75)

Eptir þat geck ut or scurþgöþinu ogorlegr blamaþr biki svartari, harðlundlegr oc hvassnefiaðr, siðskeggiaðr oc svart skeggit oc illilict, harit svart oc sitt, sva at toc a tær honum, augun sem elldr væri i at sia, oc

sem af gloanda iarne, en brænnostæins loge rauk or nõsum hans; fiaðrar hans voro sva sem þynnar, en hendr hans voro bundnar a bak apr með elligum þõndum (Unger 1874, 756)	flugu gneistar or sem af vellanda iarni. Or munninum oc nausunum for ut sva sem brennusteins logi, oc honum varo vengir oc fiaðrar sem clungr oc þynnar, hendr hans varo bundnar a bak apr meþ iarnlegum þõndum (Unger 1874, 763)
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Collings (1969, 176-8) parallels this passage with a previous iconographic description of the apostle: both descriptions are examples of a rhythmic prose style, where emphasis is given through repetition and stress. As for the choice of words, *blámaðr* 'a black person' is here used in its negative and specific meaning of 'a devil, a demonic figure', often an exotic one. In most texts with a Latin source it translates *Aethiops* or *Aegyptius*, both in the neutral and specific sense, while in a single occurrence in the *Vitae Patrum* we find *helvúligr blámaðr fox tartareus inferni* (Tveitane 1968, 20).

In one episode in *Mariu saga* it seems clear that the term *blámaðr* is used for the embodiment of *fiándi* and *úvinnr*. Here the Virgin Mary drives away the devil who is chasing a painter, and – addressing him as *úvinnr* – orders him to make himself visible:

bauluadr blamadr digr ok lagr, suatr ok kollotrr geingr ylandi framra af hyrningunne. Er nu allt i senn aa einu augabragde, at fiandinn er kominn i fiotrana (Unger 1871, 564)

Still in *Mariu saga*, a nun dreams of hell as a pit where the souls of the damned are tormented by two *blamenn logandi sem elldr* (Unger 1871, 906), while in *Tveggja postula saga Simons ok Júðass* we are told that: *þa sa allr lyðr tva hræðilega blamenn hrafne svartare ganga ut or likneskionum* (Unger 1874, 634). As a last example of the semantic field covered by *blámaðr* a description from the *Vitae Patrum* can be adduced (Unger 1877, 2, 472-473):

Et ecce vidit per totam ecclesiam quasi parvulos quosdam puerulos Æthiopes tetros discurrere huc atque illuc, et velut volitando deferri	Heilagr Macharius gat þa at lita laga ok liota, grimma ok gudrækiliga blamenn, er flugu eda floktu fyrir hvern brædra um alla kirkiuna higat ok þagat
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This is also an example of the use of lexical pairs and alliteration as a device for achieving a more dramatic and dynamic style of prose than in the original, as in the excerpt from *Barthólómeuss saga*.

While the occurrence of *blámaðr* for 'a demonic figure' is documented by many examples, the use of *skuggi* in the meaning 'spectre' is quite sporadic. Apart from the description in *Barthólómeuss saga*, it is found in *Marteins saga biskups* to render the Latin *umbram sordidam, trucem*, and in a few other occurrences, often with an adjective to stress frightfulness. In *Jóns saga Hólabyskups ens helga* we read of a woman called Guðrún:

Henne syndiz þa kirkian full af draugum. ok hræðiligum skuggum. ok sottu þessar ohræins anda seonhuerfingar allar at Gudrunu kirkiukerlingu (Foote 2003, 104; 137)

The last two examples are from *Mariu saga*, where Dunstanus meets a *skuggi* on his way to church, and from an *évinýri*, where a young boy called Vilhjálmr has a vision:

willdi illgiarn andi taalma hans ferð, ok wekr vpp mikinn fiolda hunda þeira, sem hlaupa i kring vm hann geyiandi. Sucinninn ottatz nu ok [...] slo hann meðr wond, er hann hellt aa, þann rækiliga skugga, er stod aa veginum fyrir honum (Unger 1871, 718)

sér hann til beggja handa andaligan leiðtoga, til vinstri handar engil himneskan en til hægri handar hræðiligan skugga, svá at þegar óttaz hann (Gering 1882, 303-304)

This by no means exhaustive exposition of the range of terms used as representations of evil seems to show that the many Old Norse words and expressions referring to different degrees of evil can be grouped into two main semantic areas of meaning:

- 1) a variety of names for the demonic figures and the devil that are derived from Christian theology: *ffándi*, *andskoti*, *úvinr*, *djǫfull*, *púki*, some of which are appellations that seem to apply almost exclusively to Satan, the devil par excellence, such as *ffándi*, *andskoti* and *úvinr*;
- 2) a series of descriptions mostly used for other representations of evil, some of them evoking darkness: *blámaðr*, *skuggi*, *dolgr*.

Moreover, although the senses covered in some cases overlap, there is an incorporeal, ideological frame of reference and a more physical and visual one, rendered respectively with words belonging to the sphere of *úvinr*, *ffándi*, *andskoti* on the one hand, and *dolgr*, *blámaðr*, *skuggi* on the other. Words of the latter type assume an extra meaning related to the devil and evil spirits of Christianity by means of semantic loan, prevalently from Latin, such as *Aethiops* ~ *blámaðr*. A somewhat opposite phenomenon concerns the more specific *djǫfull* and *púki*, which first enter the language in connection with the adoption of Christianity and subsequently come into use in the wider sphere of indigenous prose as synonyms for supernatural beings which belong to Nordic tradition, such as *jǫtunn*, *troll* or *draugr*, just to mention a few examples. In turn, these native Old Norse terms for supernatural beings assume a function as denotation for the devils of Christian doctrine.

One of the works in which we find elements of Nordic mythology and terminology in the adaptation of the Latin source for a Scandinavian audience is *Niðrstigningar saga*, based on the *Evangelium Nicodemi*. The saga text reflects the variety of epithets used of Satan in the Latin source, but also makes use of original solutions and expansions to add drama to the narration. On his first appearance, Satan is introduced with a short sentence in the Latin text: *ecce Satan, princeps et dux mortis, dixit ad inferum* (Thilo 1832, 699). The corresponding Old Norse passage contains a description of Satan and a circumlocution to render the concept of *inferus*:

Satan iotunn helvitis hofðingi, er stundom er með .vii. hæfðom en stundom með .iii., en stundom i dreka like þess, er omorlegr er oc ogorlegr oc illegre a allar lundir, hefir ða þingat við iotna oc við diofla oc við rikistroll gørvoll, þau er i helvite voro, ok melte sva (Unger 1877, 2, 3)

Here Satan's subordinates are rendered as *jǫtnar*, *djǫflar* and *rikistroll*, partially drawing on Nordic tradition. Quite interestingly, these terms are only found in the

oldest version of the saga (AM 645 4^o, ca 1225-50) while the other versions do not have *jǫtnar* and *rikistrǫll*. Other epithets used of Satan in the saga are *hǫfðingi myrkranna* (Unger 1877, 2, 3, Lat. *princeps tartari*), *hǫfðingi dauðans* (4, 6, Lat. *princeps mortis*), *dauða jǫfurr* (6, Lat. *princeps exterminationis*, which in the AM 623 4^o version is rendered by *dauða skilfingr*), *jǫfurr helvitis* (6, Lat. *princeps Satan*). But the semantic variety of terms related to representations of evil and to the devil in particular may also be due to a language taboo which made people prefer to use circumlocutions rather than mentioning Satan by name (Battaglia 1995, 122). In *Duggals leiðsla*, in accordance with the Latin source *Visio Tnugdali*, Lucifer is only mentioned once as the highest expression of evil, with the specification *hǫfuð djǫfull* (Cahill 1983, 73). Paraphrases are preferred, including, beside some of those already mentioned above, *hǫfðingi myrkra*, translating the Latin *princeps tenebrarum*, and *hinn grimmi vargr*, a rendering of *dira bestia* (Cahill 1983, 75, 77).

These epithets lead us to consider a few more stereotyped characterisations of Satan in Christian tradition, in particular the traits that are described in the passage from Revelations 12 quoted above in the excerpt from Rupert von Deutz. As is most clearly seen in Genesis and Revelations, the devil is identified with the *serpens antiquus*, *draco magnus*, *draco rufus*, *habens capita septem*. Actually the dragon and the devil share some features of their physical appearance: wings, horns, cloven hoofs and a tale shaped like an arrow. It is interesting to see the ways in which these iconographic characteristics are transposed into Old Norse tradition, both in original and translation prose. *Flateyjarbók* reports that Saint Óláfr had to struggle both physically against other humans and spiritually against the devil, 'living up to what is written in the Gospel' (actually the quotation is from an antiphon) *estote fortes in bello (et pugnate cum antiquo serpente)*, which is explained as *veri þer styrkir i orrosto ok beriz við fornann eitrom* (Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Unger 1860-8, 3, 239).

We have already seen that in *Niðrstigningar saga*, independently of the Latin text, Satan is described as having sometimes seven, sometimes three heads, and sometimes the appearance of a dragon. In *Þiðriks saga af Bern* the protagonist comes to the aid of Sistram, who has almost been swallowed by a dragon. In the Holm perg 4 fol version of the saga the dragon is referred to as *hinn mikli andskoti*, and in the other version as *hinn mikli djǫfull* (Bertelsen 1905-1911, 1, 197). In *Erasmus saga* the holy Erasmus makes the image of Þórr collapse and disappear, and what is left is an awful dragon (Unger 1877, 1, 367). In the Latin *Passio Sancti Erasmi martyris* the god in question is Jupiter, who is referred to as *diabolus* and materialises himself as a *draco magnus* (Mombritius 1910, 1, 487). The identification of Þórr with a dragon not only reflects the content of the Latin legend, but is also in line with his association with the Miðgarðr serpent (Lindow 2001, 441). In this account, though, Þórr is no longer the antagonist of the Miðgarðr serpent, but is identified with it in a negative sense. And, thinking of the passage from the Revelations, an additional element which Þórr has in common with the devil and the *draco rufus* is the association with the colour red, so the identification with the dragon fits both with Nordic mythology and with Biblical culture. In hagiographic literature the Miðgarðsormr is found as the Old Norse counterpart of the Leviathan (Is 27, 1), also referred to as *hinn forni fjándi* (de Leeuw van Weenen 1993, 35v) or *hinn mikla hval, þat er sialfan fiandann (Vitae Patrum*, Unger 1877, 2, 410).

The variety of Old Norse terms and expressions related to descriptions of evil shows how Christian demonology has been interpreted and mediated for the Nordic public as one of the central items in edificatory literature and missionary preaching about punishment and the consequences of immoral conduct. These terms are also imported in the indigenous works, where they coexist and alternate with those designating the spirits of Nordic tradition. Although they are basically synonyms, the different signifiers of the evil spirits and especially of Satan establish different associations, deriving from their different origin and etymology, which the authors seem to have been aware of. Thus, the shifting between Nordic and foreign-flavoured epithets in different works or versions of the same work can depend on the frame of reference which the author wishes to evoke in the audience.

In the rendering of the descriptive elements of the representations of devils and evil spirits taken over from Christian doctrine the Nordic authors show a capacity for transposing the nuances of meaning into Old Norse, but at the same time the imposition of imported culture on indigenous tradition produces original interpretations, of which I have been able to mention only a few. An extra effort to explicate the source in a more exhaustive way is seen in some of the renderings of descriptions in Latin texts, where the Old Norse version is even more frightening or simply more explicatory than the Latin original. This is achieved through the use of the stylistic traits typical of indigenous prose, but is also in line with the edifying task of discouraging paganism and spreading the new Christian morality.

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