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Demonology at a Crossroads: The Visions of Ermine de Reims and the Image of the Devil on the Eve of the Great European Witch-Hunt

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From November 1, 1395, until August 25, 1396, Ermine de Reims, a peasant widow from Northern France, was systematically beaten and tortured by the devil almost every night. This is at least what the woman told her confessor, Jean le Graveur. This story takes place only thirty years before the formal beginning of the witchcraft repression in the Continent. For that reason I have opted to explore in this article a historical problem that lies at the very heart of the strange case of Ermine: the image of the devil on the eve of the great European witch-hunt. In particular, Jean le Graveur's narration can provide new evidence for assessing the continuities and ruptures between radical demonology and the previous theological conceptions of the devil. The overlap we find in Jean's manuscript between different traditions, contributes to demonstrate that the image of the devil that prevails in times of the early modern witchcraft persecution was not necessarily built in opposition to previous demonological paradigms. The new science of demons that began to emerge during the thirteenth century merely remarked certain traits of the devil of the Fathers, and therefore the differences between both mythologies arose from the decision of emphasizing different components of the very same demonological complex. The Satan of scholasticism, then, was not only an enhanced, revised and expanded version of the Augustinian devil, but the true consummation of the Patristic model, its fullest expression: one that would begin to emerge only at the end of time, on the eve of the Second Coming of Christ.

From November 1, 1395, until August 25, 1396, a peasant widow who lived in Reims, named Ermine, went through one of the most extreme religious experiences of the Late Middle Ages.[1] For about a hundred nights, Ermine de Reims, forty-eight years old, was systematically haunted, beaten, humiliated, and tortured by the devil and his hosts.

This is at least the content of what the horrified woman told her confessor, Jean le Graveur, a subprior at Saint Paul du Val-des-Écoliers in

[1]On the social and political history of the city of Reims in the late Middle Ages, see Pierre Desportes, *Reims et les Rémois aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris: Picard, 1979), passim.

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Reims.[2] Actually, shortly after Ermine's death, it was the same Jean le Graveur who wrote a long manuscript in French giving details of his protégée's extraordinary life experience. This document was explicitly intended to transform Ermine into a local heroine, the first vernacular aspirant saint in the history of the two religious institutions that were sponsoring her: the canonical order of Val-des-Écoliers and the Abbey of Saint Denis, also in Reims. Nevertheless, the result of such an experiment was a piteous failure. No sooner did the manuscript containing the prolonged agony of Ermine reach John Gerson's hands, than the influential chancellor of the University of Paris advised the clergy to translate the text into Latin and do their utmost to restrict its dissemination.[3] Gerson did not find any heterodox elements in the incredible religious experience of the widow. But the excesses of her story demanded caution, especially within an age marked by the Great Schism, the secular war between France and England, and an apocalyptic fever with very few precedents in European history. Gerson's suggestion would prove fatal to Jean le Graveur's manuscript. The extremely scarce quantity of copies that have survived to date—two French versions and three Latin ones—confirms how successful this strategy of censorship and ecclesiastic silencing proved to be. The rediscovery of the French manuscript, which had been shelved in obscurity at the *Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* until recently, is an achievement of medievalist André Vauchez. In 1997, Vauchez's efforts bore fruit with the publication of the French version of Jean le Graveur's text.[4] This first modern edition unleashed a wave of interest in the extraordinary figure of Ermine de Reims that continues to this day.[5]

[2]On the canonical order of Val-des-Écoliers, see Catherine Guyon, *Les Écoliers du Christ. L'ordre canonial du Val des Écoliers, 1201–1539* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 1998). The connections between the local branch of the order and Ermine are described on pp. 351–57.

[3]Jean Gerson, *Early Works*, ed. and trans. Brian Patrick McGuire (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 246.

[4]*Entre Dieu et Satan. Les visions d'Ermine de Reims († 1396), recueillies et transcrites par Jean le Graveur*, ed. Claude Arnaud-Gillet (Firenze: Sismel, 1997).

[5]Here is a preliminary list of the references to Ermine de Reims quoted in recent bibliography: Françoise Bonney, "Jugement de Gerson sur deux expériences de la vie mystique de son époque: les visions d'Ermine et de Jeanne d'Arc," in *Actes du 95e congrès national des Sociétés Savantes, Reims 1970*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1974), 2:187–95; Miri Rubin, "Europe Remade: Purity and Danger in Late Medieval Europe," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series, 11 (2001): 103–7; Wendy Love Anderson, "Free Spirits, Presumptuous Women, and False Prophets: The Discernment of Spirits in the Late Middle Ages," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2002), 252–53; Deborah Fraioli, "Gerson Judging Women of Spirit: From Female Mystics to Joan of Arc," in *Joan of Arc and Spirituality*, ed. Ann W. Astell and Bonnie Wheeler (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 147–65; Gábor Klaniczay, "The Process of Trance, Heavenly and Diabolic Apparitions in Johannes Nider's Formicarius," *Discussion Paper Series 65* (Budapest: Collegium Budapest, 2003), 51–56; Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell

The tribulations of Ermine take place in the context of one of the most profound political and religious crises in the history of Europe.[6] During the months in which the widow was constantly vexed by the devil, Christianity had, in fact, two different popes: the Neapolitan Pietro Tomacelli (Boniface IX), installed in Rome since 1389, and the Aragonese Pedro de Luna (Benedict XIII), elected in Avignon in 1394.[7] The beginning of the visions of Ermine coincides with a worsening of the political tension caused by the Great Schism. In January 1394, almost two years before the beginning of Ermine's diabolical experience, the French crown, taking advantage of a temporary improvement in the mental illness that affected King Charles VI, lifted the ban that prevented the University of Paris to discuss in public issues related to the crisis of the Church.[8] By then, both the Kingdom of France and the Sorbonne, concerned about the perpetuation of the schism, had begun the slow journey that would culminate in the final break with the Avignon papacy, definitively consummated during the failed Council of Pisa of 1409.[9]

In spite of taking place far away from Ermine's cell, these dramatic events repeatedly burst into Jean le Graveur's narration. In this sense, the experiences of the widow, even though they occurred within the four walls of her tiny room, were not immune to the severe political crisis of the moment. In fact, a religious figure particularly admired by Ermine, the

University Press, 2003), 303; Yelena Masur-Matusevich, *Le Siècle d'or de la mystique française. De Jean Gerson à Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples* (Paris: Arché, 2004), 206–26; Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 279–85; Marie-Geneviève Grossel, "Dans la solitude flamboyante de la chambre des simples: les Visions d'Ermine de Reims († 1396)," in *Par les mots et les textes. Mélanges de langue, de littérature et d'histoire des sciences médiévales offerts à Claude Thomasset*, ed. Danièle James-Raoul and Olivier Soutet (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2005), 393–403; McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, 77; Daniel Hobbins, "Gerson on Lay Devotion," in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 8, 64–65; Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims (c. 1347–1396): A Medieval Woman Between Demons and Saints," *Speculum* 85 (2010): 321–56.

[6]On the European historical context within which the story of Ermine unfolds, see Charles F. Briggs, *The Body Broken: Medieval Europe 1300–1520* (London: Routledge, 2010); Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c.1300–c.1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Etienne Delaruelle, E. R. Labande, and Paul Ourliac, *L'Eglise au temps du Grand Schisme et la crise conciliaire: 1378–1449*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1962–1964).

[7]The authoritative history of the Great Schism still is Noël Valois's monumental investigation: *La France et le Grand Schisme d'Occidente*, 4 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1896–1902).

[8]Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2005), 63.

[9]On the French withdrawals and restitutions of support for Benedict XIII, see Howard Kaminsky, "The Politics of France's Subtraction of Obedience from Pope Benedict XIII, 27 July 1398," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 115 (1971): 366–97; Valois, *La France et le Grande Schisme*, 3:325–416; 4:3–225.

controversial hermit Jean de Varennes, was silenced, arrested, and prosecuted just a few weeks before the woman's death. This gifted preacher, to whom several miracles were attributed, had recently left the court of Avignon and adopted a hermit lifestyle outside the walls of Reims, where he received a large number of pilgrims. Following the election of Benedict XIII, Jean de Varennes withdrew his support to the Avignon papacy. But while the hermit shared this position with the French crown and the University of Paris, his behavior was far less cautious than the one adopted by the leading figures of the kingdom: Jean began to preach the necessity to deny obedience to both popes, considered the sacraments administered by unworthy priests invalid, and began to attack the archbishop of Reims, Guy de Roche, both because of the pomp and venality surrounding his figure and because the prelate still supported the Avignon pope.[10]

In the narrative of the visions of Ermine, the subtle reproaches by which Jean le Graveur led the widow to put aside her admiration for the hermit and to adopt a more critical view of his behavior are clearly perceptible. For example, Jean le Graveur stresses that the first Eucharistic vision of Ermine took place in the context of the 1396 *Corpus Christi* procession, during which the holy sacrament had been carried by the archbishop himself. Moreover, most of the successive visions occurred during masses celebrated by priests ordained by Clement VII (Benedict's predecessor), which seemed to suggest that the true pope, as the archbishop of Reims held, was not in Rome but in Avignon.[11]

However, the veiled allusions to the Great Schism do not seem to be the justification for Jean Gerson's recommendation to the sponsors of the deceased widow to restrict the dissemination of Jean le Graveur's manuscript. The justification for the cautious silence suggested—maybe imposed—by chancellor Gerson probably derived from the actual content of the long diabolophany experienced by the widow, an extreme experience that threatened to scandalize a laity itself confused by the political crisis affecting the papacy.

I. The Tribulations of a Widow from Reims

Several traits of Ermine's war against the demons are extremely conventional. Such is the case of the varied range of apparitions that reaffirm the infinite

[10]On Jean de Varennes, see André Vauchez, "Un réformateur religieux dans la France de Charles VI: Jean de Varennes († 1396?)," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 142 (1998): 1111–30.

[11]Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378–1417* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2006), 91; Claude Arnaud-Gillet, "Présentation," in *Entre Dieu et Satan*, 18.

protean potential conferred to evil spirits by the scholastic demonology.[12] On occasions, demons appear to Ermine disguised as huge menacing monsters, "just like they are in hell."[13] At other moments, they intend to deceive the woman, adopting the appearance of an endless list of holy figures, like Saint Mary Magdalen, Saint Leger, Saint Andrew, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Peter, Saint Remigius, Saint Elizabeth, Saint Gertrude, Saint Anthony, Saint Augustine, Saint Agnes, Thomas the Apostle, and Saint Nicholas, among others.[14] Occasionally the devil replaces all visual manifestations by auditive, olfactory, tactile, and even gustatory ones. In fact, if something characterizes the relationship established between Ermine and Satan is its overwhelming sensoriality. The widow does not think about the devil: she touches him, hears him, smells him, and licks him.[15]

When he gets tired of showing himself in the traditional way, the devil becomes a trickster, a witty domestic gnome who spills the cups' contents, blows out the candles, destroys rosaries, transforms wooden bowls into precious metal chalices, or changes wine into a fluid similar to blood.[16]

Nevertheless, the insurmountable originality of Ermine' experience is not merely this infinite variety of apparitions and domestic pranks. The circumstances that most overwhelmed and disconcerted her contemporaries were related to three specific aspects of the power of the devil: the merciless physical punishments, the audacious aerial transvections, and the multiple and ferocious attacks of wild animals and vermin.

The beatings started in mid-November 1395. Ermine herself expressed her shame because of the way she was addressed by her neighbours in the street: "here is the woman beaten by the demons every night."[17] The attacks

[12]On the capacity of demons to take any visible aspect they wish, according to the theory of *simulacra* or assumed bodies, see Armando Maggi, *In the Company of Demons: Unnatural Beings, Love, and Identity in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), vii–xii; Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 58–86; Luther Link, *The Devil* (London: Reaktion, 1995); I quote the Spanish translation: *El Diablo. Una máscara sin rostro*, traducción de Pedro Navarro (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 2002), 141–89.

[13]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 197: "tels qu'ils sont en enfer." To make the reading of the document easier, the quotations from Jean le Graveur's text will be taken from the modern French version included in Claude Arnaud-Gillet's edition. All the English translations of this source are mine.

[14]Ibid., 187, 19–23, 200, 215, 220, 222, 224, 227–28, 239.

[15]On the close identification that is usually seen in radical demonology between sensory perception and genre, see Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 128–29.

[16]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 191, 194, 197, 209, 227, 234. I use "trickster" in the anthropological sense of the word, to allude to an especially sly and amoral kind of spirit, which ranges in its negative actions from murder, theft, and obscene practices on one end, to tricks, jokes, and innocent mockery on the other one. See Carol Rose, *Spirits, Fairies, Leprechauns, and Goblins: An Encyclopedia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 315.

[17]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 188: "La voilà, la femme que les diables battent toutes les nuits."

reached the summit of brutality on Wednesday 15, December. That day they hit her "with fists and feet in such a way that she was afraid they were going to kill her." One of the assailants kicked her savagely in the thorax; as a consequence, "several days later, her breast became badly bruised." Another aggressor raised her in the air and let her fall down so abruptly that Ermine hit her head against a bench and she risked to lose one of her eyes.[18]

This last anecdote introduces us into the second area where evil epiphanies manifested themselves with particular extremism: the very frequent transvections, levitations, and flights reported by Ermine. As Enrico Castelli says, by inducing the saints to levitate demons essayed their greatest temptation: leading to the misunderstanding that they themselves could become instruments of elevation.[19] On Friday following the epiphany, Ermine suddenly woke up and found herself floating in the middle of her room, her body stuck to the ceiling.[20] On February 13, 1396, demons made her fly across the courtyard of Saint Paul de Val-des-Écoliers.[21] On April 17, the evil spirits placed her on the roof of the priorate, at very high altitude.[22] But the most extraordinary night flight episode—the anecdote Jean le Graveur gives the largest space in his manuscript—took place on Wednesday, immediately after the first Sunday of Lent; just before dawn, when the walls of Reims where still closed, the devil forced Ermine to ride on a black horse and, in a few seconds, she was transported to the forest of Nanteuil, located about sixteen kilometers out of the urban area.[23]

The repeated attacks of ferocious wild animals and vermin are the third type of peculiar harassment that Ermine suffered during her last year of life: incommensurable swarm of flies that cover completely the widow's chamber; huge bears that left unusual amounts of urine on the floor; toads the size of dogs that jump into the bed, wake up the woman, and introduce their mouths into hers; snakes that crawl under her clothes or wrap around her neck trying to suffocate her; lizards that bite, causing horrendous wounds on her hands; crows, bats, and owls that leave scars on her face and risk permanent damage to her eyes; ferocious roaring lions that keep her from sleeping; and so forth.[24]

[18]Ibid., 195: "avec leurs poings et pieds qu'elle crut qu'ils allaient la tuer"; "plusieurs jours après sa poitrine devint toute noire."

[19]Enrico Castelli, *Il demoniaco nell arte: il significato filosofico* (Milano: Electa, 1952); I quote the Spanish translation: *Lo demoníaco en el arte. Su significado filosófico*, traducción de María Condor (Madrid: Siruela, 2007), 89.

[20]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 200.

[21]Ibid., 214.

[22]Ibid., 229.

[23]Ibid., 216–18.

[24]Ibid., 198 (bears); 219 (flies); 227 (crows); 228 (toads); 232 (snakes); 237 (lizards); 224 (bats); 244 (owls); 237 (lions).

It is not necessary to underscore that a document as large, varied, and complex as the one we are introducing, allows various readings and approaches. We are dealing with an extremely valuable source for such subjects as the discernment of spirits or the relationships established by female visionaries with their confessors or spiritual directors.[25] For this article, however, I opt to explore a historical problem that lies at the very heart of the dense narrative of the visions of Ermine: the image of the devil on the eve of the great European witch-hunt.

For several decades, witchcraft historiography has experienced a boom that still continues.[26] Despite this, the study of the genesis of radical demonology did not begin until much later. While the foundational works of the new witchcraft historiography were published in the late 1960s, it was not until the publication of *Thinking with Demons* by Stuart Clark that the demonological discourse began to receive the attention it deserves.[27] It was, in fact, Clark who succeeded in demonstrating the centrality that Christian demonology acquired in early modern European culture.[28] However, Clark's monumental book did not explore in depth the origins of this new natural science of demons.

In the 1970s, several historians had ventured into the medieval foundations of early modern witch hunting. But usually these investigations only sought to identify the different traditions that converged into the sabbat stereotype, and

[25]On the discernment of spirits in the Late Middle Ages, see Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (York: York Medieval Press, 1999), 41–72; Anderson, *Free Spirits, Presumptuous Women, and False Prophets*, passim; Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 274–319; Gabriella Zarri, "Dal consilium spirituale alla discretio spirituum. Teoria e pratica della direzione spirituale tra I secoli XIII e XV," in *Consilium: teorie e pratiche del consigliare nella cultura medievale*, ed. Carla Casagrande, Chiara Crisciani, and Silvana Vecchio (Firenze: Sismel, 2004), 77–107; Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 231–96. With regard to the complex relationships between mystic women, confessors, spiritual directors, biographers, and exegetes, see *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, ed. Catherine M. Mooney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); John W. Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and Their Female Penitents, 1450–1750* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005); *Direzione spirituale e agiografia*, ed. Michela Catto, Isabella Gagliardi, and Rosa Maria Parrinello (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2008), passim.

[26]On the historiography of early modern witch hunting, see *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[27]The following are some of the very few contributions to the study of demonology that appeared before the publication of Stuart Clark's *Thinking with Demons*: Sidney Anglo, ed., *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); Brian Levack, ed., *The Literature of Witchcraft* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992); Sophie Houdard, *Les sciences du diable. Quatre discours sur la sorcellerie* (Paris: Cerf, 1992); Gerhild Scholz Williams, *The Discourses of Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern France and Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

[28]Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

therefore they did not intend to unravel the inner logic and transformations of the demonological discourse.[29]

The question about the genesis of the new science of demons was problematic for historians of early modern witchcraft since it was to be addressed either by modernists who were not afraid of venturing into medieval history, or by medievalists interested in explaining the discursive foundations of a phenomenon that reached its heyday after 1560. A clear example of the first group is the French historian Robert Muchembled, while a clear example of the second one is his compatriot Alain Boureau.[30] In recent years, many medievalists (without venturing directly into the history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) included in their books entire sections devoted to analyze the connections between their specific objects of study and the early modern witchcraft persecutions.[31]

One of the main problems that historians interested in the origins of radical demonology must resolve is the degree of originality that this discourse has regarding previous demonological paradigms. Historians have proposed different answers to this question. Muchembled, for example, argues that radical demonology implies a total break in regard to any previous theological tradition.[32] Hans Peter Broedel, on the contrary, concludes that scholastic demonology amends several elements of the Patristic tradition, without completely suppressing it.[33] Alain Boureau, meanwhile, seems to oscillate between opposite positions, in some texts stressing the irreducible

[29]See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972); Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Inquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975); Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300–1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch, and the Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Franco Cardini, *Magia, stregoneria, superstizioni nell 'Occidente medievale* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1979).

[30]Robert Muchembled, *Une histoire du diable, XIIe–XXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2000); Robert Muchembled, *Diable!* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Alain Boureau, *Satan hérétique. Histoire de la démonologie (1280–1330)* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004).

[31]Catherine Rider, *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 186–207; Jean-Patrice Boudet, *Entre science et nigromance. Astrologie, divination et magie dans l'Occident médiéval (XIIe–XVe siècle)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), 431–508; Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 274–319; Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 264–303; Jelle Koopmans, *Le Théâtre des exclus au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Imago, 1997), 127–36, 194–204; Claude Lecouteux, *Fées, Sorcières et Loups-garous au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Imago, 1992), 93–120.

[32]For Muchembled, Europe invented the devil between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. See Muchembled, *Diable!*, 12.

[33]Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 43: "this Augustinian conception of the devil was never entirely displaced during the Middle Ages, but by the twelve century it was being amended in the course of new learned speculation about the devil and his role in creation. Though scholastic theologians, and Thomas Aquinas in particular, added little that could truly be called innovative to the conception of the devil, they did alter the ways in which he and his works were perceived."

novelty of positive demonology while in others suggesting that this discipline arises naturally from the scholastic reflection on the human person.[34] As we will see below, it is in the context of these debates that the analysis of the visions of Ermine de Reims can make a significant contribution to our understanding of the origins of the natural science of demons.

In fact, the religious experience lived by Ermine takes place only thirty years before the massive persecution that broke out in the canton of Valais in early 1428, the formal beginning of the witchcraft repression on the Continent.[35] Very few documents dated shortly before the witch-hunt debut provide such a great deal of references to Satan and his followers as can be found here. What are the characteristics of the devil that harasses Ermine, terrifies her neighbors, fascinates her confessor, and scandalizes Jean Gerson? Are the evil spirits that torture this woman similar to the demons put on stage by early modern demonologists? Or, instead, do they continue to embody many of the distinctive features of ancient demonological paradigms?

II. The Devil in the First Millennium: Satan, Minister of God

In an excessively conventional way, specialists in the history of the devil establish a clear difference between the devil of the first millennium with an accentuated Augustinian flavor, and that of the second millennium with features distinctly Thomistic.

The most important church fathers were also demonologists;[36] and the most influential among them, Augustine of Hippo, wrote extensively on the nature of demons.[37] What are the features of the devil configuration of the first millennium? For Saint Augustine, the devil is the tempter par excellence, a

[34]Alain Boureau: "Un seul diable en plusiers personnes," préface a Houdard, *Les sciences du diable*, 13: "la démonologie positive n'est pas inscrite virtuellement dans le discours religieux médiéval; elle surgit brusquement dans la discontinuité la plus étrange." Nevertheless, on later works Boureau adopted a different perspective, stressing that radical demonology arose naturally from the scholastic reflection on the human being; see Boureau, "Le sabbat et la question scolastique de la personne," 38, 43–45; Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, 262: "La construction d'une science de l'homme, véritable innovation de la scolastique, se payait à ce prix."

[35]Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 63–64; Chantal Ammann-Doubliez, "La première chasse aux sorciers en Valais (1428–1436?)," in *L'imaginaire du sabbat. Éditions critique des textes les plus anciens (1430c.–1440c.)*, ed. Martine Ostorero, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, and Kathrin Utz Tremp (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1999), 63–93.

[36]Michael Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft* (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2003), 35; Stuart Clark, "Demonology," in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, ed. Richard M. Golden, 4 vols. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 1:259.

[37]Cynthia Filmore, *Satan, Saints, and Heretics: A History of Political Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009), 77.

tireless inducer of deviant behaviors.[38] The image of a strong inner demon comes out of this idea, compatible with the anti-Manichaean doctrine of moral evil. Evil is not a substance. It cannot be considered a principle opposed to goodness: evil is a deficient cause, a perversion of the will.[39] Therefore, Satan's favorite scenario to enact is the soul of man, his consciousness, his mind, his fantasy.[40]

Patristic demonology does not deny demons the capacity for producing real effects in the material world. These actions may acquire, at times, the nothingness of illusion, the non-corporeal features of a mirage. In *De Divinatione Daemonum*, for example, Augustine compares Satan to jugglers and theater stagehands (*funambuli, theatrici artifices, mechanici*),[41] whose performances presuppose fantasy and reality at the same time.[42] In certain circumstances, however, the devil was able to transcend the role of a mere buffoon and produce effects of an overwhelming materiality; an example of these can be seen in the *Dialogorum* by Gregory the Great, where Satan pull walls down[43] or throw vulnerable children into the fire.[44]

No matter the case, Patristic demonology stresses once and again that the devil can never produce any effect in the material world without a sine-qua-non pre-requisite: God's permission. This non-negotiable doctrine transforms the enemy into a powerful but strictly limited entity.[45] That is why Augustine says in *Enarrationes in Psalmos*: "the devil is a certain power, but most of the time he wants to hurt and he cannot, because he is a power that is under other power."[46] The same doctrine drives Isidore of Seville to

[38]St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XXI, 14 (*Obras completas de San Agustín*, ed. AA.VV., 38 vols. [Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1946–1990], 17:646): "Numquid non tentatio est vita humana super terram?" All English translations of Latin sources are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[39]Renzo Lavatori, *Il diavolo tra fede e ragione* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2000), 67; Boureau, "Le sabbat et la question scolastique de la personne," 40.

[40]Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 51.

[41]St. Augustine, *De divinatione daemonum* IV, 8 (*Ouvres de Saint Augustin*, vol. 10, 1re. série: Opuscules, ed. G. Bardy, J.-A. Beckaert, and J. Boutet [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952], 668): "quam multa funambuli caeterique theatrici artifices, quam multa opifices maximeque mechanici miranda fecerunt? Num ideo meliores sunt bonis et sancta pietate praeditis hominibus?"

[42]P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan: A Biography* (Chalford: Amberley, 2008), 30.

[43]Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* II, 11, 1 (Grégoire le Grande, *Dialogues*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, 3 vols. [Paris: Cerf, 1978], 2:173): "et malignus spiritus eundem parietem, qui aedificabatur, euertit, atque unum puerulum monachum … opprimens, ruina conteruit."

[44]Ibid., I, 10, 6 (Ibid., 99): "Cumque uicissim aliqua confabularentur, paruulum eius filium isdem malignus spiritus inuasit atque in eisdem prunis proiecit, ibique mox eius animam excussit."

[45]Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 41.

[46]St. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 61, 20, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères: 1878–1890), vol. 36, col 743: "diabolus potestas quaedam est; plerumque tamen vult nocere, et non potest, quia potestas ista sub potestate est."

express, with surprising optimism, that the devil has an objectively valuable dimension because he continues obeying God.[47]

Nevertheless, the devil obtains permission through hidden divine intentions to act in the world quite frequently. The aim of this plan is to punish the wicked and to test the righteous.[48] As Origin says, "God gives permission and also induces the opposite virtues to fight us."[49] The demons of the fathers are, therefore, functional to a new conception of evil linked to the volitive faculty, whose exercise is only possible thanks to the presence of an opponent.[50] When Saint Anthony the Great reproaches the deity for his lack of intervention during some of the brutal beatings he suffered at the hands of the evil spirits, God replied: "I was there Anthony, but I waited in order to watch your fight."[51]

Satan and his followers play a specific role in this perspective, main characters in the Christian economy of salvation. Even against their own interests, demons become vectors of the divine will. The church fathers never doubted Satan's ministerial quality.[52] And it is this thesis that makes understandable one of most famous maxims on the *Moralia in lob* by Gregory the Great: "even when the will of the devil is always unfair, any power exerted through divine permission is fair."[53]

Thus we get to the foundations of this audacious Augustinian theodicy. The divinity could not ignore that the most beautiful and powerful of the angels would become evil by a movement of his own free will. What reason led God to proceed with this creation, anyway? It was because he also foresaw the great goodness that could be obtained from such unfortunate rebellion.[54] Augustine's God is a numen who judged as "more worthy of his Almighty essence and goodness" the "fair use of evil rather than to forbid

[47]Isidore of Seville, *De ordine creaturarum* 8, 10, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères: 1878–1890), vol. 83, col. 933: "non obedire non possunt; sed haec eorum obedientia in Deo bona est."

[48]St. Augustine, *Adnotationum in Iob* 16, 9 (*Obras completas de San Agustín*, 19:57): "aeriae potestates quibus utitur Deus et eis permittit, ut aut excerceantur boni aut puniantur mali."

[49]Origen, *Homiliae in Iosue* XV, 5 (Origéne, *Homélies sur Josué*, ed. Annie Jaubert [Paris: Cerf, 1960], 348): "Deus dicitur permittere, immo et incitare propemodum adversarias virtutes exire adversum nos in proelium."

[50]Sonia Maura Barillari, "Introduzione" a Cesario di Heisterbach, *Sui demòni* (Torino: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1999), 24.

[51]Athanasius of Alexandria, *Vita Antonii* 10 (Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, ed. and trans. Robert C. Gregg [Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1980], 39).

[52]Attilio Carpin, *Angeli e demòni nella sintesi patristica di Isidoro di Siviglia* (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2004), 109.

[53]Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* XVIII, 2, 4, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères: 1878–1890), vol. 76, col. 40: "omnis voluntas diaboli injusta est, et tamen permittente deo omnis potestas justa."

[54]Serge-Thomas Bonino, *Les anges et les démons. Quatorze leçons de théologie* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2007), 302.

it."[55] For the Bishop of Hippo, divine providence restrains evil, thus preventing it from causing, ultimately, real damage.[56]

This exaggerated Augustinian providentialism is, in short, relatively incompatible with a genuine fear of the devil. The followers of the Christian God should not fear Satan, *The Shepherd of Hermas* vehemently insists: "do not be afraid of the devil. If you fear the Lord, you will triumph over the devil because he has no power. And who has no power, does not inspire fear."[57] The faith of the righteous transforms the devil in an entity as weak as the muscles of a corpse.[58] In fact, both Athanasius of Alexandria and Gregory the Great agree that sometimes it is the devil himself who trembles, frightened to approach the Christian God's protégés.[59]

It is clear that the devil of the first millennium expresses a particularly optimistic version of the ancient combat myth.[60] For the church fathers, Satan was already defeated. The eternal agon between good and evil had already been solved. Dozens of stories and images during those centuries emphasize the defeat of the enemy.[61] The *Acts of Peter*, an apocryphal text of the mid-second century, represents the devil as an Ethiopian slave girl, wrapped in filthy rags, with an iron collar on her neck, and her hands and feet chained.[62] The powers of the devil, in fact, decrease at an accelerated pace, says John Cassian in the early fifth century; he does not have the same strength he had two centuries before, in times of the first fathers of the desert.[63] Origen also imagined Satan's hosts as an almost defeated army:

[55]St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XXII, 1, 2 (*Obras de San Agustín*, 17:691): "Qui cum praesciret angelos quosdam per elationem, qua ipsi sibi ad beatam vitam sufficere vellent…, non eis ademit hanc potestatem, potentius et melius esse iudicans etiam de malis bene facere quam mala esse non sinere."

[56]G. R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil*, 5th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 32.

[57]*Hermae Visionis Pastoris* VII, 2. The original Greek text can be consulted in Hermas, *Le Pasteur*, ed. Robert Joly (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 207. On Hermas and his insistence on the evil spirit's weakness, see François Vandenbroucke, "Démon," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité scétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire*, ed. Marcel Viller, 16 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–1994), 3:167.

[58]Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*, 4th ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 44.

[59]Athanasius of Alexandria, *Vita Antonii* 8 (Athanasius, *The Life of Antony*, 35); Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum* III, 20, 3 (Grégoire le Grande, *Dialogues*, 2:352).

[60]On the relationship between the archaic combat myth and Augustinian thought, see Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 387–440.

[61]Charles Edward Hopkin, *The Share of Thomas Aquinas in the Growth of the Witchcraft Delusion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1940), 4.

[62]*Acta Petri* XXII (*Il diavolo e i suoi angeli. Testi e tradizioni, secoli I–III*, ed. Adele Monaci Castagno [Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1996], 279): "et mulierem quendam turpissimam, in aspectu Aethiopissam, neque Aegyptiam, sed totam nigram, sordidis pannis involutam, in collo autem torquem ferream et in manibus et in pedibus catenam."

[63]John Cassian, *Collationes* VII, 23, 1 (*Cassiani Opera*, ed. Michael Petschenig, vol. 13 [Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004], 201–2): "satis tamen nobis et experientia

every time the saints fought victoriously, "they made the devilish army weaker, almost as if they killed a lot of their own."[64]

III. The Scholastic-Thomist Approach to Demonology: The Paradoxical Materiality of a Non-Material Devil

Even though the devil had always been a matter of deep consideration for Christian theologians during the first millennium, there is no doubt that European *intelligentsia* began to be intensively obsessed, as never before, by his figure from the twelfth century onward.[65] Texts referring to the most diverse literary genres—theological treatises, encyclopedias, collections of *exempla*—devoted, with increasing frequency, entire sections theorizing about the nature and powers of the fallen angels.[66] This growing interest for Satan and his angels is also reflected in the monumental theological production of Thomas Aquinas;[67] it could not be otherwise.

In many respects, Aquinas revalidates the foundations of first-millennium demonology. The providentialism that deeply influenced Augustinian theory of evil repeatedly arises in Saint Thomas's discourse.[68] It can also be argued that, generally speaking, the Thomistic devil is not more powerful than Saint Augustine's. For both thinkers, the miracle is an area closed to intermediate

nostra et seniorum relatione conpertum est non eandem uim habere nunc daemones quam anteriore tempore inter anachoretarum dumtaxat principia, in quibus adhuc raritas monachorum in heremo conmanebat. Tanta namque erat eorum feritas, ut uix pauci et admodum stabiles atque aetate prouecti tolerare habitationem solitudinis possent."

[64]Origen, *Homiliae in Iosue* XV, 6 (Origéne, *Homélies sur Josué*, 350): "imminuant exercitum daemonum et velut quam plurimos eorum interimant."

[65]On the growing demonophobia that characterizes Western European culture from the second half of the twelfth century, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 159–207; Georges Minois, *Le diable* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 51–73; Muchembled, *Une histoire du diable*, 19–51; Boudet, *Entre science et nigromance*, 205–78; Rider, *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages*, 135–59; Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 16–34.

[66]We can cite, by way of example, three foundational texts of the second millenium demonology: the *distinctiones* 2–11 from Book II of the *Sententiae*, by Peter Lombard (c. 1150); the *distinctio* V from the *Dialogus miraculorum*, by Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1219–1223); the IIIa-IIae from *De Universo*, by William of Auvergne (c. 1231).

[67]According to Alain Boureau, *De Malo* by Thomas Aquinas may be considered the first great scholastic demonology. Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, 128. For a similar perspective, see Christine Pigné, "Du De Malo au Malleus Maleficarum: les conséquences de la démonologie thomiste sur le corps de la sorcière," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales* 13 (2006): 195–220.

[68]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 64, a. 4 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, ed. and trans. Comisión de PP. Dominicos presidida por Fr. Francisco Barbado Viejo, 16 vols. [Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1947–1960], 3:603): "et hanc procurationem boni humani conveniens fuit per malos angelos fieri, ne totaliter post peccatum ab utilitate naturalis ordinis exciderent."

beings. Angels and demons can only manipulate natural forces if they do not ever alter the principles that regulate the cosmos. In summary, similar ranges of possibility set the pattern for the operation of evil spirits in both cosmologies.[69] For this reason, it would be an extremely reductionist approach to oppose the patristic and scholastic demonologies in a simplified way. Notwithstanding, even if Aquinas does not modify the directives of Augustinian theodicy and satanology, he introduces a series of innovations in the mythology of the Christian devil that qualify and, sometimes, alter the tone of first-millennium demonology. These variations developed by Saint Thomas in the second half of the thirteenth century led to the emergence of a science of the devil that, strictly speaking, should be characterized as Augustinian-Thomistic, a peculiar fusion of archaic and modern characters that will lay the foundations of the paradigm on which early modern witch-hunt would be grounded.[70]

Following is a provisional list of the main corrections incorporated by Thomas Aquinas to a scholastic-Aristotelian devil conception that is never ready to cast off from the previous millennium evil theory:[71]

First, the immateriality of angelic natures. Thomas Aquinas is the first Christian theologian who radically and explicitly stated the doctrine of the absolute immateriality of angelic natures.[72] For the Italian saint, angels and demons are "separate intellectual substances."[73] They do not possess any degree of materiality.[74] During the first millennium, however, an

[69]See Fabián Alejandro Campagne, "Witchcraft and the Sense of the Impossible in Early Modern Spain: Some Reflections Based on the Literature of Superstition (c.1500–1800)," *Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003): 25–62.

[70]The real influence that Thomistic demonology had on the emergence of early modern radical demonology remains an extremely controversial issue. Cfr. Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 43–44, 72–76; Stephens, *Demons Lovers*, 369; Russell, *Lucifer*, 208; Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, 136–47; Hopkin, *The Share of Thomas Aquinas*, 179–80; Pigné, "Du De Malo au Malleus Maleficarum," 219–20.

[71]On the treatises of Thomas Aquinas that include issues related to angelology and demonology, see Gonzalo Sotto Posada, "La concepción de los ángeles y el origen del mal en Tomás de Aquino," in Anselmo de Canterbury, *Tratado sobre la caída del demonio*, ed. Felipe Castañeda (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2005), 293–94

[72]Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 242–48; Renzo Lavatori, *Gli angeli. Storia e pensiero* (Genova: Marietti, 1991), 147; Georges Tavard, *Die Engel* (Freiburg: Herder, 1968); I quote the Spanish translation: *Los ángeles*, traducción de Manuel Pozo, Pbro. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1973), 66.

[73]Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de Malo* q. 16, a. 2 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Opúsculos y cuestiones selectas*, ed. Antonio Osuna Fernández-Largo, 5 vols. [Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2001–2008], 5:953): "substantia intellectualis a corpore separata."

[74]Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi* II, d. 8, a. 1 (S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, ed. R. P. Mandonnet, O.P., 2 vols. [Parisiis: P. Lethielleux editoris, 1929], 2:204): "angeli neque boni neque mali habent corpora naturaliter unita: hac enim esse non potest"; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* II, 49 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Contra los Gentiles*, ed. and trans. Padre Fray Jesús M.

overwhelming majority of the church fathers, led by Augustine of Hippo, argued that angels and demons had subtle ethereal bodies.[75] This broad consensus began to break down by the mid-twelfth century.[76] By the 1230s, William of Auvergne unmistakably postulates the complete immateriality of the intermediate beings.[77] But it was Aquinas who, thanks to a deeper understanding of the metaphysical structure of the creation, and the Aristotelian distinction between act and potency, managed to provide theoretical consistency to the thesis of the immateriality of angelic natures. He could express this neither removing from the angelic natures their quality of creatures nor giving them the ontological simplicity that God exclusively claims for himself.[78] Dyan Elliott recently attributed this audacious Thomistic theoretical turn to the demands of the anti-Cathar controversy.[79] But whatever its practical value, the immateriality theory soon generated dangerous inconsistencies and contradictions. How could it be plausibly justified from the point of view of the most important disciplines of that period, that non-material entities had the capacity to produce real effects in the material world? Aristotelian syllogism should be applied to the extreme in order to demonstrate that intangible angels and demons keep their capacity for operating in the universe. This ambitious theological operation reached its highest degree of sophistication with the rationale that Aquinas developed to demonstrate that, in spite of lacking bodies-naturally-attached-to-them, separate substances can carry or move objects, and also can have intercourse with human beings.[80] Aerial transvections and copulation with

Pla Castellano, O.P., 2 vols. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1952), 1:502): "ex praemissis autem ostenditur quod nulla substantia intellectualis est corpus"; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 50, a. 1 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 3:85): "unde necesse est ponere, ad hoc quod universum sit perfectum, quod sit aliqua incorporea creatura."

[75]On the reasons that incline most of the church fathers to defend the thesis of the angelic corporeality, see Bonino, *Les anges et les démons*, 118–19.

[76]Maaike van der Lugt, *Le ver, le démon et la vierge. Les théories médiévales de la génération extraordinaire* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2004), 231.

[77]Thomas B. de Mayo, *The Demonology of William of Auvergne: By Fire and Sword* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 2007), 5, 125, 128.

[78]Jesús Sancho Bielsa, *Los Ángeles. Apuntes de la enseñanza de Santo Tomás* (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2008), 109.

[79]Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 142–50. Tavard reaches a relatively similar conclusion from a perspective completely different: see Tavard, *Los ángeles*, 68. The same happens with Garrigou-Lagrange: "Saint Thomas a affirmé beaucoup plus que Duns Scot et Francisco Suárez la différence specifique qui existe entre l'intelligence angélique et l'intelligence humaine." Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *La synthèse thomiste* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946), 273.

[80]On local movement, see *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 110, a. 3 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 3:893–94). On incubi and succubi, see *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 51, a. 3 (Ibid., 134, 136).

demons were, therefore, much more than colorful anecdotes; as Walter Stephens argues, they were the ultimate proof that corporeal interaction between human beings and the metaphysical world could nonetheless be possible.[81]

Second, the intellect of fallen angels. Once and again Augustine of Hippo stressed that Lucifer's rebellion irremediably corrupted the intellect of fallen angels. A state of blindness, silliness, and madness characterizes the degraded rationality of the devil and his followers.[82] Thomas Aquinas, on the contrary, unceremoniously rejected Augustine's point of view; the natural knowledge of demons "was not suppressed, not even diminished."[83] "Demons are illuminated by the light of their intellectual nature," as it can be read in the *Summa Theologiae*.[84] The intellect of pure spirits has not been affected after their failed rebellion since no subtraction of any part of their beings is admitted by the simplicity of the angelic substance. In fact the devil's knowledge does not decrease; quite the opposite, it increases throughout the centuries—his science sharpens as time goes by.[85]

Third, the ontological superiority of angels and demons. As can be discerned from *De divinatione daemonum*, Saint Augustine strongly denies that demons should be considered superior to human beings based on the fact that they possess a keener perception derived from the subtlety of their ethereal bodies. Otherwise, priority could be given to dogs over humans because of their strong sense of smell, or to eagles because of their extraordinary sight.[86] But Thomas Aquinas contradicts his illustrious predecessor once again. Immateriality is the origin of knowledge for the Italian theologian.[87] Therefore, the angelical natures not only exceeded humans in metaphysical, physical, and intellectual terms[88] but they also are in fact, among all

[81]Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, 112, 126.

[82]Evans, *Augustine on Evil*, 103–5; Russell, *Satan*, 213.

[83]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 64, a.1 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 3:589): "cognitio . . . quae habetur per naturam . . . in daemonibus nec est ablata, nec diminuta."

[84]Ibid., *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 64, a. 1 (Ibid., 591): "daemones . . . sunt tamen lucidi lumine intellectualis naturae."

[85]Ibid., *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi* II, d. 7, q. 2, a.1 (S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, 2:188): "quamvis cognitionem a rebus non accipiat daemon, tamen acuitur ejus scientia per longitudinem temporis."

[86]St. Augustine, *De divinatione daemonum* III, 7 (*Ouvres de Saint Augustin*, vol. 10, 664, 666): "primum considerant non ideo sibi praeponendos esse daemones, quod acriore sensu corporis praevalent, aerii scilicet, hoc est subtilioris elementi: quia nec in ipsis terrenis corporibus bestias sibi praeponendas putant, quae acrius multa praesentiunt; velut sagacem canem, quia latentem feram olfactu acerrimo sic invenit…; vel vulturem, quia projecto cadavere ex improvisa longinquitate advolat; nec aquilam, quia sublimiter volans de tanto intervallo sub fluctibus natantem piscem dicitur pervidere."

[87]Bielsa, *Los Ángeles*, 113.

[88]Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 44.

creatures, the closest to God, the most similar to Him.[89] Angels and demons reproduce the form of divine understanding on account of their intelligible way of being.[90] Therefore, it is not exaggerated to describe the intellect of pure spirits as deiform.[91] Finally, it is necessary to make clear that angels and demons in Thomistic theology not only approach God because of the perfection of their minds[92] but also on account of the peculiar process of individuation that is their distinctive trait as separate substances.[93]

Fourth, epistemological potential of the science of the devil. Saint Augustine's demonology is permeated by a clear gnoseological pessimism. The detailed and precise knowledge of the angelical order escapes any human possibility: "what angels can do according to their nature even though they do not put it into practice because it has been forbidden to them, and what is it that their natural condition does not allow them to do, it is very difficult to say if not really impossible."[94] Aquinas not only disagrees with Saint Augustine's resignation but also reverses his reasoning. Thus we read in *De Malo:* "anything that can be visibly produced in this world can be produced by demons, not only through their own virtue but also through natural active principles."[95] And in the *Summa Theologiae* he added: "anything that an angel or any other creature does by means of its own virtue falls within the order of nature."[96] We have to underscore the tremendous consequences that these premises have on human knowledge: intermediate entities are part of the same universe as the animal, vegetable,

[89]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 57, a. 1 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 3:285): "angeli autem inter ceteras creaturas sunt Deo propinquiores et similiores."

[90]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* II, 46 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Contra los Gentiles*, 1:496): "oportet igitur ad summam perfectionem universi esse aliquas creaturas in quibus secundum esse intelligibile forma divini intellectus exprimatur."

[91]Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi* II, d. 3, q. 3, a. 4 (S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, 2:124): "intellectus angelorum dicitur deiformis, eo quod divino intellectui conformis est: non autem in hoc quod uno omnia intelligat, et ita simul intelligat, sed in hoc quod a rebus cognitionem non accipit, sine investigatione rationis et sino adminiculo sensus cognoscit."

[92]Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, 151–52.

[93]Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Les anges et la philosophie. Subjectivité et fonction cosmologique des substances séparées à la fin du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), 45–46: "L'identification de chaque ange avec une espèce revêt manifestement la signification d'une valorisation et d'une promotion de la subjectivité angélique, dont le revers est une appréciation négative de la condition humaine individuelle."

[94]St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* III, 9, 18 (*Obras completas de San Agustín*, 5:295): "quid autem possint per naturam, nec possint per prohibitionem, et quid per ipsius naturae suae conditionem facere non sinantur homini explorare difficile est, imo vero impossibile."

[95]Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de Malo* q. 16, a. 9 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Opúsculos y cuestiones selectas*, 5:1057): "omnia quae visibiliter fiunt in hoc mundo possunt fieri per daemones non sola propria virtute, sed mediantibus activis naturalibus."

[96]Ibid., *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 110, a. 4 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 3:895): "quia quidquid facit angelus, vel quaecumque alia creatura, propria virtute, hoc fit secundum ordinem naturae creatae."

or mineral kingdoms; and angels and demons obey the same natural laws as the rest of the creation as a whole. Then, this non-mystifying perspective strengthens the possibility of knowing the physiology of the devil. In fact, while linking the power of pure spirits more closely to the functioning of nature, scholastic theology contributed to transform demonology into a natural science, an angelic physics, a theologically informed biology.[97]

Fifth, the autonomy of the diabolical will. The devil of the first millennium, transformed against his will into an instrument of God's plans, always tended to appear as a figure that lacked independence, initiative, or freedom. Thomas Aquinas reasserted this theory of divine supervision, but he introduced a distinction that tended to increase the degree of autonomy held by Satan and his angels. When they act to punish sinners, demons are directly commissioned by the deity; but when they act to tempt humans, evil spirits are not sent by God. In the latter case, the creator limits himself to allow a course of action that he does not want, that does not express his supreme will.[98] Now then, as Hans Peter Broedel argues, in order to make this distinction meaningful, God's permission had to turn into a more generous kind of supervision, a passive supplement of God's active will.[99] Therefore, the new Thomistic theory—extremely coherent with the wider significance Aquinas gave to what was called *causae secundae* in the operation of the cosmos—redefined the *permissio Dei* theory, reducing it from the original claim that nothing evil occurs outside of the divine will, to an authorization from the divine that ensured the devil a weak general permission to operate in the world.[100]

Sixth, organization and hierarchization of the forces of evil. The demonization of the perceived enemies of Christianity can already be appreciated in the synoptic Gospels and the Pauline epistles. It is not surprising, then, that the demonization of the adversaries of the Church became one of the distinctive hallmarks of primitive Christian thought.[101] For the church fathers, fallen angels and impious men are members of the same enemy coalition.[102] This thesis resurfaces strongly in the eleventh century, when heresy reappeared in the West after half a millennium of

[97]van der Lugt, *Le ver, le démon et la vierge*, 363, 516, 518; Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, 50.

[98]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 114, a. 1 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 3:969): "mali angeli impugnant homines dupliciter. Uno modo, instigando ad peccatum. Et sic non mittuntur a Deo ad impugnandum, sed aliquando permittuntur, secundum Dei iusta iudicia. Aliquando autem impugnant homines puniendo. Et sic mittuntur a Deo."

[99]Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 72–73.

[100]Jörg Haustein, "Aquinas, St. Thomas (ca.1225–1274)," in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 1:54.

[101]Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), passim.

[102]Sofia Boesch Gajano, "Il demonio e i suoi complici," in *Il demonio e i suoi complici. Dottrine e credenze demonologiche nella Tarda Antichità*, ed. Salvatore Pricoco (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1995), 258–63.

absence.[103] By then, monastic chroniclers even imagined alliances between domestic enemies and foreign opponents of Christianity.[104] But it was no doubt the soundness and attractiveness of Catharism that proved to be the factor in strengthening as never before the stereotypes and invectives of this ancient Patristic rhetoric.[105] These precedents are the explanation for the qualitative leap noticeable in Thomistic demonology. In fact, the way Aquinas tends to conceive the forces of evil goes further than any other images in the first millennium. In the *Doctor Angelicus*, Lucifer and his hosts represent a kind of sophisticated corporation, designed to enhance the efficiency of the fight against the forces of good. "Friends are those who have only one and the same enemy: hence, having the intention of harming humans further, demons are allied with each other in order to design a better offensive strategy."[106] So, this is a sealed alliance based on criteria of strict coexistence. It is typical for the impious to join and submit themselves to those whom they imagine more powerful.[107] The infernal world is undoubtedly a hierarchical structure, a perfect counterpart of the papal theocracy envisioned by the Gregorian Reform.[108] But Thomas Aquinas will go even further: the devil is, in fact, the vortex that unifies the forces of evil that work in the cosmic ecosystem.[109] He is the head of all evildoers.[110] Therefore, Satan not only rules despotically over the rebel angels but he is also the prince of the wicked men.[111] In the Thomistic rhetoric, this solid union of the enemies of Christ at times takes the worrying appearance of a

[103]Peters, *The Magician, the Witch, and the Law*, 33–45.

[104]Raoul Glaber, *Histoires*, ed. Mathieu Arnoux (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 183–85. Cesario di Heisterbach, *Sui demòni*, 97.

[105]See this suggestive reflection of Saint Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*, IIaIIae, q. 94, a. 3 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 9:245): "haeresis Manichaeorum, etiam quantum ad genus peccati, gravior est quam peccatum aliorum idololatrarum."

[106]Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi* II, d. 6, a. 4 (S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, 2:169): "amicos autem esse eos qui unius inimici sunt, consequitur: et ideo ut magis hominibus noceant, quasi ad invicem confoederantur, ut concorditer et ordinate impugnent."

[107]Ibid., *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 109, a. 2 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 3:875): "concordia daemonum, qua quidem allis obediunt, non est ex amicitia quam inter se habeant; sed ex communi nequitia, qua homines odiunt, et Dei iustitiae repugnant. Est enim proprium hominum impiorum, ut eis se adiungant et subiiciant, ad propriam nequitiam exequendam, quos potiores viribus vident."

[108]Ibid., *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 63, a. 8 (Ibid., 3:579): "omnes daemones illi supremo subduntur… . Habet enim hoc ordo divinae iustitiae, ut cuius suggestioni aliquis consentit in culpa, eius potestati subdatur in poena."

[109]Russell, *Lucifer*, 203.

[110]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 8, a. 7 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 11:394): "omnium malorum caput est diabolus."

[111]Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Iob ad litteram* I, 8 (Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, vol. 26 [Roma, ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1965], 10): "Solet autem perversorum hominum, quorum princeps est Satan."

corpus mysticum.[112] The hostile powers that threatened Christian society were a group of beings alienated from grace, a frightful army with two generals—Satan and the Antichrist, which like the Christian trinity are not separate beings but only one.[113]

On the basis of this series of nuances that Thomas Aquinas introduced into Patristic demonology, the devil that appears in his *summae* could be "perceived" as a more menacing figure, a being more autonomous and more obviously present in the daily world than the Satan that we find in the writings of the church fathers. Leaving the foundations of Augustinian providentialism untouched, the redefinition of God's permission proposed by Thomism grants Satan a degree of freedom in his interaction with humans that contrasts with the limits often imposed by Patristic theologians.

At the same time, keeping unmodified the essence of the powers of the devil—which lay in his ability to manipulate the forces of nature in his own benefit—the progress in the understanding of natural phenomena characteristic of the late medieval centuries provoked a remarkable increase in the *potentia diaboli*, in Satan's capacity for producing real effects in the material world. Therefore, for instance, Saint Thomas recognizes that demons can cause violent storms and induce changes in the atmosphere by moving, pushing, or agitating air masses;[114] it is indeed a power that first-millennium theology generally refused to grant to evil spirits. All this can be found in the famous eighth cannon of the Council of Braga of 561,[115] and also in the influential *Contra insulsam vulgi opinionem de grandine et tonitruis*, by Agobard of Lyons (circa 815–817).[116] Similarly, Aquinas believes that Satan's knowledge about the natural world allows him to select

[112]The idea of a diabolic *corpus mysticum* will appear again in the context of the repression of the *Vauderie d'Arras* (1459–1460). See Frank Mercier, *La Vauderie d'Arras. Une chasse aux sorcières à l'Automne du Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 116–19, 212–16.

[113]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 8, a. 8 (Santo Tomás de Aquino, *Suma Teológica*, 11:396): "Diabolus et Antichristus non sunt duo capita sed unum… . Ita Antichristus est membrum diaboli, et tamen ipse est caput malorum."

[114]Santo Tomás de Aquinas, *Expositio super Iob ad litteram* I, 19 (Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, 13): "considerandum vero est quod cum omnis praedicta adversitas sit per Satan inducta, necesse est confiteri quod Deo permittente daemones possunt turbationem aeris inducere, ventos concitare, et facere ut ignis de caelo cadat."

[115]"Si quis credit, quia aliquantas in mundo creaturas diabolus fecerit et tonitura et fulgura et tempestates et siccitates ipse diabolus sua auctoritate faciat, … anathema sit." E. Mangenot, "Démon d'après les décisions officielles de l'Église," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, ed. Emile Amann, 15 vols. (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1903–1946), 4:407.

[116]S. Agobardi Episcopi Lugdunensis, *Liber contra insulsam vulgi opinionem de grandine et tonitruis*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères: 1878–1890), vol. 104, cols. 147–58. Even though Agobard's main objective is to deny that men can cause rain, hail or any other atmospheric phenomenom, his insistence that only God can alter the weather allows us to conclude that the devil lacks this power, except in exceptional cases such as those described in the *Book of Job. De grandine et tonitruis* V: "Ecce et hic locus solum Dominum ostendit creatorem et auctorem grandinis, non aliquem hominem";

the physical traits of the children whose birth he provokes through the manipulations of incubus and succubus, as reflected in a chilling excerpt from the *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi*: "Demons can know the quality of the semen through the disposition of the man from whom it has been extracted. They can know, as well, the woman suitable for the reception of the semen and even the constellation which can be helpful for the corporeal result (that is, to achieve the optimum complexion of the person thus engendered). In case all these circumstances occur, it is possible that people born in this way have big and strong bodies."[117]

IV. The Image of the Devil in the Visions of Emine de Reims: Variations on the Same Theme

It is time to return to our source, to compare the behavior of the demons that unceasingly haunt Ermine with the demonological paradigms discussed in the preceding pages.

There is no doubt that the invisible thread that links each of the tribulations suffered by the widow from Reims demonstrates strong Augustinian providentialism. Forty years before the appearance of the foundational texts of early modern radical demonology—the *Formicarius* by Johannes Nider; the anonymous *Errores Gazariorum*; and *Ut magorum et maleficiorum* by Claude Tholosan[118]—the narration of Jean le Graveur presents a demon that mimics the tenacious opponent of the hermits and cenobites of the first millennium.

"Quem laudant de terra, no solum dracones abyssi, verum etiam ignis, grando, nix, glacies, spiritus procellarum, quae faciunt verbum ejus; non verbum hominis, non verbum angeli mali." (Ibid., cols 150–51); *De grandine et tonitruis* VIII: "ecce in hac magna et prolixa Ecclesiastici libri sententia, cum subtilissima admiratione imperio Dei tribuitur quidquid in aere fit, quidquid de aere in terram descendit." (Ibid., col. 152). On Agobard of Lyons and *De grandine et tonitruis*, see Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 108–16; Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Les superstitions* (Paris: Seuil, 1988); I quote the Spanish translation: *Historia de la superstición*, traducción de Teresa Clavel (Barcelona: Crítica, 1992), 59–62; Xavier Yvanoff, *La sorcellerie médiévale* (Agnières: JMG Éditions, 2008), 125–34; Jean Verdon, *Les superstitions au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Perrin, 2008); I quote the Spanish translation: *Las supersticiones en la Edad Media*, traducción de Silvia Kot (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 2009), 47–49.

[117]Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi* II, d. 8, a. 4 (S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, 2:213): "daemones possunt scire virtutem seminis decisi ex dispositione ejus a quo decisum est, et similiter mulierem proportionatam ad seminis illius susceptionem, et etiam constellationem juvantem ad effectum corporalem, scilicet optimae complexionis in genito: quibus omnibus concurrentibus, possibile est genitos corpore magnos esse vel fortes."

[118]On this foundational *corpus*, see *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, 99–438.

The spirits that tortured Ermine had their operation restricted to the narrow bounds imposed by the supreme power that supervised their action. Aware of this, the widow frequently reminds the demons of this truth: "you cannot do me more harm that what God allows you. If He wants you to beat me, do it. If He wants you to kill me, do it. I deserve it."[119] On several occasions, the fallen angels operated as useful instruments of conversion, reminding Ermine of old sins and transgressions that she could not have revealed to her confessor had it not been for the help of the wicked spirits.[120]

At the same time, a deep sense of providential control emerges in the narration from the moment the author unveils the extraordinary anecdote of the transvection to the forest of Nanteuil. Saint Paul the Simple makes, within the context of this amazing tribulation, his first appearance to play the role of a second narrator. He will be in charge of disclosing the celestial script in which Ermine is unwittingly starring.[121] The interventions of this ancient hero of the desert give sense to the overwhelming superimposition of humiliations the widow has to endure. With the same purpose, an unidentified celestial voice frequently makes comments on the most violent episodes and gives courage to the tormented woman. The Tuesday before Pentecost, for instance, a sweet voice comforts Ermine as follows: "Woman, do not be afraid: demons will not withhold you much longer."[122] On May 29, 1396, shortly before the celebration of *Corpus*, Paul the Simple gives even more details about Ermine's future: "you still have to endure many tribulations but they will cease after *Corpus Christi*."[123] On Tuesday, June 6, when the woman was laying on the floor as a result of another beating, the holy hermit raised her, placed her on her bed, and covered her with a blanket, saying: "Ermine, beautiful girl, I am the hermit who rescued you from the forest and the roof of the church; I have already come to help you in many other opportunities."[124] On more than one occasion a sacred figure entered the scene, drove away the demons, and temporarily put an end to the suffering of the widow. As usual in the stories featuring the desert fathers,

[119]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 192: "vous nes pouvez me faire que ce que Dieu veut, s'Il veut que vous me battiez, battez-mois et s'Il veut que vous me tuiez, tuez-moi, je l'ai bien merité."

[120]See Florence Chave-Mahir, "Une parole au service de l'unité. L'exorcisme des possédés dans l'Église d'Occidente (Xe–XIVe siècle)" (Ph.D. diss., Université Lumière-Lyon 2, 2004), 273–84.

[121]On Saint Paul the Simple, see Dom Jules L. Baudot, O.S.B., *Dictionnaire d'hagiographie* (Paris: Librairie Bloud & Gay, 1925), 511–12; Francis Joseph Bacchus, "St. Paul the Simple," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), vol. 11. New Advent http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11591a.htm, (accessed June 14, 2010).

[122]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 236: "femme, ne sois pas épouvantée, les démons ne te retiendront que peu de temps."

[123]Ibid., 239: "tu auras encore de nombreuses mésaventures, mais elles cesseront après la Fête-Dieu."

[124]Ibid., 245: "Ermine, belle fille, je suis l'ermite qui te ramena du bois et te rapporta du toit de l'église; je te suis venu en aide plusieurs autres fois."

God revoked his license and interrupted the combat when one of the contestants went too far.[125]

As in the monastic *exempla*, the constant harassment of the devil is the instrument that facilitates the emergency of the virtuous self of a new Christian saint.[126] According to Homi Bhabha, stereotyped speeches are usually effective because they trigger subjectivization processes that allow the emergence of new identities.[127] This is why, following the classical formulas of hagiographic narrations, Ermine asks the deity to spare no punishment or torture to her: "Lord, do not spare me anything," she claims, after spending a sleepless night haunted by crows, flies, snakes, lizards, and toads.[128] The white martyrdom that evil spirits caused her to suffer soon began to bear fruit; by mid-January 1396, the widow hears a sweet voice that gives assurance on the effectiveness of this brutal penitential regime: "my friend, do not be so afraid. God has granted you a great grace: all your sins have been forgiven."[129] As in countless occasions in the past, Satan and his minions were unwittingly contributing to the creation of a new Christian heroine.[130]

It is not surprising, therefore, that our source repeatedly stresses the failure of Satan. The subject of the weak and defenseless woman, who defeats a powerful adversary with supernatural help, appears in Christian hagiography in the story of Saint Perpetua, martyred in Carthage on March 7, 207: shortly before being thrown to the arena, the fragile young woman defeats in a dream, very easily, a huge dragon, whose head she crushes with her delicate foot.[131] Jean le Graveur had no doubt that a similar moral crowned the story of Ermine de Reims: "all power, science, strength and cunning of the infernal enemies were deployed against a simple and ignorant poor

[125]David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 150.

[126]Ibid., 154.

[127]Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 67.

[128]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 240: "Seigneur, ne m'épargnez en rien."

[129]Ibid., 201: "Ma mie, ne sois pas trop effrayée, Dieu t'a fait une grande grace car il t'a perdonné tous tes péchés."

[130]Few images synthesize with greater force the role of the Augustinian devil as manufacturer of saints as the one we can find in the *Elucidarium* by Honorius Augustodunensis, a catechetical *summa* written around the beginning of twelfth century. In this text, Satan is compared to a blacksmith who, through torture and pain, forges and purges golden goblets, that is, the saints of the Heavenly King: "tali camino et his instrumentis purgat ipse aurea vasa caelestis regis: hi sunt electi, in quibus renovat imaginem Dei." Quoted by Francisco Vicente Calle Calle, *Les représentations du diable et des êtres diaboliques dans la littérature et l'art en France au XIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Université de Caen, 1997), 1:71.

[131]*Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* X, 10 (*Il diavolo e i suoi angeli*, 300): "At ubi vidi moram fieri, iunxi manus, ut digitos in digitos mitterem, et aprehendi illi caput, et cecidit in faciem, et calcavi illi caput."

woman, who nevertheless, . . . after a brief time, managed to defeat all of her assailants."[132]

Although Augustinian demonology works as *basso continuo* of the curious story of Ermine de Reims, the first millennium paradigm never monopolizes the image of the devil that can be found in Jean le Graveur's narration. Other more recent demonological traditions also contribute to this extraordinary hybrid image of Satan in the manuscript.

In fact, many of the corrections introduced by Thomas Aquinas into the Patristic demonology are clearly perceived in the collection of anecdotes compiled by Ermine's biographer. We have already seen that the absolute immateriality of angels and demons definitively prevails in the theological discourse from the second half of thirteenth century onward, thus offering an orthodox framework that the subtle nuances suggested by the Franciscan school fail to alter.[133] The disembodiment of separate substances becomes, therefore, one of the basic tenets of early modern radical demonology. The story told by Jean le Graveur certainly expresses, with peculiar conclusiveness, one of the main problems that affected any demonology subsequent to the *Summa Theologica*: the obsession to demonstrate that even though evil spirits lack bodies-naturally-attached-to-them, they can nevertheless produce real effects in the material world. In Ermine's story, the aerial bodies assumed by Satan and his hosts always have a consistency that the narrator strives to maintain. Once, while trying to get rid of the spirit that disturbed her sleep, Ermine "threw a punch and hit something."[134] When she threw away a toad that had jumped to her face, "[the alleged animal] made a soft noise and screeched 'Oing' while reaching the floor."[135] When she received blows, the devil's fist seemed "hard as iron."[136] The paradoxical and overwhelming physicality of these bodiless demons provoked in Ermine a kind of reasoning that seems designed to help remove any doubts the

[132]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 184: "toute la puissance, la science, la force et la ruse des ennemies de l'enfer se sont déployées contre une pauvre femme, simple et ignorante; mais … elle a, après un peu de temps, vaincu tous ses ennemis."

[133]On the peculiar characteristics of Franciscan angelology and demonology, see Martin Lenz, "Why Can't Angels Think Properly? Ockham against Chatton and Aquinas," in *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance*, ed. Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2008), 155–67; Tiziana Suarez-Nani, "Angels, Space, and Place: The Location of Separate Substances according to John Duns Scotus," in ibid., 89–112; David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 93–111; Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, 148–57. Futhermore, rival angelological conceptions that challenged some of the theological principles defended by Aquinas also emerged within the Dominican order; see the case of Thierry de Freiberg in Suarez-Nani, *Les anges et la philosophie*, 55–73, 143–64.

[134]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 189: "donna un coup et frappa quelque chose."

[135]Ibid., 229: "il fit un bruit mou en tombant et cria: 'Oing.'"

[136]Ibid., 198: "dur comme fer."

doctrine of the complete immateriality could have induced. "There is something very surprising here," she explained: "it is said that demons are made of nothing but in this very same moment, I am rolling them like balls just in front of me."[137]

It is important to note that in Jean le Graveur's narration, there is also a vast list of anecdotes that reveals that through local movement evil spirits can transport any kind of material objects, a theory that Saint Thomas had justified using arguments drawn from Aristotelian physics.[138] In addition, Ermine's biographer makes a remarkable effort to prove that the air transvections she reports had indeed taken place; thus, one of the incontrovertible pieces of evidence that proved that the woman had been actually transported through the air to the forest of Nanteuil was the fact that the walls of the city were still closed at the time of the episode.[139]

It is very suggestive that when it comes to inducing temptations, Ermine's familiar spirits have the same high degree of autonomy and independence that Saint Thomas attributes to them. The devil, in fact, continued torturing the widow even if Saint Paul the Simple had announced her tribulations would cease after *Corpus Christi*. The hermit explains to the widow the reasons for this apparent contradiction: the demons had appeared before the deity, *motu proprio*, to request that "during the octaves of [*Corpus*] they were allowed to cause you whatever harm they were empowered to, and God had accepted."[140] Satan and his angels were taking advantage of the customs of the catholic liturgical calendar, which usually extended the celebration of certain feasts up to eight days immediately after them! The anecdote makes clear that the decision to torment the woman did not always come from God.

Finally, it is easy to observe that for Ermine as well as for her confessor, the impious enemy they were facing sometimes acquired the traits that Aquinas attributed to the forces of evil—those of a close alliance between evil spirits and wicked men, designed to launch a coordinated attack against the forces of good. Actually, on two occasions Ermine was accosted by hostile men on the street. The first brandished a dagger and told her, "next time I come across you I will severely kill or hurt you."[141] The second cursed her in front of some astonished passers-by: "Where do you go, whore? To

[137]Ibid., 228: "voici une chose bien étonnante, on dit que les démons ne sont rien et, en ce moment, je les roule devant moi."

[138]Ibid., 191, 194, 209–11, 213, 250.

[139]Ibid., 218: "elle n'aurait pu, même si elle l'avait voulu, sortir de Reims à cette heure-là car les portes de la ville n'étaient pas encore ouvertes."

[140]Ibid., 245: "qu'Il leur permette de te faire toute ce qui est en leur pouvoir, tant que dureront les octaves [de la Fête-Dieu], et Dieu le leur a accordé."

[141]Ibid., 204: "il ne la frappa mais dit que, la prochaine fois qu'il la rencontrerait, il la tuerait ou la blesserait grièvement."

prostitute yourself? . . . You only live for promiscuity, dirty slut."[142] These assaults in broad daylight occurred simultaneously with the attacks that the demons launched against the woman every night. Thus, both episodes contributed to establish the disturbing feeling that the enemy Ermine had to face was, in fact, a compact unit in which aggressors of flesh and blood symbiotically complemented the brutal attacks of disembodied spirits.

The obvious references to the Thomistic demonology do not exhaust the variations that Jean le Graveur introduces into the image of the devil structured around the Augustinian principles of the first millennium. The misfortunes of Ermine de Reims also include several episodes that allude directly to the radical demonology of the centuries to come. The idea of a diabolic pact, one of the key pieces of what has been called the cumulative concept of witchcraft, appears more than once in the text.[143] One of the greatest merits of the widow was, according to Jean le Graveur, that she "never consented to pay tribute to any of the spirits that she saw."[144] The devil demanded the woman pay homage, which she refused: "serve me, love me, fear me," Satan insisted a few weeks before the Ermine's death.[145] From the earliest witchcraft persecutions, Satan offered money and wealth as a recruitment strategy.[146] In Jean le Graveur's manuscript, in fact, such offers appear on five different occasions.[147] The diabolic sacraments, to which Alain Boureau attributed the qualitative leap that radical demonology experienced during the 1320s, are repeatedly used by the devil to tempt the

[142]Ibid., 207: "Où vas-tu ribaude? Tu vas te prostituer? . . . tu ne vis que de débauche, sale putain."

[143]On the diabolic pact, see Béatrice Delaurenti, *La puissance des mots: "Virtus verborum." Débats doctrinaux sur le pouvoir des incantations au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Cerf, 2007), 230–42; Fabián Alejandro Campagne, *Homo Catholicus, Homo Superstitiosus. El discurso antisupersticioso en la España de los siglos XV a XVIII* (Madrid: Miño y Dávila, 2002), 66–74; David Lederer, "Pact with the Devil," in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 3:867–69; J. R. Veenstra, *Magic and Divination at the Courts of Burgundy and France: Text and Context of Laurens Pignon's Contre les Devineurs (1411)* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 43–96; Franco Cardini, *Magia, stregoneria, superstizioni nell'Occidente Medievale* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1979); I quote the Spanish translation: *Magia, brujería y superstición en el Occidente medieval*, traducción de Antonio Prometeo Moya (Barcelona: Península, 1982), 180–88; Brian Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1987); I quote the Spanish translation: *La caza de brujas en la Europa moderna*, traducción de José Luis Gil Aristu (Madrid: Alianza, 1995), 62–66; Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, 93–123; Arturo Graf, *The Story of the Devil*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 130–44.

[144]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 185: "jamais elle n'a voulu consentir à rendre hommage à quelque esprit qu'elle ait vu."

[145]Ibid., 263: "sers-moi, aime-moi et crains-moi."

[146]By way of example, see Jaquet Durier's heresy trial at Vevey, Pays de Vaud, March 1448: Martine Ostorero, *"Folâtrer avec les démons." Sabbat et chasse aux sorciers à Vevey (1448)* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1995), 202.

[147]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 190, 199, 216, 218, 245.

widow;[148] for example, on February 6, 1396, Satan made a surprising proposal to Ermine: "I will see you receive communion well and honorably, privately in your chamber, and as frequently as you like."[149]

The episode of the forest of Nanteuil also relates how, in a few seconds Ermine was transported to a place almost twenty kilometers away from the city of Reims. No doubt this impressive anecdote foreshadows the nocturnal flights that future witches took part in the following decades. Moreover, the scene the woman sees after being left in a clearing in the forest takes the appearance of a still immature sabbat, in which devils in human form take the place that decades later will become the terrestrial allies of the devil. According to Jean le Graveur, "all around Ermine there were so many demons in human form that she could not count them."[150] Many of the spirits that surrounded her in the forest had taken the appearance of inhabitants of the village where Ermine had lived before moving to Reims. A few decades later, inquisitors and secular judges would begin to ask for the names of the neighbors who the suspected witches had reportedly seen at the sabbat; at this point, the ghosts seen by Ermine in the *protosabbat* of Nanteuil would finally become a threat of flesh and bone.

The word *sorcière* (witch) also appears in Jean le Graveur's narration. By mid-July 1396 Satan tried to frighten the widow. The devil reminded her that many people in the city had already begun to grow suspicious of her, suggesting a potential shift in popular perception of her from tormented by the devil to allied with the devil:[151] "a rumor has been spread in town that

[148]On the diabolic sacraments, which played a key role in the demonology of Fray Enrico Del Carretto, one of the theologians consulted by John XXII on the possibility of assimilating ritual magic to heresy, see Alain Boreau, *Le pape et les sorciers. Une consultation de Jean XXII sur la magie en 1320 (Manuscrit B.A.V. Borghese 348)* (Roma: École française de Rome, 2004), xxviii–xlvi. For a different interpretation on this papal consultation, see Isabel Iribarren, "From Black Magic to Heresy: A Doctrinal Leap in the Pontificate of John XXII," *Church History* 76, no. 1 (March 2007): 32–60.

[149]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 210: "je te ferais communier bien et honorablement, en privé dans ta chambre, aussi souvent que tu le voudrais."

[150]Ibid., 216: "tout autour d'elle, il y avait tant de démons, sous la forme d'hommes vêtus de noir, qu'elle ne pus les compter."

[151]As Nancy Caciola argues (*Discerning Spirits*, 318): "witchcraft is an extreme but logical conclusion of the shifts in the interpretation of possessed behaviors engendered by the discernment of spirits." On occasions, the "living saints" of the Italian Renaissance were called *masche di Dio* (witches of God); in these cases, however, such expression did not have the disqualifying purpose that it seem to have in the case of Ermine de Reims; see Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990), 116. On the disturbing phenomenological proximity between holy women and witches in the Late Middle Ages, see Peter Dinzelbacher, *Heilige oder Hexen?Schicksale Auffälliger Frauen in Mittelalter und Frühneuzeit* (Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 1995); I quote the Italian translation: *Santa o Strega? Donne e devianza religiosa tra Medioevo ed Età moderna*, traduzione di Paola Massardo (Genova: Ecig, 1999), 165–261; Pamela Giorgi, *Donne sante, donne streghe. Estasi mistiche e possessioni tra medioevo e modernità* (Firenze: Olimpia, 2007), passim. Richard Kieckhefer, "The Holy and the Unholy: Sainthood, Witchcraft and Magic in Late Medieval Europe," in *Christendom and Its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution,*

you have been many times tormented by the Enemy, and that he has frequently spoken to you; you may therefore be thrown in jail and tortured as a witch, to make you confess."[152]

V. Radical Demonology and Christian Apocalypse: On the Verge of the Modern Witch Hunt

Based on the arguments of the previous sections, it is clear that the extreme experience of Ermine de Reims can provide new evidence for assessing the continuities and ruptures between radical demonology and the previous demonological paradigms.

The question we must pose now is whether the consolidation of the new natural science of demons demanded, as Muchembled and Boureau suggest, the replacement of Patristic demonology by a radically different conceptualization of Satan. How different is the Augustinian devil from the image of Satan that predominated during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

In Jean le Graveur's narration, an atmosphere of great tension can be observed between different demonological paradigms that in fact do coexist, and not always in a traumatic manner. Some demonological paradigms of a folk nature could even be added to those already analyzed;[153] more than once, for instance, the devil who harassed the widow acted like a nightmare demon, one of the classical components of the European popular mythology.[154]

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and Rebellion, 1100–1500, ed. Scott Waugh and Peter Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 310–57.

[152]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 260: "le bruit court dans la ville que tu as été, de nombreuses fois, tourmentée par l'Ennemi et qu'il t'a souvent parlé; on pourrait bien te mettre en prison et te torturer, comme sorcière, afin de te faire avouer."

[153]On the characteristics of wicked spirits in European folk and popular culture, see Alfonso M. Di Nola, *Il diavolo* (Roma: Newton Compton, 2006), 315–34; Fabián Alejandro Campagne, *Strix hispánica. Demonología cristiana y cultura folklórica en la España moderna* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2009), 151–223; Russell, *Lucifer*, 1992, 62–91; Carlos González Sanz, "El diablo en el cuento folklórico," in *El diablo en la Edad Moderna*, ed. María Tausiet and James S. Amelang (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2004), 133–60; Muchembled, *Une histoire du diable*, 32–34; De Mayo, *The Demonology of William of Auvergne*, 91–118.

[154]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 194: "le démon revint et se coucha derrière elle sur la couverture, il mit son bras sur elle et celui-ci était si pesant qu'elle avait l'impression que c'était une meule de moulin…; et il la tint ainsi pressée presque jusqu'à l'heure des matines." On the nightmare demon, see Fabian Alejandro Campagne, "Witch or Demon? Fairies, Vampires and Nightmares in Early Modern Spain," *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 53 (2008): 393–94; Owen Davies, "The Nightmare Experience, Sleep Paralysis, and Witchcraft Accusations," *Folklore* 114 (2003): 181–203; Charles Stewart, "Erotic Dreams and Nightmares from Antiquity to the Present," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8 (2002): 279–309; Sophie Bridier, *Le*

From the previous analysis, it is clear that the overlap found in *Les Visions d'Ermine de Reims* between (1) an Augustinian conception of the devil with a very strong providential content, which highlights the restrictions and limits imposed to Satan; (2) a Thomistic demonology, which enhances the paradoxical capacity of a disembodied devil to act in the material world, and his unprecedented autonomy as tempter and instigator of deviant behaviors; and (3) a radical demonology under construction in which we can already perceive the emergence of the conspiracy theory and of the sect of devil worshippers, help to demonstrate that the image of the devil that prevails in times of the great European witch hunts is not necessarily in opposition to the previous demonological paradigms.

Part of the importance of *Les Visions d'Ermine de Reims*, in which references to the devil abound, is that it demonstrates the inconvenience of a rigid opposition between the demonologies of the first and the second Christian millennia. From a strictly doctrinal point of view, the demonological postulates of scholasticism do not contradict the essence of Patristic demonology. The new science of demons, which began to emerge during the thirteenth century, merely emphasized specific traits of the devil of the fathers and, therefore, the differences between the two mythologies did not arise from the existence of deep contradictions but from the decision of emphasizing different components of the same demonological complex. What I am trying to suggest is that the Satan of scholasticism was not only an enhanced, revised, and expanded version of the Augustinian devil but the true consummation of the Patristic model, its fullest expression—one that would begin to emerge only at the end of time, on the eve of the Second Coming of Christ.

In brief, the image of the devil that becomes the basis of the witchcraft repression of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is merely a late-scholastic construction that corrects, clarifies, and qualifies postulates of a clear providentialist nature, whose essence the new science of the devil will never deny. A much more accurate analysis of the natural powers of the devil and a re-signification of the doctrine of God's permission proved to be sufficient to transform the pathetic devil of the Patristic sources—an involuntary slave of an omniscient and omnipotent providence—into a gruesome monster, the fierce opponent of the Christian deity that radical demonology would make popular from the mid-fifteenth century onward.

After all, Augustinian demonology admitted the prophecy included in the cryptic text that completes the sacred canon of the New Testament:

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cauchemar. Étude d'une figure mythique (Paris: Presses du l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2001), passim.

immediately before the Parousia, the devil was thought to be temporarily freed from the constraints that God imposed after the incarnation of the Word. On the eve of the Second Coming of Christ, it was believed that God would grant Satan a series of unprecedented permissions that will preannounce the final combat between the forces of good and evil. Augustine explains this with crystal-clear arguments in the famous book XX of *De civitate Dei*:[155]

> the bonds of the devil simply mean that he is not allowed to tempt humans as much as he would like to do. . . . If this happened…, human weakness is such that would cause the downfall and defeat of a large number of faithful, who would be separated from faith—and this is not the will of God. And that is precisely why he is tied. . . . But he wil be released when the time is running out. . . . He will be loosed in order to make the City of God . . . aware of the kind of enemy it has defeated. What are we compared to the saints and faithful to come? To test them, this brutal enemy will be loosed, an enemy with which, despite being tied up, we fight with many risks at the present time.[156]

In many senses, the radical demonology of early modern times is the child of this special clause of the demonology of the first millennium. Then, it was not accidental that a text like Jean le Graveur's was created within the framework of one of the golden ages of Christian apocalypticism.[157] Ermine's confessor

[155]On the Augustinian apocalyptic theory, particularly dominant during the first millennium, see Richard Landes, "The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. van Meter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 243–70; Paula Fredriksen, "Apocalipticism," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999); I quote the Spanish translation: *Diccionario de San Agustín. San Agustín a través del tiempo*, traducción de Constantino Ruiz-Garrido (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2001), 95–102.

[156]San Agustín, *De Civitate Dei* XX, 8, 2–3 (*Obras completas de San Agustín*, 17:544–45): "sed alligatio diaboli, est non permitti exercere totam tentationem, quam potest vel vi vel dolo. . . . Quod si permitteretur in tam longo tempore et tanta infirmitate multorum, plurimus tales, quales Deus id perpeti non vult, et fideles deiiceret, et ne crederent impediret: quod ne faceret, alligatus est. . . . Tunc autem solvetur, quando et breve tempus erit. . . . Et solvet in fine, ut quam fortem adversarium Dei civitas superaverit. . . . In eorum sane, qui tunc futuri sunt, sanctorum atque fidelium comparatione quid sumus? quandoquidem ad illos probandos tantus solvetur inimicus, cum quo nos ligato tantis periculis dimicamus."

[157]On the rise of apocalytic thinking during the Great Schism, see Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 173–99; Laura Ackerman Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: The Christian Astrology of Pierre d'Ailly, 1350–1420* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 86–101; Roberto Rusconi, *L'Attesa della fine: Crisi della società, profezía ed Apocalisse in Italia al tempo del grande scisma d'Occidente (1378–1417)* (Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1979), passim; Federico Pastore, *La fabbrica delle streghe. Saggio sui fondamenti teorici e ideologici della repressione della stregoneria nei secoli XIII–XVII* (Pasian di Prato: Campanotto Editore, 1997), 25–56; Jean Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident aux XIVe et XVIIIe siècles. Une cité assiégée* (Paris: Fayard, 1978); I quote the Spanish translation: *El miedo en Occidente (Siglos XIV–XVIII). Una ciudad sitiada*, versión castellana de Mauro Armiño (Madrid: Taurus,

shared the eschatological enthusiasm influencing Europe, then immersed in the uncertainties of the Great Schism. In fact, Jean le Graveur eagerly set forth his certainty for the imminent coming of the antichrist in the very same foreword of the manuscript: "Since God has revealed the coming of the Antichrist in the Apocalypse, through the very words of Saint John the Evangelist, and given that the time for this happening is imminent…, I think that everything that may follow . . . will be a true example, a model of teaching, where we can safely learn how to protect ourselves from the perfidy and stratagems of this wicked Antichrist."[158]

As can also be seen in the radical demonology of the witch hunters of centuries to come, the enemy that systematically vexed Ermine is none other than the Augustinian Satan: a spirit that, on the eve of the agonic struggle that was to trigger the end of time, has been freed from the restrictions of an overly narrow divine permission. After all, in the words of Augustine, "if [the devil] were never loosed, we should know less about his evil power, the most faithful patience of the holy city would not be tested enough, and to conclude, it would be less evident what good use the Almighty makes of his great evil."[159]

In general terms, then, Ermine's adversary already had all the features of the stubborn opponent of early modern witch hunters. In the final years of the fourteenth century, however, there was still no secular or ecclesiastical authority prepared to launch the final battle against the forces of evil and its earthly allies. Just a few decades later, in the Western Alps, the ultimate political decision would be made, and the fires of the first stakes would begin to illuminate a continent that expected to hear, at any moment, the terrible trumpets of the Last Judgment.

1989), 307–32; José Guadalajara Medina, *Las profecías del Anticristo en la Edad Media* (Madrid: Gredos, 1996), 191–245, 288–399.

[158]*Entre Dieu et Satan*, 184: "Comme Dieu a révélé la venue de l'Antéchrist par la bouche de saint Jean l'évangéliste dans l'Apocalypse, et parce que le temps de sa venue est proche . . . il me semble que les choses que suivent . . . sont un exemple véritable, un modèle d'instruction pour nous apprendre sûrement comment nous pourrons nous garder des perfidies et des tromperies de cet Antéchrist pervers."

[159]San Agustin, *De Civitate Dei* XX, 8, 2 (*Obras completas de San Agustín*, 17:544): "Si autem nunquam solveretur, minus appareret eius maligna potentia, minus sanctae civitatis fidelissima patientia probaretur; minus denique perspiceretur, quam magno eius malo tam bene fuerit usus Omnipotens."