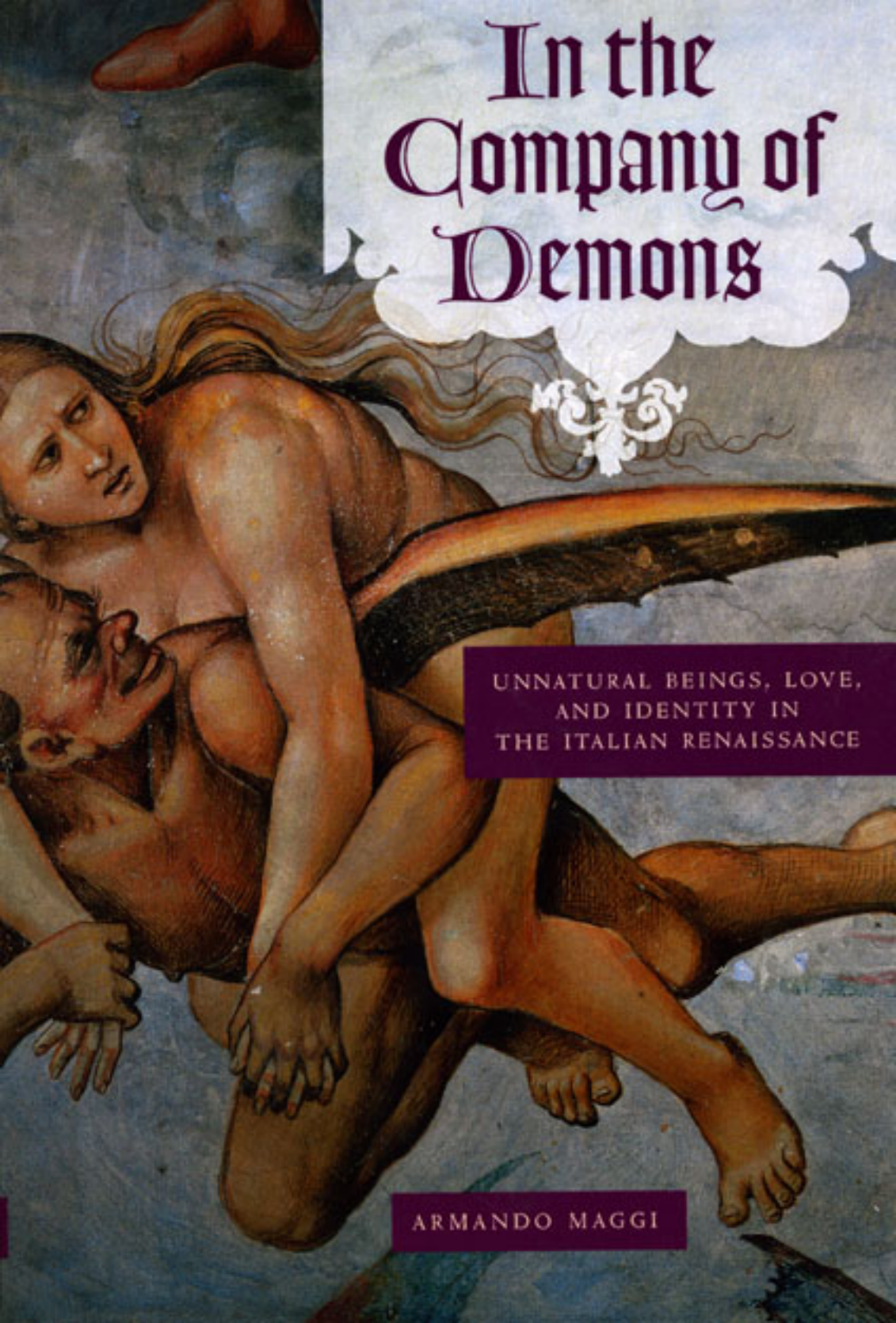
In the Company of Demons
UNNATURAL BEINGS, LOVE, AND IDENTITY IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE
ARMANDO MAGGI

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PREFACE
Bodies of Metaphors

It is unquestionable that revelations, prodigies, or celestial signs always accompany grave events, Niccolò Machiavelli writes in the first book of his *Discourses on Livy*.[1] Before the French king Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494, Machiavelli continues, many believed that the citizens of Arezzo, a town in Tuscany, had seen and heard sinister armies fighting in the sky. Machiavelli reminds us that, according to several contemporary thinkers, the air is full of "intelligences" (that is, spiritual beings without a physical body) who have compassion for us and warn us about upcoming dangers by evoking astonishing and alarming images, which work as forms of visible statements.[2] In other words, these spiritual beings would speak to us through images. Although he professes no specific knowledge of natural and supernatural things, Machiavelli states that "maybe" some spiritual beings are responsible for these strange and unnatural visions (for instance, images of soldiers marching in the sky).[3]

The strange and unnatural manifestations preceding devastating occurrences such as wars, plagues, or natural disasters might be messages coming from some compassionate spiritual beings who are able to foresee the future and cannot help but warn us. Machiavelli stresses that both the ancients and the moderns believed in this unique and puzzling connection with some superior creatures. He reminds us that Livy, in the *History of Rome*, reports that "before the arrival of the French armies in Rome," a "more than human voice" had warned that the enemy was approaching.[4] Machiavelli underscores the uncanny coincidence between the French armies of King Charles VIII invading Italy in the fifteenth century and the "French" invasion reported by the ancient historian Livy. Both French invasions of Italy had been announced by superior intelligences.

Machiavelli feels compelled to mention the possible existence of some spiritual beings only because Livy's book is full of references to their active presence in ancient history, and Machiavelli doesn't know what to make of it.

Whereas the author of *The Prince* offers an extremely cautious interpretation of the unnatural signs preceding dramatic events, Francesco Guicciardini, the greatest Italian historian of the Renaissance and one who was on friendly terms with Machiavelli, has no doubt about them. In his *Ricordi* (Reflections), Guicciardini writes: "I am entitled to state that the spirits do exist. I mean those things we call spirits, that is, the aerial beings that speak with human beings in a direct and open way. My personal experience has convinced me of their existence."[5]

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The book you are about to read is not a survey of Renaissance folk stories and theories on spirits, demons, and angels. Do not read it in hopes that you may find an informative, and flat, overview of this cultural issue. Instead, similar to my earlier *Satan's Rhetoric* on the idiom of fallen angels according to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century treatises on demonology, *In the Company of Demons* addresses an enigma that has not received the critical attention it deserves. I hope that the intentionally ironic reference contained in the title will help me clarify the main theme of this work. Unlike our contemporary culture, that of the Renaissance tended to believe in an ongoing interaction between spiritual beings and humankind. The historian Guicciardini is adamant about this. The spirits are those aerial beings that converse with us.

The act of addressing us is a fundamental aspect of these creatures. The spirits exist only insofar as they speak to us. I believe that the more you read this book, the better you will understand this central and baffling idea. But before we continue, we must ask ourselves a basic question. Why do these spiritual beings have mercy on us in the first place? And why do they choose to speak to us through sudden and striking images? Why is their presence always marked by an odd, eerie, weird apparition? Why do they have to pervert nature in order to reveal their messages? Let us bear in mind that the spirits' alleged warnings never or rarely succeed in modifying the course of history. Notwithstanding the spirits' eloquent presage, Charles VIII did invade and devastate Italy. The spirits' warning, then, wasn't it a useless message? If the spirits had the faculty to foresee the future, why did they bother sending us a message if they knew it would be of no use?

Some sort of emotional or intellectual involvement (what Machiavelli defines as compassion) compels the spirits to express their concern or interest toward us, even if their visible statements seem meaningless. But let us also keep in mind that the spirits' language is unnatural because it perverts and questions nature. As I will explain in more detail later, we understand

that the spirits have spoken when nature becomes suddenly and temporarily perverted (for instance, multiple suns or moons appear in the sky, or the image of a dead friend walks into our bedroom and lies next to us). It is a fact that when the spirits speak, reality is somehow suspended. At times the spirits' astounding and mysterious statements are more than speaking; they are requests for attention. (For instance, what do they try to say by showing three suns in the sky?) Before saying something, the spirits announce that something of great importance is about to be said.[6] Don't we say "Listen!" when we need to communicate something urgent to a distracted listener?

At times, the spirits choose to speak to us through the forms of human beings who wish to become close to us, to become intimate with us. In other words, the spirits' "compassion" sometimes takes the visible form of a human body. Instead of sending a message (the image of three suns or armies at war in the sky), the spirits may come to us as actual men or women who call for our attention. It is one thing to receive a telegram announcing a tragic event and another to hear the distressing news from someone who visits you and shares your sorrow. Nothing more than a human presence is able to communicate and share concern, longing, and desire. However, as we see throughout this book, the spirits' bodies are big lumps of metaphors. A tenet of Renaissance demonology is the idea that the spirits' bodies are similes. That is, they look like bodies but they are not.

What do I mean when I say that the spirits' bodies are similes? This concept is not mine, of course. A number of Christian theologians and demonologists explicitly use this expression, and I quote from some of the main authors on this subject in the introduction. But what does it mean, this idea of a body made of similes? Christian thinkers believe that, when the angelic beings make themselves visible to us, they condense large masses of air in order to create the form of a body. The spirits' bodies are not very different from the clouds in the sky. When we look up in the sky, we often think that some clouds look like objects, animals, or faces. In other words, the forms of the clouds remind us of something we already know (a scary face or a dog, for instance). The clouds *look like* things that are familiar to us. It goes without saying that we wouldn't be able to recognize something we have never seen before. The clouds can only look like something familiar. Now consider that the angelic beings present themselves like dense, thick clouds and that these clouds *look like* bodies. The only essential difference between the clouds in the sky and the spirits' bodies is that, whereas the forms of the clouds are totally casual and depend on our imagination, the spirits' bodies are intentional creations of the spirits themselves. The forms of the clouds don't mean anything.

We read into them. We see whatever our imagination suggests. On the contrary, the spirits' bodies mean something because the spirits have chosen to present themselves in a specific form. The spirits' bodies are not casual creations. The spiritual beings decide that, in order to speak to a particular person, it is better for them to shape a big lump of air into a specific form. The spirits' bodies stand for something else. That is, the spirits' bodies are messages. We know that the spirits don't have physical, visible bodies. Spirits create bodies out of air only in order to say something. Their bodies are like sentences. They are statements. The spirits' bodies made of air are similar to beautiful metaphors. Through a metaphor, a poet tries to convey a certain message. The angelic beings do something very similar with their bodies made of air. The angels or demons use bodies made of air to make a statement. And like poets, the angelic beings can only use metaphors that we can understand. If a poet uses an obscure metaphor, his or her poem will be a failure. Similarly, the angels and demons must use metaphorical bodies that make sense, that is, that we can recognize. Otherwise, they will fail to communicate with us.

The spirits' bodies must look familiar to us, otherwise we wouldn't be able to understand what they have to say. We must be able to make sense of them. However, similar to the forms of ominous armies marching in the sky, the spirits' bodies are temporary and unnatural. They are unnatural in the sense they are invented for a special event, for a particular encounter with us. These bodies do not exist in nature. The spirits' bodies are unnatural, fake, and disposable. Once they have said what they have to say, these bodies are discarded. They disappear like clouds falling apart in the sky. Again, being metaphorical statements, the spirits' visibility exists only in order to express something. In Louis Marin's words, the spirits have "bodies-signs."[7]

The "something" of the spirit's expression, however, requires some form of interpretation. When we come across a metaphor of some sort, don't we have to interpret its meaning? But who are these creatures that exist only insofar as they speak to us? And what is the origin and goal of their unnatural statements? We know that the interpretation of a metaphor in a literary text necessarily requires some understanding of its writer. We can't understand a poem fully unless we investigate the historical moment in which its writer lived. Do the spirits have a past? How do they choose their visible manifestations? For instance, how do they decide to visit us with that particular body? Why that body and not another? A fundamental question concerns the role of the spirits' memory. When we speak and use metaphors, we refer to a common cultural background and our personal experience. Our language is both an instrument shared by millions of other speakers and our own invention,

based on what we know and remember. If a spirit comes to us in the form of a teacher or servant and tells us that he is in love with us, does this image have something to do with the spirit's biography? Or if the spirit presents himself as a handsome and seductive man by the name of Ludovicus, what is the relationship between the spirit's metaphorical body (what does Ludovicus look like?) and this specific name? Why the name Ludovicus?

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This book addresses the spirits' fleeting bodies according to Renaissance culture, whose essential points of reference are Italian humanism and Neo platonism. *In the Company of Demons* shows that, along with classical literatures, Italian Renaissance philosophers also brought back the spirits that populated Latin and Greek culture. We could say that in early modern Italy, the spirits spoke their language of visible "compassion," as Machiavelli says. In Renaissance Italy the ancient spirits revealed themselves again as visible metaphors.

But what is a metaphor? Since Aristotle, the concept of metaphor is the most intricate and controversial aspect of rhetorical expression. In insisting that the spirits' bodies are similes, Renaissance demonologists offer a unique insight into the thorny issue of what is a metaphor. We must remember that, like paintings, metaphors show their message without analyzing or revealing it. A metaphor, like a picture, doesn't tell you what it means. It shows itself. We, the viewers, are supposed to say what a painting or a metaphor means.

Both paintings and metaphors, as Joseph Stern writes in *Metaphor in Context*, work like demonstratives.[8] A metaphor says "This is I." In Stern's words, "like a picture, a metaphor *displays* rather than describes its content."[9] Both pictures and metaphors show their visibility without commenting on it, as in Christ's sentence "*This* is my body," while showing a piece of bread. In what sense is a piece of bread "my body"? Before debating whether the Eucharist is or is not the real body of Christ and in what sense, we can all agree that some form of rhetorical transformation takes place with Christ's words. Similar to the Savior's utterance during the Last Supper, the angelic beings' offering of a visible body to us indicates that they are present. But like the words of Christ spoken at his last meeting with his apostles, the visibility of spirits evokes compassion. We could claim that the Eucharist is the ultimate demonstrative, a *this* that points to the Word's infinite compassion for us. The Eucharist is the demonstrative (again, *this* is my body) that recounts God's willingness to become incarnate in order to come close to us, to share our sorrows.

Similarly, the spiritual beings' bodies are demonstratives indicating compassion and desire. Let us keep in mind what Machiavelli says in his *Discourses*. For Machiavelli, "intelligences" speak to us through portents because they desire to communicate their compassion. In stating that the spirits come to us as metaphors, Renaissance thinkers and demonologists underscore that metaphors (verbal expressions that show their presence without describing it) are manifestations of compassion and desire. As forms of desire, the metaphorical bodies of the spirits cannot help but have a sensual element. This key aspect is one that I examine throughout this book.

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It is interesting that today these aerial beings have become strangely silent. The images of angelic spirits are now commercial items to display on the shelves of chain bookstores (pins, little statues, images on covers of self-help books). Who could possibly count the number of New Age and self-help books that offer instructions on how to get in touch with our guardian angel or inner child, on how to call forth the good spirits and tame the bad ones?[10] In Edward Ingebretsen's words, "angels are now mall chic for generic holiday shopping. . . . An angel pinned to a lapel is an economic and civic statement as well as a theological memory. The angel cult drains pocketbooks while forming the 'nice' person, thus dispensing with need for soul and interiority both."[11] Ingebretsen is right. We show an angel pin on the lapel of our coat because we wish to show how "nice" we are. We watch *Oprah* and believe that we have the ultimate power to enhance our lives and find happiness. *Oprah, The Power of Now,* and infinite other pseudoreligious publications contend that happiness is already within us. We don't need to look outside. The "spirits" are positive powers that lie dormant within us. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, keeps insisting on the real and ominous existence of fallen angels, and on their real danger for our salvation.

Let me repeat that this book is not a historical description of the "strange" things in which people believed during the Renaissance. I have written this work only because I am convinced that its numerous "weird" issues directly concern us. Archeological investigations about the peculiar creeds of Renaissance people do not interest me. What does it mean to have a "body of metaphors"? Who has such a body today? Where are the angels and devils today? Where are the spirits that used to visit human beings to express compassion and concern?

INTRODUCTION
Bodies of Desire: The Spirit in Love with the Young Man

The Story of the Evil Spirit in Love with a Young Man

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Infinite are the evil spirits that roam through the created world, the famous Renaissance demonologist Girolamo Menghi writes in *Compendium of the Art of Exorcisms* (*Compendio dell'arte essorcistica*), and infinite are the forms they assume to approach and pervert us. Menghi, who had entered the Franciscan order in 1550, strongly believed in the existence of demons, who were unleashing a powerful attack against God's creation. In Menghi's view, the world was undergoing its final stage of existence, during which time Satan and his cohorts were allowed to ravage the creation and torment its creatures before Christ's Second Coming.[1] In Revelation 12:12 ("the devil has gone down to you in a rage, knowing that he has little time left"), Menghi saw a direct confirmation of his dramatic convictions. As a form of counterattack, Menghi advocated the aggressive publication of treatises on demonology and exorcism. Along with a number of books in Latin, such as the influential *Flagellum daemonum* (1577), *Fustis daemonum* (1584), and *Eversio daemonum* (1588), Menghi wrote the *Compendium* (1576) in Italian to make his message available to the largest audience possible.[2] To get an idea of Menghi's exceptional influence, we note that, in his private diary, the renowned English magus John Dee explicitly mentions Menghi's *Flagellum* along with two other famous books, the *Malleus maleficarum* and Wier's *De praestigiis daemonum*.[3]

Referring to what Saint Augustine says about angels and devils, Menghi in the *Compendium* writes that "unlike us, devils are not subject to their bodies. On the contrary, their bodies are subject to them. Devils in fact transform

them into whatever form they wish."[4] Amazing encounters take place between humans and the evil spirits' temporary bodies. We know, Menghi continues, that "devils are neither male nor female. However, sometimes they appear in the form of women and other times they present themselves as men. This is because some enjoy the company of men whereas others prefer women. This diversity results from the different dispositions the devils find in men and women."[5] In other words, the devil's visible body is a reflection of a human being's desire (a person's particular "disposition"). It is correct to say that an evil spirit's physical appearance is a response to our wish or longing, because the devil takes on a body that (he hopes) will turn us on. Given that the devil shows a body that we may find attractive but that doesn't really exist (it is only something that the devil has invented to seduce us), we can rightly say that the devil's body is a simile. That is, the devil's body *looks like* or *is like* a real body that would excite us. However, Menghi seems also to insinuate that each devil has some kind of natural, personal propensity either toward men or women, as if every devil somehow had a deeper and unspoken connection with its victims. According to Menghi, the devil himself is able to feel some sort of desire for us because, in the Italian demonologist's opinion, some "enjoy the company" of men and others prefer to approach women. Isn't Menghi saying that some devils like men better than women, whereas others like women better than men? Isn't this a form of desire?

Take, for instance, "the amazing true story" of a sixteen-year-old boy of Mantua, which we find in chapter 21 of the second book of the *Compendium*. In this part of his work, Menghi examines the existence of the "familiar spirits" (spiriti famigliari), devils that become "tied" (legati) to human beings and serve them in a number of "different forms."[6] All the forms these spirits take on symbolize their being subject to human will. As I've explained, the devils' visible bodies *look like* bodies but aren't real, carnal bodies. These fake bodies are visible metaphors. For instance, a devil may take the form of a dog only to signify that he serves a particular human being very faithfully (the devil is *like* a dog). This reminds us of Jacques Cazotte's famous novel *Le diable amoureux* (The devil in love), the story of the young officer of the king of Naples who summons Béelzébuth. The devil first appears as a monster, then turns into a dog, and finally becomes a charming girl, who will be the officer's faithful and amorous servant.[7]

According to Menghi, "familiar spirits" may obey their human masters in the forms of "servant, horse, or worker." Instead of dominating their victims, these spirits paradoxically follow their victims' orders. Menghi reminds us that, as an exorcist has the power to subjugate a devil obsessing a human

body and force him to fly back down to the recesses of hell, so can a magician compel a certain evil spirit to obey his commands.[8] Keep in mind that, according to Plato, Socrates had a private demon throughout his life.[9] The inherently demonic nature of the classical world is a major theme of this book. It is interesting that the ambiguous character of the ancients' "demons" also haunts some seventeenth-century Catholic treatises on guardian angels. For instance, instead of seeing Socrates' demon as a synonym for a Christian fallen spirit, Andrea Vittorelli in *Dei ministerii ed operazioni angeliche* (On the angels' roles and operations, 1611) cites an alternate view of Socrates' mysterious demon. Deeply active in the pastoral enactment of the rules of the Council of Trent, Vittorelli contends that the gentiles had some kind of knowledge of the guardian angels. Vittorelli defines Socrates' demon as "unique custodian . . . inner lover, faithful witness and assistant, who criticizes evil, praises goodness; arbiter in this life, guide in the next."[10]

In his influential text, Menghi also underscores that this sort of perverse relationship is not limited to the corrupt culture of the ancients, for these spirits are still among us. To support his theory, the Franciscan exorcist quotes a detailed story he had heard from a "truthful brother" of his order.[11] Letting this friar report this extraordinary event, Menghi writes:

> While I (this religious says) lived in the aforementioned city of Mantua, there was a young man of the age of sixteen, who was the brother of a friar of ours (and he told me his name). A familiar spirit was so in love with this young man that he never left him alone. One day, when he came to visit his brother the friar, the young man told him that this spirit took on different forms and followed him wherever he went. When he heard this, our brother became deeply concerned. Wishing to free his younger brother of this spirit, he asked me to offer him some solace and help. Convinced that the whole thing was a joke, I (this brother said) ridiculed his story. My skepticism made him even more anguished. Seeing his torment, I said: "Let me speak with this brother of yours, because maybe (if what you said is true) we can do something about it."[12]

The "truthful brother" soon meets with the young man and asks him to explain his incredible situation:

> He [the young man] told me that this spirit followed him wherever he went as a servant, or a schoolteacher, sometimes as a valet or a courier or a butler, and showed himself to this young man and other people through many other different forms. People in fact believed that he was a real person. He [the young man] also said that this spirit sometimes

> went to stores to pick up things for him. The spirit first stole money from those shopkeepers and then paid them with their own money. This story truly shocked me. When this young man left, that demon followed him in the form of a servant. I saw him walk around my room, but I didn't realize he was a diabolical spirit.[13]

A first crucial aspect of this extraordinary account is the spirit's silence. He stands in a corner of the friar's room and patiently waits for the young man to complete his accusation against him. Having assumed the simile of a servant, he respects his master's decision to report him, his faithful companion, to a Franciscan friar. A second important element is the apparent lack of evil doing. Granted this spirit is a skillful thief, but he only steals to please his beloved and never involves him in his questionable activities. As the demonologist Menghi unequivocally states, the spirit is in love. What lover doesn't do foolish things to gain and keep his beloved's attention?

The story is not over yet. To convince the friar of the spirit's real presence, the young man sends the demon to deliver some fish to the Franciscan. This time, the demon has the appearance of a valet.[14] In a later encounter between the young man and the friar, the spirit looks like a schoolteacher: "He is that man strolling over there in the form of a schoolteacher," the young man explains to the stunned Franciscan. Finally, while they are walking together down the street, the friar and the young man encounter three noblemen riding their horses toward the two. One of these noble-looking men is the spirit, who halts his horse and takes off his hat to greet the friar. Fearing that this cunning spirit may cause him some harm, the friar refuses to see the young man again. No one knows, Menghi concludes, what happened to the young man and whether he ever succeeded in freeing himself of this spirit.

How to make sense of this strange "true story"? At the end of the friar's narration, we are left with innumerable questions. Why is the spirit obsessed with this young man? We detect no evil in the spirit's behavior, given that he seems to be exclusively interested in seeing and being close to his beloved. Almost all the forms or similes he assumes signify his dedication to the young man (servant, schoolteacher, butler). And why does he decide to greet the friar in the form of a nobleman riding his horse?

We could say that the friar's story revolves around a unique form of unrequited love. The young man is not willing to respond to the spirit's perverse devotion. However, we lack any reference to the spirit's biography. How did he develop these unnatural feelings for this young man? Where did he see him for the first time? That is, when did he fall in love with this youth? We do

not even know the evil spirit's name, which would be of crucial importance in chasing him out of the young man's life. As Menghi explains in *Flagellum daemonum,* to expel a devil from a possessed body, an exorcist must force the evil spirit to pronounce the spirit's name. For the name synthesizes the spirit's entire biography: "the exorcist will ask the devil to reveal his name; if he has accomplices; what is the name of his master; which role he plays in the demonic order; why he has chosen this obsessed person . . . how he will signify his departure."[15]

The Body of an Evil Spirit Is a Metaphor of a Real Body

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Gabriele Amorth, the most authoritative exorcist in Italy today, agrees with Menghi's views. In a long and detailed interview published in 2003, Amorth confirms that during an exorcism, "the first thing we [exorcists] ask a devil is his name. The devil has a hard time speaking. He tries his best not to speak. For the devil, to mention his name, to reveal himself is a great defeat."[16] In other words, to cure the creation of a diabolical presence, a priest must know the "history" of the demonic virus. The devil's name hides a biography, a past, a set of memories. And like a physician, an exorcist must also connect the case he is working on now with other possessions manifesting comparable symptoms and a comparable evolution. We shall see that both classical culture and contemporary stories of demonic invasion may help the exorcist shed some light on the nature and goal of a devil. As far as the spirit in Menghi's *Compendium* is concerned, we know nothing about his past. We only know that the forms he assumes are a reflection of his love for the young man. We could infer that when he appeared as a nobleman, the spirit was trying to impress the friar and convince him that his desire for the young man had a noble, respectful nature.

Another important element should be considered. Let us remember that, according to Menghi, an evil spirit's appearance is in fact a response to a human being's desire.[17] Demons come to us because we have consciously or subconsciously called them, and their physical presence mirrors our deepest yearning. We could thus say that this evil spirit presented himself to the young man in a male form because this is what the young man likes. The perversion of the spirit would be in fact a mere reflection of the young man's own homosexual feelings. The secret bond between the spirit and his victim would lie in their unexpressed passion "against nature."

Let us pause a moment before we proceed. It is a fact that in modern times people tend to envision evil as an abstract, impersonal reality. "Evil" is what takes place in the creation. "Evil" is an event, and evil are the human beings who have committed it. Even if we believe in the actual existence of spiritual beings devoted to our perdition, we consider them as manifestations of one and only one Devil, Satan, more than actual independent beings. We speak of "the devil" more than of "devils." That is, our modern "devils" have lost their identity, their biography.[18] Renaissance demonologists, on the contrary, believed in hidden presences that haunted and perverted the creation as invisible individualities. In Italian, they were called indistinctly *demoni* (demons) or *diavoli* (devils), although the term *demone* would also allude to the ancients' idea of spiritual beings (Socrates' *daimon*). And because angelic beings did not have a body, when a fallen angel presented himself to a man or woman, he had to acquire some sort of metaphorical body. As the famous Renaissance demonologist Paolo Grillando confirms in *De sortilegiis* (1536), the evil spirits' bodies are "almost natural and metaphorical."[19] The devil's body is "almost natural" because it is made of air, the element of the creation in which the fallen angels are doomed to reside until Christ's Second Coming.[20]

In his influential *De strigimagis* (1521), Sylvester Prierio, one of the most severe Catholic Inquisitors of the sixteenth century, reiterates the widespread concept that the devils acquire a temporary body by compressing and molding air into something *similar to* a human form.[21] The Spanish Jesuit Martin del Rio confirms in the seminal *Disquisitiones* (1599) that, by manipulating air, demonic spirits are able to express and form "things that can be touched and felt" (palpabilia). Such a demonic "palpable" body is a "similitude of flesh" (carnis similitudo).[22] In *The Demons' Activities* by Michael Psellus, the learned eleventh-century Byzantine statesman, we find an eloquent definition of these demonic bodies. "Look at the clouds," Psellus writes, "you will notice that at times they look like men or bears or dragons or other beasts. The same happens to the demons and their bodies."[23]

Thomas's *Summa Theologiae* supports the connection between the air and the devil's appearance. In part 1, question 51 ("On the angels' acquisition of bodies"), Thomas states that, in the same way that the air expresses form and color only when it is condensed into clouds, so do angels acquire a visible form through a condensation of the air.[24] The angels' transient bodies "represent" the angels' intentions "in likeness of perceptible things" (sub similitudinibus rerum sensibilium). In other words, when an angelic being represents himself as servant, teacher, or nobleman, he stages a metaphor,

a simile. But this visible figure of speech is not a human being's private vision. In the scriptures, Thomas stresses, we find innumerable cases of angelic beings who were visible to more than one person. Take, for instance, the spirits who visited Sodom. Human beings, we could conclude, think and speak through visible metaphors, and as metaphorical bodies the spirits come to us.[25]

What This Book Is Not

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A brief but essential clarification is needed before we move on. By the expressions *visible metaphor* and *metaphorical body* I do not refer to the Renaissance debate on the allegorical relationships between ancient knowledge and contemporary Christian culture. It is well known that the "erosion" of Greek and Latin theology, as Don Cameron Allen writes in *Mysteriously Meant,* is already detectable in the first debates between pagan authors and early Christian theologians, and is reflected in Renaissance allegorical interpretations of pagan symbolic images.[26] *In the Company of Demons* is not about the Renaissance process of Christian allegorization of the ancients' myths. Let me clarify this essential point. As Allen reminds us, in *Contra Celsum* Origen attacks Celsus's opinions, according to which the biography of Christ was "conflated out of the myths of Hercules, Bacchus, and Orpheus."[27] The interplay between pagan myths and Christian truth is certainly one of the fundamental aspects of Renaissance culture. I discuss this important subject in chapter 1 of this volume, on Giovan Francesco Pico's Latin dialogue *Strix*.

As we shall see, Pico believes that the demons' bodies appear as actual, visible palimpsests of visible quotations. For Pico, the physical body of a demon is literally made of visible metaphors. Each member of a devil's visible body is a simile. Renaissance Christian authors such as Giovan Francesco Pico hold that the devils come to us as visible quotations from classical texts. To put it differently, the devils are walking quotations, lumps of bits and pieces of citations. However, it is evident that such a bold and groundbreaking interpretation could only arise in the land of humanism. Italy is the natural place of the debate between the ancients' false creeds and Christian allegorical manipulations. As I stated in the preface, Renaissance Italy witnessed the return of the ancient spirits.

A second important point should be borne in mind. It is evident by now that my study does not intend to be a historical survey of the different philosophical and theological interpretations concerning a demon's body

during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In recent years, seminal works have been dedicated to this important subject.[28] My work does not analyze the consistency of the fallen angel's body but rather focuses on its visibility and on the meanings of its interaction with us. My study has a rhetorical, linguistic nature. What do the spirits' "metaphorical bodies" mean? How do these bodies speak? As the story from Menghi's *Compendium* has shown, the evil spirit becomes the visible response to a human being's inner request. If a demon wants to befriend us, his body must remind his victim of something familiar and desirable. The evil spirit must look familiar to his human victim. In other words, the fallen spirit must visit us as a form of memory. To relate to us, the devil must at once speak our idiom (our historical languages) and take on a body of familiar metaphors.[29]

Angelic Beings Speak to Us through Metaphors

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In his seminal *The Aristotelian Telescope* (first partial edition, 1655), the first and most important analysis of metaphorical expression written in early modern Europe, Emanuele Tesauro explains that both the good and the bad spirits express themselves through "verbal or symbolic ingenuity" (argutezza). The spirits' manifestations, Tesauro stresses in the chapter "Angelic Ingenuity" ("Argutezze angeliche"), are visible concepts, clusters of symbolic references.[30] The angelic beings, Tesauro contends, deliver their communications to us through allusive and indirect symbols, which the ancients often misinterpreted as casual manifestations of human fate.[31] In particular, in section 7 of his *Telescope*, a lengthy and detailed examination of all possible kinds of metaphors, Tesauro contends that angels and devils use a "metaphor of resemblance" (metafora di simiglianza), which he defines as "call[ing] a substance with the name of another [substance]."[32] The two substances involved in this kind of metaphor can be either identical or simply similar. For instance, "rain" or "dew" for tears involves the same substance, water, whereas to state that "enthymemes" are the "bones" of a discourse includes two distinct substances.[33] "From this [second] subcategory," Tesauro explains, "derive the images that represent the *spiritual substances* in a visible manner."[34] In the final section of *The Trinity*, Augustine confirms that angels "[take] created materials distinct from themselves and us[e] them to present us with symbolic representations of God."[35]

An Analysis of the Evil Spirit in Mantua

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The Spirit Is Similar to the Latin Lares, the Deities of the Household

We must try now to detect the origin and nature of the "familiar spirit" in love with the young man from Menghi's story. I will show that, from his puzzling behavior, we understand that this evil presence is in fact a spiritual and cultural hybrid. To begin with, Menghi's definition of a familiar spirit is an unquestionable reference to classical culture. For the Franciscan demonologist, the spirit's silent dedication to the young man evokes the Latin Lares and Penates, the deities of the household.[36] The spirit is "familiar" in that he serves a human being the way the Lares and Penates serve a given home. In the highly influential *Images of the Ancients' Gods* (*Le imagini de gli dei degli antichi*, 1556), Vincenzo Cartari defines these pagan divinities as follows: "The Lar or Lares (since they were numerous) were certain gods or better yet demons that the ancients worshipped in the homes as their custodians."[37] But the ancients, Cartari explains, offer more than one depiction of these false, demonic deities. First, because they were "the demons who guarded private homes, the Lares were depicted as young men clothed with dog skin, who also kept a dog at their feet." The dog's presence signified that they (the demons) were "faithful and diligent guardians of the household."[38] Indeed, we have seen in Menghi's story that the familiar spirit follows and serves his young master like a faithful dog.

Two decisive figures of Renaissance culture had firsthand encounters with these *lares familiares*. In his autobiography, *The Book of My Life*, Girolamo Cardano, the great mathematician, physician, astrologer, and philosopher, states that both his father and he had personal spirits that followed them throughout their lives. But also Johann Wier, whose groundbreaking *De praestigiis daemonum* contends that witches should be treated for their mental problems and not burned at the stake, writes that when he was a boy, he witnessed the activities of these spirits "on several occasions, quite in fear, along with [his two] brothers." Whereas Cardano's personal spirit is closer to Socrates' *daimon*, Wier's description of the *lares familiares* of his childhood closely resembles Cartari's definition: "they are active in households especially at night during the first period of sleep, and, by the noises that they make, they seem to be performing the duties of servants. . . . Many of these gentle spirits, having foreknowledge of the future on the basis of hidden signs, can be heard ahead of time tending to things which we find actually being done a little later."[39]

Lares Either Protected or Threatened a Household

Cartari believes that a second, quite different connotation of the Lares must be added to the first. Borrowing from Sextus Festus's *On the Meaning of Words*, Cartari writes:

> The ancients also venerated them [the Lares] at the crossroads. In some specific days they hanged small balls and figures made of wool on them [statues]. The balls were for their slaves and the figures were for all the others. Their number corresponded to the number of their family members, so that if the Lares came they would take these [objects] and wouldn't harm anybody in the family. For the Pagans thought that they [Lares] were demons from hell, who would visit the earth in particular days dedicated to them. . . . Some believed that the Lares were our souls when they escape from their human bodies. When these souls came to these celebrations they needed to find some kind of body where they could rest.[40]

According to Cartari's dense definition, the Lares had an utterly paradoxical nature. These deities/spirits either protected or threatened a household. Either way, the Lares signified the perils menacing a family, the uncertainties awaiting its members. Let us keep in mind that Menghi's story revolves around two brothers, a friar and his younger sibling who is stalked by a demonic presence, a "familiar spirit." But in Festus's description we find another essential aspect of these spiritual beings. The Lares also had something to do with the netherworld. On specific days, these spirits roamed through the world in search of victims.

Lares as Souls of the Dead

We have said that the Lares existed "at the crossroads" of two opposite natures. In both cases, these spirits were drawn toward our households. The Lares' persistence most probably resulted from a strong attachment to the living. In other words, the Lares could not help but return to the places of a past experience. This is the sense of Festus's conclusive remark. Some people thought that the Lares were not divinities but rather the souls of the dead who came back either to look after their family members or to persecute them. Let us bear in mind that, in their fight against paganism, Christian thinkers had already insisted on the classical divinities' mortal nature, on their being hybrids, deceased men and women somehow turned into divine entities.

In the *Apology*, a powerful defense of religious freedom, the great Christian writer Tertullian (ca. 150–222 AD) holds that all the ancient commentators on religion remember Saturn, the father of the pagan gods, only as a man.[41] Traveling through Italy, Tertullian continues, we can even visit the mountain where he lived and the city he founded. Saturn, Jupiter, and all the other gods are nothing but names of deceased men.[42] All the myths (*fabulae*) of these false gods are in fact hymns to death. Aren't the gods of the household, the so-called Lares, the souls of the dead?[43] And aren't these the most cherished and private gods, the most familiar gods?[44]

To see the Lares as souls freed of their human bodies may help us clarify a second fundamental aspect of the spirit in Menghi's *Compendium*. How can we interpret the demon's love for the young man? Festus's analysis of the Lares doesn't explain this element of Menghi's familiar spirit. Desire is not an explicit characteristic of the gods of the household. I have pointed out that the Lares must harbor some persistent memory that compels them either to protect or to persecute a family.

At the beginning of this introduction I mentioned that Menghi saw Socrates' private demon as a possible antecedent of the spirit stalking the young Mantuan. Like the Lares, Socrates' guardian spirit played a warning and protective role, and had an intimate, familiar connection with the philosopher. In his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, Cicero writes that the Latin *lares* corresponds to the Greek *daimones*, thus positing a direct relationship between the qualities of the spirits of the household and the powers of Socrates' private demon.[45] If we accept Cicero's explanation, we conclude that the guardian spirit is also connected to the soul's destiny and journey after the body's death.

Lares and the Afterlife

In Plutarch's *On the Sign of Socrates*, we read of the young Theocritus who desired "to understand the nature of Socrates' sign [daimónion]."[46] He thus "descended into the crypt of Trophonius, first performing the rites that are customary at the oracle." After staying in the crypt for two days, he had the impression that his skull had been hit violently and that his soul had flown out of it. Looking downward, Theocritus saw a "great abyss," from which he heard "innumerable roars and groans of animals, the wailing of innumerable babes, the mingled lamentations of men and women, and noise and uproar of every kind."[47]

After this infernal vision, the young visitor is told that the soul's destiny depends on its relationship with its highest part, called understanding, which is at once a faculty of the soul and an external deity, its demon, who resides within the soul.[48] This spirit works as an internal/external instructor who aims at leading the soul toward a perfect identification with its inner demonic teacher, who is also the soul's highest area. That is, the familiar spirit strives to transform the soul of a dead person into a demon.[49] Some souls, Theocritus learns, because of a lack of schooling, are disobedient and indocile, whereas others "are docile to the rein and obedient to their daemon."[50] The soul's demonic metamorphosis is thus a form of private education. It is superfluous to remind the reader that the spirit from Menghi's *Compendium* at times assumes the simile of a schoolteacher. The spirit intends to signify that he is there to serve and instruct the youth. The scope and goal of his possible teaching are, however, a mystery.

In *The God of Socrates*, Apuleius confirms that some souls, after metamorphosing into demons, feel drawn toward their descendants, whom they assist and direct with great care and dedication. These demons are called *lares*.[51] If we apply this definition to Menghi's story, we could certainly say that the spirit's love for the young man is similar to the passion or Eros a dedicated teacher always feels toward his students. Let us remember that in the *Symposium* Diotima defines Eros as a "great demon," who connects men to the gods.[52] However, we could hypothesize that the spirit's affection is also rooted in the past—as if, before turning into a demon, this spiritual being was somehow related to the young man's ancestors. This "familiar spirit" might come from a past preceding the young man's birth. Again, let us keep in mind that, for the exorcist Menghi, a spirit's past is of fundamental relevance. An exorcist expels a demon when he learns the demon's name, when he succeeds in revealing the demon's biography.

What the Evil Spirit of Mantua Remembers

We could synthesize this analysis by saying that the spirit's love may spring from his memory, from a past event that compels him to go back to the young man and take care of him. In other words, this soul-demon is tormented by a persistent and unsolved memory. The soul's destiny, Plotinus confirms in the *Enneads*, is strictly linked to its remembrances. For the soul "is and becomes what it remembers."[53] Memory has the power to mold the soul and its transformation. Throughout the third part of the *Enneads* ("On Our Allotted Guardian Spirit"), Plotinus reiterates that the key to the soul's metamorphosis

into a demonic being lies in its shedding the remembrance of its passions and desires.[54] Reading the *Enneads* in this manner, we could thus infer that the spirit visits the young Mantuan less as a teacher than as a student.[55] That is, the spirit goes back to the young man because he wishes to confront and erase an enduring memory. He wants to learn how to forget.

The spirit's metaphorical bodies (servant, schoolteacher, valet, and aristocrat) would thus be the necessary means through which the spirit may confront and solve his troubled past.[56] Through his changing similes, the demon in love would endeavor to summon and relive the moments of a crucial past experience somehow linked to the young man. Please keep in mind that this spirit in love may be connected to the young man's family. In *The God of Socrates*, Apuleius has a name for a spirit who is dragged down by the weight of memory, a spirit in exile because of some baneful remembrance. Apuleius calls this sort of being *larva*. The larvae, he explains, are spirits who, haunted by the past, are deprived of a fixed residence and wander through the creation in search of solace.[57]

We have ascertained that, in the story from Menghi's *Compendium*, the demon's visible similes are means through which this spiritual being tries to connect with his young beloved. Although, as Thomas underscores in the *Summa*, the demons' aerial bodies are often visible to everyone and are not mere intellectual experiences, the story of Mantua proves that the spirit appears to communicate with a specific human being. We have also seen that the spirit's metaphorical bodies call for a thorough interpretation. His appearances are signs from the past, and their meanings are obscure and even contradictory. Although some of his transient bodies (servant, valet) conjure up the concept of home, they may in fact signify both protection and violation. Furthermore, the spirit's appearance as a schoolteacher may paradoxically mean that the teacher/lover is the recipient of the student/beloved's instruction.

What We Learn from This Analysis

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Through our analysis of a section from Girolamo Menghi's influential *Compendium*, we have understood that Renaissance demonology expresses a complex and contradictory theory of demonic physicality. Although all Renaissance demonologists follow Thomas's theory on the aerial and metaphorical appearance of the fallen angels, their analyses and narratives merge Christian theology and folklore with classical philosophy and literature. In the Renaissance, the devil has a syncretistic presence in that his visibility is in fact a

cultural palimpsest (a cluster of disparate cultural references). I have already pointed out that, in our contemporary mainstream culture, the devil tends to be seen as an abstract menace. The air has been cleansed of the spirits' physical similes.[58]

In the Renaissance, on the contrary, the air carried infinite potential metaphors, through which the evil spirits endeavored to pervert the creation. According to the Renaissance Inquisitor Sylvester Prierio, whose disturbing *De strigimagis* I quoted earlier, evil spirits are like viruses that "devour" the creation.[59] Their presence in the world is an infectious menace. What kind of visible bodies, according to Renaissance demonology, do the evil spirits acquire to infect our existence? How do their illusory bodies interact with ours? Can a human body couple with a body of demonic similes? How can a metaphor couple with human flesh? If the demon's body is a lump of metaphors, how can he have sex with a human being? How can a man or a woman have sex with a metaphor? These are some of the issues I address in the following chapters of this book.

In the *Apology*, Tertullian writes: "the breath of demons and angels achieves the corruption of the mind in foul bursts of fury and insanity."[60] The "breath" of these spirits is a mute and silent fire. We can detect it in the maladies of the air, in the life taken away from the creation (suddenly wilted flowers or tainted crop). In the Renaissance, humans breathed the flames of these aerial similes, which had the power to infect our crops and cattle, to bring about devastating tempests and ruinous diseases, and to pervert us with their seductive appearances. Let us remember that, according to Church Fathers, the air we breathe is the realm of the demons.[61]

The Structure of This Book

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This book studies the rhetorical mayhem according to which invisible entities take up metaphorical bodies with the sole aim of infecting the created world. These beings exist against nature, for their birth results from the impossible intercourse between language (which is not material) and air. How could we possibly slow their proliferation if they are bundles of quotations, visible puzzles made of disparate cultural references? Made of air, these beings dissolve and mutate at random. They have the consistency of a sentence uttered in the air. How can one fight and burn the body of a metaphor? How can man burn, destroy a metaphor that lives in the air?

Other, even more disconcerting issues arise from this inquiry. What if these beings, these "impossible" hybrids, in their temporary physicality mated with humans? This is an important and controversial issue of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century demonology. Would these spirits be able to multiply themselves through a new process of contamination? In other words, what kind of being would result from the subsequent "impossible" coupling between these metaphors/spirits and women? Their offspring would be neither totally angelic nor totally human. Would these creatures be subject to death as humans? What would be the meaning of their existence in the creation? Would these beings have souls, like the angels, devils, and human beings? Would they be exposed to God's judgment at Doomsday? Would they be allowed to ascend to heaven or would they inevitably burn in hell with the demons and the other fallen souls? And finally, if these beings exist, what makes a being human?

Chapter 1

Classical Culture as Expression of a Demonic Wisdom—Witches and Their Demons Come from Past Cultures

Chapter 1 focuses on Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola's *Strix sive de ludificatione daemonum* (Witch, or the deceptions of demons), first published in Latin in 1523 and a year later in an Italian translation. A second Italian version came out in 1555. Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533), the nephew of the Neoplatonic philosopher Giovanni Pico, was educated according to his uncle's literary and philosophical ideals and eventually inherited his vast library. As Edward Peters reminds us in his most recent edition of *Witchcraft in Europe*, Giovan Francesco "was learned in Latin and Greek . . . and widely read in the classics, and so, technically, a humanist."[62] It is interesting that Peters rightly calls Pico a humanist but only "technically," because we shall see that Pico vehemently rejects the values he inherited from his famous uncle.

After graduating from the University of Ferrara, Giovan Francesco Pico wrote two important treatises influenced by his uncle's philosophical positions: *De rerum praenotione libri novem*, which examines the relationship between prophecy and exegesis, and *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium libri VI*, a complex analysis of Christian superiority over classical thought. In the subsequent *Strix*, however, Giovan Francesco denies his original philosophical formation. In this important, albeit short, book, Pico describes the numerous differences between classical culture and Christian revelation as two opposite

armies engaged in a ruthless war. On the side of truth Pico places those Christians who, like himself, openly decry ancient cultures and literatures, whereas on the side of evil he includes all those humanists who believe that Latin and Greek cultures have something positive to teach us. Giovan Francesco stages this essential contrast as a dramatic dialogue between two opposing intellectuals, Apistius (the "man without faith") and Phronimus (the "prudent man"). The book opens with the two friends leisurely talking on a street. Suddenly they see a group of people rushing to a nearby square. The two friends realize that a witch has just been arrested and is now being dragged to her trial. In the second part of the dialogue, a Catholic Inquisitor questions the anonymous witch in front of the two intellectuals and forces her to confess her crimes.

Strix is usually remembered as the sole example within the popular genre of Renaissance dialogue in which a witch is allowed to express her sorrow and describe the terrifying rituals during which she meets the incubus Ludovicus, has sex with him, and murders innocent children. However, *Strix* is not only an arresting description of a hypothetical debate on witches' criminal activities; it is also, and more importantly, a crucial interpretation of classical culture. Christianity being the embodiment of truth, the character Phronimus demonstrates to the skeptical Apistius that all of classical culture, the very foundation of Italian humanism, is based on Satan's intervention in the creation. Giovan Francesco Pico revisits the pillars of classical literature, philosophy, and historiography (Herodotus, Homer, Virgil, Pindar, Ovid, Seneca, Plato, Plotinus, and Iamblichus, among many others) and "unveils" their inner diabolical nature and message: Before the Word's sacrifice for all of humanity, the classical world heard exclusively Satan's voice. According to Pico, Greek and Latin myths were nothing but metaphorical stories coming directly from Satan. The Fallen Angel spoke to human beings through metaphorical narratives (myths), whose real, literal message was evil and perversion. Before being unmasked by the Word, Satan divulged his message of corruption and infection through mythic stories in which he, Satan, was in fact the only character. In other words, every mythic story coming from Latin and Greek culture has one and only one character—Satan. Let us keep in mind that these diabolical, depraved "similes" (the mythic stories of the pagan gods) are still remembered in the names and figures of the constellations visible in a night sky.

Like the natural similes formed by the constellations, the strix and her demonic lover Ludovicus refer to ominous past stories. The term *strix* itself comes from classical Latin and originally meant a screech owl and, by extension, a woman who turns into a troublesome and dangerous bird. A strix is

first and foremost a hybrid, a half-human, half-bestial being. We shall see that, for Giovan Francesco Pico, a strix is not just a woman who engages in diabolical activities. Pico is convinced that "to burn" a strix means to unravel the infinite mythic references hiding in it. Like the metaphorical figures perennially making and unmaking new demonic tales in the sky, a strix exists as a patchwork of narrative particles. A strix has renounced her humanity to become a monstrous network of diabolical stories. Burning a strix is like burning a library of classical books.

In my analysis of Pico's thought I bring in a number of his less studied literary and philosophical texts, including his Latin poem *De Venere et cupidine* (On Venus and desire), which has received little critical attention. This poem is particularly important because, like *Strix*, it is based on a clear-cut opposition. In this case, the contrast is between Venus, the pagan goddess of sexual, demonic love, and Mary, the virgin mother of the Word.

Chapter 2

Humankind and the Spirits Share the Same History—The Spirits before and after Christ's Revelation

Chapter 2 analyzes the history of the spiritual beings, in particular the evil beings who personify Satan's malevolence in the created world. Numerous philosophical treatises on this subject classify these creatures according to different parameters, such as their possible residence (spirits of the air, of the water, of the earth, of the caves, and so forth), the degree of their viciousness, the frequency and nature of their physical appearances, and finally the kind of relationship they have with human beings. The most systematic taxonomy of the demonic presences inhabiting the creation is Strozzi Cigogna's *Il palagio degli incanti e delle gran meraviglie degli spiriti e di tutta la natura* (The palace of marvels and of the great enchantments of the spirits and of the entire nature, 1605), a dense and almost unknown treatise on demonology. Cigogna's work gained some popularity in Europe thanks to a subsequent Latin translation titled *Magiae omnifariae vel potius universae naturae Theatrum* (first published in 1606). Although *Magiae omnifariae* came out with the approval of the Catholic Inquisition, it was condemned in 1623. Cigogna's *Palagio* or *Magiae* is the most comprehensive and original treatise on angelic beings ever written in early modern Europe. To get an idea of the popularity of Cigogna's book, it is useful to remember that, in the first section of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton borrows from Cigogna heavily.

Cigogna (1568–1613) envisions the universe as a perfectly structured Thomistic "palace," a divine and baroque theater in which every being has a specific role and location. Heaven and earth are inhabited by millions of visible and invisible presences, whose existence is revealed and confirmed by innumerable reports from pagan authors. Cigogna and Pico certainly share the same cultural premises, but whereas in *Strix* classical culture is attacked and reviled, in Cigogna's *Magiae* it becomes the essential guideline for detecting and nullifying the Enemy's infectious maneuvers. If the positive outcome of an exorcism involves the revelation of the demon's personal name, Greek and Latin literature is the primary repository of the evil spirits' biographies. In other words, we read and interpret the creation's present vicissitudes (plagues, storms, possessions, and so on) in the light of classical texts, as if Greek and Roman culture were a demonic book of Revelations. In my analysis of Cigogna's *Magiae*, I pay special attention to the spirits that live only insofar as they serve and relate to us, that is, their biographies are nothing but accounts of their rapport with human beings. These beings, who in *Magiae* are also but not exclusively the Roman Penates or Lares, perfectly embody the rhetorical hybridization I mentioned earlier.

What makes these spirits a deceitful incarnation of the Evil one? Cigogna, like Pico before him, has a hard time pinning down the evil nature of the classical Lares. Although these familiar spirits must be evil because they are expressions of pagan depravity, even the pious Aeneas shares with them his journey to Italy. Being originally souls of the dead, these beings retain some trace of physicality, the memory of a body. They are more human than all the other spirits. One could simply argue that Satan has somehow possessed these spirits in order to approach their original families and beguile them through the memories of their deceased—a sort of spiritual possession (Satan possessing other spiritual beings), intrinsically similar to the one involving Satan's traditional followers (witches, sodomites, Jews). As we shall see, in their general attack against paganism the first Christian apologists, Tertullian among others, subsumed all foreign expressions of religiosity under the general rubric of idolatry.[63] If Cigogna's work primarily focuses on the mythic stories that reveal the demonic nature of all pagan divinities, then it is worth noting that in the case of the Lares or Penates this narrative evidence is missing. It is impossible to prove that the Lares and the Penates had some hidden negative nature. Classical texts fail to provide Christian theologians with this basic information. We must simply assume that these spirits were bad, without being able to prove it.

Chapter 3

Humans and Spirits Love in the Same Way—Human Bodies Are More Spiritual Than Physical

The topic of chapter 3 is *Spositione d'un sonetto platonico* (Interpretation of a Platonic sonnet; first edition in 1549 as *Espositione d'un sonetto platonico;* a second edition in 1554 with *Spositione* in the title; I quote from the second edition) by Pompeo della Barba, a truly fascinating interpretation of Menghi's "familiar spirit." Della Barba was at once a well-respected physician and a dedicated student of Florentine Platonism. As a medical doctor, he spent the last years of his life working for the Holy See. However, his last book, *I due primi dialoghi, nell'uno de' quali si ragiona de' segreti della natura* (The first two dialogues, the first on the secrets of nature, 1558), was soon condemned by the Inquisition and became one of the rarest texts of the Renaissance. Only a few libraries still hold a copy of this controversial book, and no critical study has ever been dedicated to it. As we shall see in chapter 3, *I due primi dialoghi* discusses delicate issues concerning human sexuality and physiology in a scientific, candid manner.

Although this chapter revolves around *Spositione d'un sonetto platonico,* both sides of della Barba's formation (Platonic philosopher and physician) play a relevant role in my analysis. Della Barba wants his readers to be aware of his dual background. His discussions of Platonic issues (such as the nature of love) are deeply influenced by his medical knowledge. In the Renaissance tradition of love treatises, which I briefly analyze at the beginning of this chapter, della Barba's *Spositione* is a commentary on a sonnet about the destiny of a lover's soul after his physical death. The "shadow" (ombra) of a human being cannot help but visit the "place" (sito) where he first fell in love. He has become the *daimon* of his own fixation.

If, according to Florentine Platonism, in the act of falling in love a lover senses his nonbeing (that is, he senses a void inside), then he is dead even before actually dying. A lover exists in the other, the beloved, whose beautiful forms have seduced and robbed the lover of his own soul. A lover is an ontological contradiction. Della Barba addresses these fundamental aspects of the love experience in *I due primi dialoghi* but from a strictly physiological standpoint. Where do sexual longing and pleasure come from? Is it possible that men and women secrete two different kinds of semen, which merge with each other when they mate? If semen is the carnal side of the love experience, what is the nature of this physical secretion? Could we say that through their

distinct seminal fluids two lovers try to turn into one and only one being? It is a fact, della Barba insists in *I due primi dialoghi*, that since soul and body constantly influence one another, physicians should address both sides of human identity (the physical and spiritual).

It is important to understand how the three different functions of the soul relate to the body. Whereas the vegetative and sensitive souls are the main constituents of the human (either male or female) semen, the rational soul "comes from without," that is, it descends from the divinity, and thus interacts with the body in a different way. A physician should always bear in mind that a human being is at once a carnal and a spiritual creature, in a sense a hybrid, a mixture of two species.

Borrowing from Apuleius's *On the God of Socrates*, della Barba in *Spositione* defines several different kinds of spiritual beings. The genius (also called *manes*) is, for della Barba, Socrates' protecting demon, whose diabolical nature has been unmasked by Christian theology. *Lemures* are the souls that have discarded their bodies, and *larvae* are the souls that visit our households with malignant intentions. Larvae, della Barba concludes, are called lares when they have a positive, supportive nature.[64] In the lares/larvae della Barba identifies the spirit of a dead lover who, compelled by his desire, can even leave the sepulcher, take up a temporary body (a body made of air; a body made of visible metaphors), and have sexual intercourse with his beloved.

It is evident that, in della Barba's text, a lover's soul both is and is not the more conventional succubus or incubus. Although both an incubus and a dead lover's soul take on a body made of air to approach a human being, the soul of a dead lover is not maliciously pursuing his beloved's damnation. It is a fact, though, that both spiritual presences (the evil succubi or incubi and a dead person's soul) must be treated with unflinching severity. To support his view, the physician della Barba openly refers to Giovan Francesco Pico's *Strix*. But della Barba also mentions that, in the island of Crete, people believe that the only way to assure that the soul of a dead lover does not come back to fulfill his or her abominable desire is to pierce the corpse's heart with a stick. In other words, to stop a soul from coming back with a visible but fictional body in an attempt to quench some still burning desire, one must perform a symbolic act on the cadaver lying in the tomb.

Paradoxically, the phrase "to break a lover's heart" here has both a symbolic and a literal meaning. We must make the lover's soul "see" the nonsense of his or her postmortem incarnation. The memory of the love story that connected lover and beloved in the past has now become an act against nature. The lover's aerial body is indeed the unnatural attempt "to give a body" to a

memory. It is in the nature of memories to fade away and disappear with the persons who created them and held them dear during their lives. To hold onto some physical desire even after our own death is against the nature of things.

Let me clarify this point. If we stay with the concept of a "familiar spirit" as the soul of a deceased person who still has strong feelings toward the living, we must conclude that the familiar spirit is a monster, a hybrid, because it is at once real but dead (it is nothing but the corpse decomposing in the tomb), and alive but metaphorical (the creature that molds a body out of air to visit us with some burning request). The familiar spirit *is* the corpse we dig up to pierce with a stick, but it *is* also the materialization of a memory at once external to the corpse (the spirit *looks like* what we remember of the deceased person) and emanating from the corpse (a love obsession stronger than death itself). For this reason both diabolical entities (succubi and incubi) and our familiar spirits must be addressed with the same practice of exorcism. If both spirits are unnatural manifestations, an exorcism cleanses and restructures the creation according to the Word's natural order. The exorcist begs the Word to erase all those linguistic abnormalities that have plunged the creation into chaos and disarray. The exorcist knows that our familiar spirits are freaks, monsters brought about by an act of sin (the lover's unwillingness to forget, his deviant request). In an exorcism, the priest asks the Word to reassemble the creation, as if the creation were a statement that has been rendered incorrect and unintelligible by the irruption of metaphors that don't make sense (the familiar spirits that pretend to be real human creatures but in fact are only lumps of air).

Chapter 4

A Race of Semihuman and Semispiritual Creatures— Their Importance for Our Salvation

Girolamo Menghi's description and treatment of our familiar spirits has brought to the fore the very kernel of their being. First, these spirits are ontological monsters, unique similes merging physicality (transient bodies with aberrant desires) and language (love stories still lacking closure). Second, these beings' existence seems to depend on ours, for they appear both to be close to us and to ask us for something impossible. It seems that their beings revolve around this request, which they in fact refrain from expressing.

To investigate further the nature of these beings, I examine in chapter 4 the work *De daemonialitate* by the seventeenth-century Franciscan Ludovico Maria Sinistrari. This treatise on demonology, whose manuscript was discovered

in London in 1872, saw its first printed edition in 1875. No substantial study has ever been dedicated to this book. Sinistrari, born in the Piedmont village of Ameno in 1622, held the position of Consultor to the Supreme Tribunal of the Catholic Inquisition and was later entrusted with the compilation of the statutes of the Franciscan order. Sinistrari's most important work is *De delictis et poenis* (On crimes and their punishments; first edition published in Venice in 1700), which analyzes and classifies all possible crimes and sins according both to ecclesiastical and to civil law, and often gives details of the punishment appropriate to every given offense.[65]

In *De daemonialitate*, the Franciscan Sinistrari questions the canonical definition of angelic being. A fundamental tenet of Christian angelology is the belief that angels lack any possible form of physical desire. If the good angels simply convey God's communication, the fallen angels cannot help but relive their expulsion from heaven as a senseless obsession. When he tries to seduce a human being, a devil is in fact striving to reenact the remembrance of his own exile from grace. A devil's penis, which is usually much bigger than a man's, is cold as ice because he feels nothing. The devil's penis is not the vehicle of his actual sexual desire but only the metaphorical manifestation of a demonic temptation. The devil's penis is *like* a penis. However, Sinistrari reminds us that infinite accounts seem to describe a second sort of spirit, whose goal is not the sanction of a demonic pact but rather the fulfillment of a carnal, humanlike drive. Sinistrari calls this spirit *incubus*. This being reminds us of both the lover's soul turned into a demon in della Barba's Neoplatonic treatise on love, and the inferior divinities inhabiting the most secluded places of the world, according to Greek mythology (nymphs, satyrs, fauns, etc.) as Cigogna's *Magiae* describes in his long treatise.

Sinistrari underscores that what we call "practices against nature" should in fact be divided into a series of subsections that correspond to different forms of sin. Although we usually liken sodomy to bestiality, the law expert Sinistrari points out, these two unnatural practices in fact differ from each other, for in sodomy a man uses another man in a bestial manner although he is not a beast. Let us remember that Sinistrari dedicates a special section of his controversial *De delictis et poenis* to the specific problem of sodomy. The Franciscan tries to prove that women too can practice sodomy through an abnormal use of the clitoris.[66] But if sodomy is the unnatural coupling of two beings of the same gender, sex with an incubus or an animal is the encounter between two different races and natures. Sinistrari holds that this form of intercourse, whose outcome is still a matter of scientific discussion, is an actual case of contamination. As innumerable stories confirm, the offspring of this

sort of physical encounter is a hybrid, a being against nature. Think of the giants in *Genesis*, Sinistrari writes in the first chapters of *De daemonialitate*, whose existence no one would dare question. Weren't they the children of the "sons of God" and women?

Just as humans carry original sin as the parental legacy of mortality and exile from the divinity, so are these creatures against nature the visible receptacle and outcome of their parents' biographies. We must bear in mind, however, that the Franciscan Sinistrari posits two different demonic beings, devil and incubus. Thus, their progeny also must somehow differ. In the case of a devil, if he is able to assume a body of air, why shouldn't he be able to summon the semen necessary to inseminate a woman? This is Sinistrari's first, essential question. Why do most demonologists refuse to recognize the possibility of such a demonic endeavor? And what would that demonic semen be but the manifestation of a perverse obsession? The devil's semen is the reenactment of his eternal ban from divine grace and forgiveness.

We may thus say that these creatures against nature (the children of the devil and a woman) incarnate a chain of rhetorical contaminations. They are two stories at once, Satan's rebellion and damnation, and the human progeny's exile and restored dialogue with the divinity thanks to Christ's death and resurrection. These creatures are both damned and saved, both loathed and dearly loved by God. But what can we say about the other form of deviant coupling, between a woman and an incubus? As Sinistrari argues in the central section of his treatise, an incubus's body is neither totally metaphorical like a devil's nor totally carnal like ours. Incubi are in-between beings, a step down from the angels and a step up from human beings. So what kind of body will their offspring have? The children born of an incubus and a woman will be lighter than ours, since they are made of flesh and air. The air, which was their father (the incubus), makes their bodies a reminder of their damnation, their eternal decay. They are inconsistent, like a story that is about to be forgotten because it has no meaning now. But at the same time they are like us, since their mother's womb in theory would grant them a heavier, more material presence and a chance for eternal salvation.

In the final part of *De daemonialitate*, Sinistrari adds a significant explanation of the race of incubi. Unlike devils, incubi are granted a humanlike faculty of reflection. They know they are monsters and invoke our assistance. They want to be saved. Quoting a long passage from Saint Jerome's biography of Saint Paul, the first hermit, Sinistrari recounts that while Saint Anthony was walking through the wilderness to reach Paul's abode, Anthony encountered a little creature who inspired a sudden fear in the holy man.[67] This "animal"

looked like a dwarf with horns on his forehead and cloven feet. Believing he had come across some demon lurking in the woods, Anthony immediately began reciting some form of exorcism to chase the demon away. But this creature, offering the holy man some dates to show his peaceful intentions, explained that he was a mortal being, and that the ancients used to call him "satyr" or "incubus." He had approached the saint with the sole intention of begging the saint to pray for him and his race, for he had heard that God had descended from heaven to save the world.

In book 1 of *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium* and in chapter 9 of *De praenotione*, Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola had already discussed this episode from Jerome's biography of Saint Paul.[68] Like Sinistrari, Pico had reported this eerie encounter in order to consider the hypothetical ontological differences between a human being and a satyr or nymph. Are satyrs and nymphs always incarnations of the Foe? Creatures of this sort inhabit the most secluded regions of the world, where they can escape human violence. They leave their safe dwellings (woods, lakes, seas, and mountains) to pursue carnal intimacy with humans. Is there any relationship between Sinistrari's incubi and Menghi's familiar spirits? Both seem to long for our presence and intervention. In Sinistrari's reading of Jerome's text, an incubus needs us to pray for him.

De daemonialitate brings to the fore a universe populated with millions of spirits, as Strozzi Cigogna had already detailed in his *Magiae omnifariae*. But Cigogna's articulated taxonomy had inevitably left a number of questions unanswered. If the heavens and the earth are infected with infinite spiritual beings that lust after humans and give birth to a variety of mixed races, who among them will be saved at Doomsday? Who has a soul and who doesn't? What does love mean for these innumerable spirits?

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This book studies how, according to Renaissance demonology, the air metamorphoses into visible beings who come from the past to address us with some burning request. They appear to us as materializations of memories. Their arrival is a question. At times, they claim they are in love with us. They may even become part of our household. They are our familiar spirits.

CHAPTER ONE

TO READ THE BODY OF A MONSTER Exegesis and Witchcraft in *Strix* by Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola

The episode in Girolamo Menghi's *Compendium of the Art of Exorcisms* has shown that a spirit always appears as a familiar presence, even when his appearance seems unreasonable or unclear. When a man sees a spirit, he recognizes him as something not totally foreign and new. The spirit is a form of recognition. Even if he visits us for the very first time, we sense that the spirit is somehow returning to us. Before delivering a message, a spirit's visible form signifies a form of reunion. The spirit's visible body means that something has come back to us. In Menghi's story, a spirit silently follows and serves a young man. The Franciscan demonologist is convinced that this spirit is in love with this youth, even though we never hear the spirit articulate his feelings. The spirit may have expressed his love in private, or the young man himself may have come to this conclusion. Although this spirit is a demonic presence, his behavior has nothing mischievous about it. The spirit's numerous "incarnations" (schoolteacher, butler, and so forth) are attempts at a possible amorous reunification. The spirit's various bodies are signs of desire.

We must bear in mind, however, that, as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas stress, a spirit's body is the materialization of a remembrance. The spirit chooses a body that we recognize as familiar. In the introduction we saw that, according to important demonologists such as Paolo Grillando and Martin del

Rio, spiritual creatures assume "metaphorical bodies," similelike bodies made of air. Del Rio speaks of the devils' "palpable" bodies. These visible metaphors may even try to have sexual intercourse with us. Let us keep in mind that these spirits are made of the air we breathe.

Demonologists are convinced that intimacy with these aerial metaphors is an everlasting mark of damnation. Those who engage in sexual activities with the spirits of the air lose their humanity and live the rest of their lives as impure monsters. How could human flesh couple with a body of aerial metaphors? The outcome of such abomination can only be a monster, a being of a double nature. Some of these sinful beings metamorphose into beasts of the netherworld. They are called *striges*, screech owls. At night, while Satan's deceptive forms are shining in the sky, these birds infiltrate our homes and suck our children's blood. Striges gather in solitary places, where their master narrator mates with them and gives birth to new contagious metaphors. To put an end to the plague of striges means to read and interpret the stories hiding in them. To detect and burn a strix entails an act of interpretation, as when we read and interpret an obscure book.

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It is logical to stage the battle between a divine and a diabolical knowledge in a public square, as a sort of mystery play in which the characters debate how to detect the signs of an erroneous and infectious narration. An Italian square is the background of the dialogue *Strix sive de ludificatione daemonum* (Witch, or the deceptions of demons), which the humanist Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533), nephew of the well-known Neoplatonic philosopher Giovanni Pico, published in Latin in 1523.[1] Apart from a few studies focused on specific aspects of his philosophical system, Giovan Francesco Pico's opus still awaits a comprehensive analysis. This critical silence is in part the result of the vast erudition of his literary and philosophical references, but also and primarily the result of his austere religious views, which seem so foreign to our modern sensibility.[2] Pico's unflinching support for the Catholic Church's violent battle against Satan's followers, and his strenuous belief in repression and persecution as the primary means to preserve Christian truth alienate those readers who cherish a different, "brighter" view of Renaissance culture.[3] In this regard, the dialogue *Strix* seems the perfect synthesis of Pico's thought. *Strix* is usually remembered as the sole Renaissance dialogue in which an old woman is publicly questioned and forced to confess her repugnant encounters with devils.[4] But *Strix* is more than an ingenious piece of

fiction on the scourge of witchcraft. As Walter Stephens stresses in *Demon Lovers, Strix* is a literary archetype.[5] Stephens underscores that this dialogue works as the response to a dramatic state of spiritual and social emergency that the author experiences as a direct, private menace. In Stephens's words, "Pico's real subject is demonic reality and its relation to illusion and untruth."[6] Pico strongly believes that a half-human and half-bird being called *strix* incarnates and reveals Satan's infectious presence in the creation.

Biographical Note

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Giovan Francesco Pico was born in the city of Mirandola in 1469.[7] After marrying Giovanna Carafa in 1491, he acquired the hereditary title to the principate of Mirandola from his famous uncle Giovanni Pico, who in his will stated that at his death Giovan Francesco should have the first opportunity to purchase his library. As Charles Schmitt stresses in his study of Giovan Francesco's anti-Aristotelianism, the relationship between the two Picos was characterized by a constant mutual affection.[8] As we shall see, throughout his work Giovan Francesco refers to his uncle with an unmistakable tone of respect and love. In 1499, Giovan Francesco became prince of Mirandola, but soon after his two younger brothers, Federico and Ludovico, contested his dominion and, with the direct support of their mother Bianca Maria d'Este, set out to conquer Mirandola by force. Their first attempts (in 1499 and 1501) failed, but in 1502, after a fierce siege that lasted some fifty days, Pico's brothers succeeded in occupying Mirandola. The repeated loss and recapture of his territory in fact punctuated Giovan Francesco's entire troubled life, until its tragic end. After a period of exile in which he also traveled to Germany to see his rights recognized by the emperor, Pico temporarily reacquired Mirandola in 1511 thanks to the military help of Pope Julius II, but he lost his land again the very same year.[9] In 1514 Giovan Francesco and Francesca Trivulzio, the wife of his deceased brother Ludovico, arrived at an agreement, which by no means put an end to the disputes between the two parties. In 1533, Giovan Francesco was murdered by his nephew Galeotto, Francesca Trivulzio's son.

Pico's Defense of the Mystic Caterina Racconigi, Accused of Being a Witch

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In 1529, during his longest stay in Mirandola, Giovan Francesco had welcomed the young mystic Caterina Racconigi, whom years earlier (1512–13) he had defended against accusations of witchcraft and heresy. Caterina, who would eventually be beatified, had been brought before the court of the Inquisition in Turin because of her visionary powers and miracles.[10] So deep and sincere was Giovan Francesco's respect for this young tertiary that he dedicated to her a long hagiography in ten books with the title *Compendium of the Marvelous Things concerning the Blessed Caterina Racconigi* (*Compendio delle cose mirabili della Beata Caterina da Racconigi*).[11] As a "living saint," Caterina had triggered the Church's suspicion because no evident distinction existed between her spiritual gifts and the witches' diabolical powers.[12] A saint and a strix could in fact bring about identical "miraculous" effects. Caterina and the anonymous witch described in *Strix* are specular figures. This is why, in order to fully understand the demonic monster strix, it is fundamental to know her exact opposite, the blessed Caterina Racconigi, a Dominican tertiary. Let us remember that to declare that a given human being is a saint means to turn her into a model of salvation. We "model ourselves" on a saint's biography when we read her existence as a reflection of a divine intervention. This is why an accurate interpretation is of such essential importance. As we shall see in a moment, for Pico, Caterina Racconigi is the anti-strix. The Holy See honored Caterina's mystical experience only in 1807.[13]

Giovan Francesco's *Compendium* of Caterina's life is a unique piece of writing that has received insufficient critical attention. His *Compendium* is at once traditional hagiography and philosophical treatise against Latin and Greek culture. Caterina, Pico is convinced, symbolizes a truthful, Christian sage who defies the allures of pagan demonic wisdom. This element is present also in Pico's second hagiographic work, the *Vita Hieronymi Savonarolae* (The life of Girolamo Savonarola). Unlike Girolamo Savonarola, though, Caterina Racconigi never questioned and threatened the Holy See's political and ideological interests. For this reason, whereas the *Vita Savonarolae* had primarily a manuscript circulation and was severely censored and butchered in its vernacular translations, the *Compendium* was even expanded and hailed as a model of hagiographic writing.

Pico's Biography of Caterina Racconigi Attacks Classical Culture and Humanism

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One cannot compare the pagan perception of divine things with Christian doctrine, Pico openly states at the beginning of the *Compendium*. Wondering whence natural marvels originated, the Greeks resorted to philosophy, which is in fact the product of human ignorance. But God deigned to manifest the hidden order of the creation when his Only Begotten died on the cross. "The wood of the cross," Pico stresses, is the image of God's wisdom.[14] The Holy Ghost visited Caterina several times when she was a child. The third person of the Trinity first entered her room in the form of a dove. When the five-year-old mystic crossed herself and invoked Jesus, a ray of great splendor came out of the dove's mouth, which spoke these words: "Receive and drink this wine, dear daughter. Thanks to it . . . you'll become hungry and thirsty of divine love."[15] Like a new Savior, Caterina is baptized (the dove) at the knowledge of the crucified god (the wine).[16] Like other women mystics, Caterina later marries the Word several times. The Virgin Mary herself officiates at the first marriage between the young girl and Jesus.[17] Eventually Caterina receives hidden stigmata, and her heart is taken out of her chest to be purified.[18]

Giovan Francesco knows that true Christian knowledge still faces severe opposition from the stubborn worshippers of the "philosophy of the pagans" (la filosofia de' pagani).[19] Both the *Compendium* and the *Vita Savonarolae* are "engaged" books, that is, they are written against unspecified detractors, who are in a sense the primary addressees of Pico's writing. These unnamed "slanderers" (calunniatori) are first the Italian humanists, who had resuscitated classical literature and values, but also those who, inside the Church, denied Savonarola's holiness and thus also questioned his call for a spiritual reformation.

Let us remember that Giovan Francesco himself is a humanist.[20] Pagan culture, along with Christian revelation, is Pico's background. At the beginning of every new section of the *Compendium,* Pico responds to what his enemies might say to ridicule his text. Don't "they" remember, Pico writes, that a familiar devil spoke in the mind of Socrates, "the father of pagan philosophy"?[21] Pythagoras, another pillar of ancient culture, even flew on an arrow like our contemporary witches, as Pico also mentions in *Strix*.[22] Pico's enemies could reply that Caterina herself, as his *Compendium* confirms, flew from place to place. However, angels, not demons, carried her.[23] She even brought Pico some relics

from her mystical trip to Jerusalem.[24] As Gabriella Zarri reminds us, Caterina was one of the "masche di Dio" (witches of God), holy women whose supernatural faculties resembled those of the witches.[25] But Caterina had the utmost hatred toward "familiar demons," who persecuted her throughout her life.[26]

Like the men and women turned into eerie beasts in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a crucial reference in Pico's *Strix*, devils present themselves to Caterina Racconigi as strange birds, serpents, or hybrids made of more than one species.[27] In one instance, Caterina gives Pico a detailed description of this uncanny being: He was a quadruped, his upper body was very hairy, with a half-bestial, half-human head. He had a large mouth, up to his ears, and very long teeth. His shoulders were almost human. He had claws like a lion and a tail thick as a human leg.[28]

Caterina had one of her most painful confrontations with these beings at Pico's home in Mirandola. Responding to Pico's insistent request, the mystic had agreed to spend some time with his family. While he was in bed with his wife, Pico heard horrible thuds and blows coming from Caterina's room. Although three rooms divided Pico from Caterina, these terrifying noises woke him and lasted throughout the night. The following day, a pale and tired Caterina confessed that she had struggled with a monstrous being until dawn.[29] What the pagan philosophers called physics and metaphysics, Pico underscores, in Caterina's experience became a zealous and silent wrestling with "familiar demons," who embody a perverse knowledge.[30] Caterina's triumph over the demons of paganism is more illustrious than any victory narrated by Roman historians.[31]

To wrestle with a false knowledge (for Pico, Latin and Greek culture and Italian humanism), to defeat the monstrous incarnations of a perverse wisdom is man's highest and noblest goal. For Giovan Francesco Pico, "to know" is a moral and religious obligation. To interpret the signs and messages of the created world is the philosopher's primary concern. As he stresses at the beginning of the important *On Pre-Notion* (*De rerum praenotione*), people usually believe that it is very different to interpret a past or present event and to express a prophetic foresight of a future occurrence. On the contrary, with the term *pre-notion* Pico addresses knowledge as a whole, for he contends that to understand essentially means "to know before," that is, to uncover what it is not visible or revealed *yet*.[32] "To know before" thus applies to past, present, and future things alike, because it essentially addresses the ultimate spiritual meaning of a given event. However, human beings cannot help but try to read God's will through the "images" and "similes" present in his creation. This is why Satan endeavors to sidetrack our interpretation with perverse, aberrant

similes.[33] We shall see that the strix, a nocturnal beast-woman that comes to us from the netherworld and feeds on our blood, is Satan's most visible simile.

For Pico, to Interpret Reality Is a Religious Endeavor

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Strix and *The Life of Savonarola*

Interpretation is indeed the core of Giovan Francesco's philosophical inquiry. Ten years after the "unjust" legal persecution of Caterina Racconigi, Giovan Francesco actively participated in the trial of a group of ten witches, seven men and three women, who were later convicted and executed.[34] As the friar Leandro Alberti reminds the reader in the preface to his Italian translation of *Strix* (1523–24), Mirandola had recently become the target of an unexpected demonic attack.[35] Strange gatherings had been going on in the countryside, stirring the suspicion of Gerolamo Armellini, Inquisitor of Parma and Reggio.[36] During the "game of the woman" (giuoco della donna), the holy name of God had been offended, his cross had been stomped on, and innumerable other crimes against the true faith had been perpetrated. Supported by Giovan Francesco Pico, the Inquisitor's investigation concluded that the defendants had to be burned on a pyre. Alberti, however, mentions that "many people . . . began to say with injurious words that these people had been executed unjustly."[37] In this second instance, after a thorough review of their trial, Giovan Francesco determined that the ten had got what they deserved. Dedicating his translation of *Strix* to Giovanna Carafa, Pico's wife, Alberti reiterates that her husband had undertaken a "detailed and most subtle examination" of this legal case: "because these complaints increased from day to day, the illustrious lord Gian Francesco . . . decided to look into this matter and thus undertook a detailed and most subtle examination of all that had taken place before the inquisitor . . . in order to discover the insidious wiles of the demon and to spread everywhere the resonant truth of Christian faith."[38] Giovan Francesco's most pressing task is to make untruth visible, that is, to expose its rationale and goals, its methods of infiltration and infection. The sharp contrast between Caterina Racconigi and a group of miserable witches in fact symbolizes a much more universal philosophical and religious endeavor. Pico writes a biography of Caterina to preserve the truthfulness inherent in her religious experience.

A similar conflict between a devious and a truthful interpretation is at the basis of Pico's second and more famous biography, that of the friar Girolamo Savonarola, the great apocalyptic visionary burned at the stake in

1498. Pico completed it in 1530.[39] In Pico's view, Savonarola, like Caterina, was the object of an interpretative mistake, which our author again tries to mend through a fervent hagiographic biography.[40]

Pico Exorcizes Two Women with a Piece of Savonarola's Heart

I discuss only one passage from *Vita Savonarolae*—one that clarifies Pico's attitude toward demonology. In chapter 19, Pico narrates that Savonarola was first hanged and then burned along with a group of his followers.[41] The remains of his body were then collected out of the ashes and thrown into the river Arno. Two days after the execution, a child saw something like a ball (pilam quondam) float down the river. He fished it out and showed it to his father, who immediately recognized it as the "prophet's heart" (prophetae cor).[42] Afraid of the persecution they might incur if they turned it to the Florentine authorities, father and son took it home. The child's mother carefully hid it as a very precious relic.

When two members of her family fell ill and doctors seemed of no avail, the mother touched their legs with Savonarola's heart and they recovered immediately. In a passage overlooked by many commentators, Giovan Francesco Pico states that he himself received a fragment of Savonarola's heart from a priest called Balthasar, who had used it to free a woman from a demon.[43] Thanks to his fragment of Savonarola's body, Pico himself exorcised two possessed women, both citizens of his dominion. The first victim, who had come to see Pico because of a legal dispute over a house, confessed to being frequently vexed by a devil. While he let her voice her concerns, Pico secretly reached for a silver cross, around which he had wrapped Savonarola's heart and a few other relics. The devil inside the woman, sensing Pico's moves, reacted violently and, unable to face Pico's insistent questioning, confessed to being a servant of Beelzebub ("Quis ergo—inquam—tuus?" "Beelzebub").[44] When he finally put the little cross on her forehead, the woman passed out.

The following day, after a preliminary conversation with the possessed, the amateur exorcist Pico held Savonarola's heart in his fist and pressed it to the woman's head, who fainted again. Pico's other exorcism is of greater importance, for it took the form of a highly theological confrontation. Having heard that another woman living in the territory of Mirandola was tormented by three devils, Pico ordered that she be brought to him. The problem with this particular possession was that the woman expressed grave and dense concepts, which even theologians found challenging ("res grandes loqueretur theologis etiam non omnino faciles"). Before a small audience, one of the evil

spirits, who claimed he had been a member of the first angelic hierarchy and ruled over more than seven thousand demons, attacked his interlocutors with a series of theological questions. Did they think God was right when he condemned to eternal punishment the angels who were only guilty of a minor sin? Should the babies who die right after baptism go straight to heaven? While he replied to the devil's inquiries point by point, Giovan Francesco went for Savonarola's heart again and, holding it in his fist, placed it on the woman's head. The possessed immediately felt as if a tower were pressing her head down.

The final part of Pico's adjuration revolved around the meaning of the relic itself. "He would have been much better off if he had escaped the flames that burned him," were the first words coming out of the woman's mouth.[45] "What's his name?" Pico asked. The woman being unwilling to answer his question, Pico insisted that she explain how this unnamed presence (Savonarola) could possibly annoy her, since his body had been burned. "This part," the woman said, "was not reduced to ashes" (Pars . . . illa non abiit in cineres). What part is that? Pico pressed her. The one Jesus asks from us. To the next question, "Where is his soul now?" the devil in the woman replied that Savonarola was now where he, the devil, used to be. And where is that? Not where Jesus and the apostles are but among the confessors. "Liar!" was Pico's riposte, "tell us where he is" (Mentiris—inquam—exprime locum). "He is certainly among the martyrs," the devil in the woman finally admitted.

As far as I know, this brief description of Pico's role as an exorcist, in whom civil and religious powers come to merge through a state of emergency, is never or rarely mentioned in any contemporary critical analysis of Giovan Francesco's works. As Paola Zambelli stresses in her important study of Renaissance magic, Giovan Francesco Pico is primarily remembered as a peculiar exponent of early modern skepticism, for whom the critique of the whole canon of Western philosophy parallels a passionate defense of the Catholic Church's most repressive and violent resolutions.[46] The episode from Pico's *Vita Savonarolae* in fact symbolizes a fundamental aspect of Pico's intellectual experience. The Church was facing one of the most perilous moments of its history given its internal corruption, the fierce attack of the Lutheran "plague," and the staggering number of satanic possessions.[47] In Giovan Francesco's view, Savonarola's central message is his dramatic call for a radical spiritual renovation.[48] The confrontation between the "heart" of a prophetic Truth and a deceitful argumentation (the possessed woman engaging Giovan Francesco in a theological debate) returns in *Strix* with far-reaching implications.

Pico's Interpretation of a Monstrous Body Called *Strix*

The first part of this chapter has stressed the following crucial points. First, for Pico, the basic opposition between the mystic Caterina Racconigi and the witches infecting the territory of Mirandola has a cultural foundation. Whereas Satan's disciples embody the values of Latin and Greek culture, the blessed Caterina represents the truth of Christian revelation. Pico contends that to uphold the charges against a group of witches equals proving the truthfulness of Christian faith against "the insidious wiles" of every form of dubious or false knowledge. The second point is connected to the first. Pico was able to exorcise a woman because he held a piece of Savonarola's heart in his hand. For Pico, the truthfulness of Catholicism, which was literally embodied in the martyr and prophet Savonarola, has healing powers. The truth of the Catholic faith has a physical connotation. However, both Caterina and Savonarola had been subjected to false accusations. That is, their lives and deeds had been "misread." For Pico, a correct interpretation is an expression of faith.

An Introduction to *Strix*

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Strix unfolds as a riddle revolving around a monster called *strix*. A strix is not merely the name of Satan's worshipper (the Latin version of *strega*, "witch"). A strix is a human being who, by turning to Satan, has renounced her humanity and has turned into an unnatural beast, which must be first interpreted (dissected, unraveled) and then burned. Like the sphinx, a strix harbors a message and meaning of paramount importance for the interpreter. To read a strix's obscure presence means to trace back its origins, to uncover its intentions, and to execute its annihilation.

The four characters active in this dramatic dialogue (Phronimus, Apistius, the Inquisitor Dicaste, and the anonymous strix) stage the progressive disclosure of Truth. *Strix* can be seen as a drama divided into two acts plus a finale. In the first part of this "play," the two friends Phronimus and Apistius voice opposing views of witchcraft. Whereas Phronimus (the "prudent man"), who expresses the author's beliefs, insists on the existence of a pact between lewd women and devils, Apistius (the "man without faith") manifests a skeptical and rather ironic position on this subject. Through the debate between the two friends, which quickly turns into a philosophical discussion on the nature of classical culture, Pico shows the uncertainty of human dialectic, which can only struggle and fail to apprehend truth. In the second part of

the dialogue, the face-off between the strix and the Inquisitor transcends the weaknesses of rhetoric. Let us remember that, when he acted as an exorcist, Giovan Francesco had put an end to his debate with the devil by simply imposing Savonarola's heart on the possessed woman's head.

For Giovan Francesco, falsity is not only a rhetorical or linguistic concept. By dragging a strix to the stage of his text, Pico shows that what is false exists as a real negativity opposing the human mind, its welfare, and its final salvation. What is false is not simply nonexistent (for instance, a false sentence, a false statement, but also the nymphs, satyrs, and Lares of Latin and Greek literature, all of them being invented creatures), because every false "thing" (words, sentences, texts, pagan stories, and divinities) actively works against human enlightenment. In *Strix*, the anonymous woman compelled to detail her horrendous crimes *speaks* falsity and *is* falsity itself. The anonymous woman *embodies* falsity, to which Christian truth responds with the enforcement of divine-social law (the Inquisitor Dicaste). Being false, the strix is also the sole character without a name.

If in the first part of *Strix* the enlightened Phronimus parallels the Inquisitor Dicaste ("Judge"); in the second the skeptical Apistius first defends classical culture against Phronimus's persistent attacks and later finds himself aligned with the strix. At the end of the dialogue the intellectual Apistius recognizes that his reasoning in favor of Latin and Greek culture is as false as the strix's unlawful behavior. Apistius finally sees that the strix has in fact spoken a falsity similar to his own. We may say that, if Phronimus and the Inquisitor Dicaste are two sides of the exorcist Pico, who healed a citizen of the strix's dominion by holding the heart of the martyred Savonarola over her head/mind, then Apistius and the strix side with the three learned devils tormenting the woman of Mirandola.

Strix: Chapter 1

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The Beginning: The Desire to See a Strix

The first exchange between Apistius and Phronimus depicts a moment of sudden, general commotion:

APISTIUS: Tell me, Phronimus, where are all those people running to through the green-market?

PHRONIMUS: Let's go see what's the reason of such a throng. It won't take too much of our time.

APISTIUS: I agree, if we just walk to the church they've started building for the Virgin Mother of God, and have called Church of the Miracles. It must be more than a mile. In that crowd I think I recognize some of those in charge of that holy dwelling. I'm sure that they are all heading in the same direction.

PHRONIMUS: I think you're right. If I'm not mistaken, some of those youths over there are at the service of the priest in charge of the persecution of sorcery. I don't think it would be a bad idea to go and take a look. If it's not greatly beneficial, it will be at least a pleasant walk and when we come back, we'll be quite hungry. But perhaps it will be more rewarding than that, because we may easily learn something new. For I'm convinced they've arrested some strix, and that crowd with those children is rushing to see her.

APISTIUS: Do striges really live around here? I would certainly walk more than ten miles to see one.

PHRONIMUS: Well, if you have never seen one, this time you may have a chance to gratify your wish.[49]

Apistius, the man without faith, first notices the utterly unusual excitement that has suddenly overwhelmed the "people" (vulgum) visiting an open market. It is Apistius who first mentions the new Church of the Miracles, which is being built nearby. Phronimus, the prudent man, limits himself to supporting his friend's curiosity but does not seem particularly surprised. Phronimus explains to his friend that only the arrest of a strix could create such a stir among the populace. But he is also aware of the fact that, walking to the new Church of the Miracles, his skeptical friend may see a heartfelt wish answered. That is, by confronting a strix Apistius may gain a fundamental insight about himself and undergo a radical transformation.

Apistius's response to his friend's explanation has an ambiguous tone.[50] He would certainly walk more than ten miles to take a look at that "bird" (avem), since he has been looking for one for quite some time. Phronimus replies, "Why do you say 'bird' . . . are you teasing me?" Apistius insists that he would love to see the bird that in Latin was called *strix*, even though the ancients did not know this animal directly ("ignoravit antiquitas"). According to Apistius, classical authors in their verses describe a "screech owl" (strigem) that sucks the blood of children, but they never had a chance to see one, nor did they know where it lived, nor were they sure it actually existed. Apistius quotes verses from Seneca, Tibullus, and Lucan, all of them confirming the existence of this mysterious beast.[51]

What these quotations share is their characterization of the striges as beasts of the netherworld.[52] In particular, in a famous and disturbing passage from Lucan's *The Civil War* (*Pharsalia*), we read of a Thessalian witch called Erictho, whose voice was far different from human speech and "resembled . . . the night-flying screech-owl."[53] When Pompey's son asks her to foretell his future, Erictho explains that the easiest way to predict what the gods have in store for him is "to lift one dead man from the Thessalian fields; then the mouth of a corpse still warm and freshly slain will speak with substantial utterance."[54] Scouring the battlefield, the witch finally finds a corpse whose stiffened lungs are unwounded. Invoking the "horror of hell," this woman brings back to temporary life "the ghost of the unburied corpse," who in tears reveals that the "civil war has shattered the peace of the infernal world."[55]

The Ancients Knew of the Striges but Were Not Ready to See Them

But, Apistius asks himself, how could these classical authors speak about something they had never seen? Pliny even doubted that a screech owl suckled children and did not know what type of bird it was.[56] What Pliny did know was that screech owls were "creatures under a curse." The ancients sensed the presence of such an uncanny being, but they were not ready to encounter it. Let me phrase this point more clearly. A strix is an impossible being, a bunch of contradictions. When his friend mentions a witch as the most probable cause of a sudden turmoil in their town, the skeptical Apistius immediately thinks of the classical strix, a rapacious bird whose true existence was both feared and questioned.[57] Apistius does not believe in witches but would love to see a strix. He remembers references by classical poets to this horrible creature, even though these writers didn't know it firsthand. Let me stress the importance of this aspect for my inquiry. A strix is more than a mere learned reference to classical literature. In Latin and Greek texts Apistius finds a first, albeit vague and imperfect, definition of a monstrous being that is at once real and fictional, invisible and ominous. Greek and Latin authors could only foresee a strix because they were not able to apprehend or see its true form and meaning.

The strix becomes visible, that is, she appears in the dialogue, only when the skeptical intellectual is ready to *see* her for what she really is—a contaminated body, a body of a monstrous and diabolical nature. In the introduction I mentioned the famous episode in Jerome's biography of Saint Paul the hermit, in which Saint Anthony encounters a satyr, a being with goatlike legs and two sharp horns on his forehead.[58] As the ambassador of a human

race that hides in the wilderness, this creature beseeches the mystic to pray to God for him and his people. Giovan Francesco discusses this story in a central passage of *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium* (Analysis of the vanity of the gentiles' creed), where he tries to define what a human being is. Pico asks himself whether the satyr in Jerome's story embodies a different human species or is closer to a beast.[59] For Pico, an additional problem is that, as we shall see in a later section of *Strix*, devils often take on the form of satyrs.[60] What is the relationship then between a satyr as a visible manifestation of Satan and a satyr as a variation of the human race? If satyrs were nothing but human creatures, why does the devil choose their body to appear to us? In Jerome's text, the satyr himself recognizes that the ancients used to call his race "incubi."

We must thus posit the existence of beings whose nature could be at once human, bestial, and demonic. A clearer clue to the nature of these beings is in Ovid's *Fasti*, a poetic treatment of the Roman year I mentioned in the introduction. Apistius knows this description by heart: "They fly by night and attack nurseless children, and defile their bodies, snatched from their cradles. They are said to rend the flesh of sucklings with their beaks, and their throats are full of the blood which they have drunk."[61] The verses preceding this citation offered a more physical account of these beasts: "greedy birds . . . big is their head, goggle their eyes, their beaks are formed for rapine, their feathers blotched with grey, their claws fitted with hooks." But it is impossible to tell "whether they are born birds, or are made such by enchantment."[62]

Striges Are Related to Carna, the Goddess of the Hinge

How to combine Pliny's view of a strix as a wet nurse who suckles babies with that of screech owl (*strix*, as the noun of the verb *stridere*, "to screech") sucking life out of children? Maybe, Apistius wonders, we should posit both a "good" (benefica) and a "bad" (malefica) strix, if such a being in fact exists.[63] But why can't we hypothesize that, thanks to Satan, these striges take up the form of wet nurses so that, when they show up at the door of our houses, we let them approach our defenseless babies? This is Phronimus's theory, which he supports with a subsequent passage from the same sixth book of Ovid's *Fasti*. Let us remember that at this point in his work Ovid narrates the mythic origins of the month of June. The reference to the striges is in the first day of the month: "The first day is given to thee, Carna."[64] For Ovid, Carna is "the goddess of the hinge: by her divine power she opens what is closed, and closes what is open."[65] The story behind this divinity revolves around Cranaë, a nymph who protected

her virginity from her numerous suitors by saying: "In this place there is too much light, and with the light too much of shame; if thou wilt lead to a more retired cave, I'll follow."[66] While her lover went in front, the nymph would disappear into a bush. But Janus, the god with two faces, found out her device and forced her to make love to him. As a gift, Janus "gave her a thorn—and white it was—wherewith she could repel all doleful harm from doors."[67]

A strix is then a being that presents itself at the threshold of our dwellings. Carna, let us keep in mind, is the goddess of hinges, of entrances and exits. Phronimus reminds Apistius that the ancients sent these beings away by placing a bunch of white thorns outside their doors ("virgam . . . ex alba spina"), a reminder of the nymph loved by the two-faced Janus.[68] The god who had violated the nymph's intimacy also provides us with the means to protect our household from future invasions. In a second quotation from Ovid's *Fasti*, Apistius recalls the story of Proca, the king of Alba Longa, whose chambers were invaded by these eerie birds, who sucked the breast of Proca's five-year-old son "with greedy tongues, and the poor child squalled and craved help."[69] Consulted for advice, Cranaë went to the cradle and reassured the child's devastated parents that she would save him: "Straightaway she thrice touched the doorposts, one after the other, with arbutus leaves; thrice with arbutus leaves she marked the threshold. She sprinkled the entrance with water . . . and she held the raw inwards of a sow just two months old. . . . A rod of Janus, taken from the white-thorn, was placed where a small window gave light to the chambers."[70] Commenting on this story, Phronimus notices a contradiction in the god Janus. How could one possibly be safe if the god who teaches us the rituals necessary to guard our homes is in fact the same god who sends his striges to devastate the quiet of our dwellings? Aren't these uncanny beings a reenactment of the god who stalked and raped the nymph Cranaë? Phronimus is convinced that Janus's language and gestures (the white thorns outside the door; the threshold marked with arbutus leaves) are not "sacred" (sacra) but rather "execrable signs" (execranda portenta) and that we learn them from the very god who intends to assail us.[71]

Phronimus's explanation becomes now very explicit and direct. Whereas the ancients had an ambiguous relationship with Satan because they did not know him in his truthful essence, we are now able to call Janus by his real name—Satan. And don't we call a devil's follower *strix* ("appellationem strigis")? To gain our trust, these women first secretly "corrupt" (vitiant) our newborn babies in the cradles and then show up at the door of our houses as wet nurses with the remedy for the illness they themselves have caused. Let us remember that in *Fasti*, Ovid is unable to tell us whether these striges are natu-

ral birds or human beings turned into beasts as a form of punishment. As the *Malleus maleficarum* confirms, a text Giovan Francesco Pico knows well, the striges present themselves as midwifes or wet nurses to kidnap our children and offer them to their master during the "ludum Dianae" (game of Diana), the night gatherings at which these birds/women meet their demons.[72]

Apistius can't hide his skepticism toward his friend's stunning confidence. How could one possibly believe that these women first cover their bodies with some unguent and then, riding a sheep or a log, fly to meet Satan? Some striges claim that their demons take them up in the air, whereas others believe that only their soul encounters their demonic lover while they lie in a trance.[73] These contradictory and flagrantly absurd ideas suit the "populace" (vulgum), not a sophisticated man like Phronimus. Phronimus attacks Apistius's skepticism by questioning the very foundation of his philosophical and literary knowledge. Just by listening to your learned quotations from Ovid, Lucan, and Seneca, Phronimus says, it is evident that you, Apistius, are really well versed in poetry and philosophy. To be truly knowledgeable of these subjects, Apistius replies, one must somehow know the "secret philosophy" (reconditam philosophi[am]) stored in the verses of classical poets, first and foremost Homer, whom Aristotle and Plutarch held in the highest esteem. Although he has often read the classics to practice his Latin and Greek and to become familiar with some of their teachings, he doesn't know classical culture very well. Phronimus replies that Apistius is right in stating that to understand the ancients' wisdom fully it is indispensable to study Homeric poetry. Classical culture is based on poetry. However, Phronimus is also certain that Apistius's seeming modesty hides an arrogant philosophical conviction according to which Truth, as Aristotle claims, would lie between two opposite "vices" (vitiis). Apistius in fact does not claim to know everything, nor does he state that he knows nothing.[74] We shall see later that "to lie between two opposites" is the core of a satanic knowledge.

Homer, the Realm of the Dead, and the Striges

The first exchange between the two friends has brought up a point of great importance. Apistius and Phronimus agree that, in classical culture, poetry and philosophy are strictly related to each other and that they express some cohesive but hidden learning. In particular, Apistius seems to embrace a Neoplatonic interpretation of Homeric poetry as the source of a hermetic knowledge demanding some sort of spiritual initiation.[75] In any case, even if we exclude any direct Neoplatonic connotation in Apistius's stance on Homeric

poetry, it is a given that he identifies truth with the interpretation of classical texts, poetry and philosophy alike. Without contradicting his friend, however, Phronimus pushes the relationship between ancient poetry and philosophy even further, stating that classical culture is in fact intrinsically poetic. Given this essential identification, Phronimus continues his attack against Apistius's skeptical view of witchcraft by quoting a passage from book 11 of the *Odyssey*.[76] If it is true, as Plutarch holds, that the blind poet knew "all divine and human things" (divina denique et humana),[77] how does Apistius interpret the verses about Ulysses' arrival at the land of the Cimmerian people?

> I, drawing my sharp sword from beside my hip,
> dug a trench of about a forearm's depth and length
> and around it poured libations out to all the dead.[78]

This reference to the *Odyssey* deserves special attention. In the realm "shrouded in mist and cloud," where "the eye of the Sun can never flash his rays," Odysseus invokes "the nations of the dead" and slashes the throats of the sacrificial victims, whose "dark blood" he pours into the trench he just dug with his sword.[79] Responding to his invitation, "the ghosts of the dead and gone" flock toward him.[80] However, Odysseus does not let the souls of the dead trespass the boundary marked by the blood surrounding him. Like the striges presenting themselves at our houses, the spirits of the dead approach and question Odysseus "at the door," so to speak, but cannot walk into his circle of blood. And like striges, the souls of the dead are drawn toward blood:

> They swarmed in a flock around the dark blood
> While I searched for a way to question each alone . . .
> I would not let them drink the dark blood, all in a rush,
> And so they waited, coming forward one after another.[81]

First, the ghost of his companion Elpenor beseeches Odysseus to remember him: "my lord, remember me, I beg you! Don't sail off and desert me, left behind unwept, unburied, don't."[82] As long as the soul stays outside the circle of blood, the dead may ask the living for compassion but can't offer anything in return. Only if they drink from the trench of blood, that is, only if they enter the realm of the living, do they become able to warn the living about their future.[83]

Through these selections from classical literature, Phronimus has shown that in the ancient world human beings conversed with the creatures "from below," and that this exchange occurred also thanks to a creature called strix. The appearance of this hybrid in fact foreshadowed the "unnatural" encounter

between the living and the beings of the netherworld. This beast itself was of an unclear nature, maybe a sinister bird or a human turned into a bird. Strix was a hybrid symbolizing the trespassing of the natural boundaries between two worlds and two distinct forms of beings. In this regard, Phronimus reminds Apistius, classical literature abounds with clear references to unnatural couplings and to the subsequent birth of unnatural beings. At the times of the heroes (heroicis temporibus), who themselves were the offspring of human–divine sexual intercourse, the creatures from below seduced human beings by taking up beguiling forms.[84] Phronimus again finds a verse summarizing this point: "He left [it] in a shady vale not far from the city's walls." This quotation is from the story of Peleus, Achilles' father, in book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*.[85] When he saw the naked Thetis, one of the divinities of the sea, resting in a grotto, Peleus tried to have sex with her, but she escaped his embrace by taking up different forms (bird, tree, tigress). Only thanks to Proteus, another god of the sea who also had the ability to change shape at will, was Peleus able to seduce the recalcitrant Thetis, who then gave birth to Achilles. For Phronimus, the names Thetis and Proteus are nothing but synonyms for demons who beguile humans (Peleus) by changing themselves into seductive forms. Don't demonologists state that devils can present themselves either as women (succubi) or men (incubi), according to their victim's sexuality?

Pagan Mythic Stories Foreshadow the Truthful Stories of the Bible

The *Metamorphoses* also allude to a second moment in Peleus's biography. After his marriage with the demon/divinity Thetis, Peleus slaughters his brother Phocus and, "driven from his father's house with his brother's blood upon his hands," he finds shelter in the kingdom ruled by Ceyx, son of Lucifer ("Lucifero genitore").[86] It is impossible not to perceive a biblical undertone in Phronimus's choice of this classical myth. Like Cain, Peleus murders his own brother. Like Adam, he is expelled from his father's house but is welcomed into the realm of Lucifer's son, which lies at the bottom of a vale. Here Peleus hears the narration of a new case of physical transformation, this time the result of an unbearable sadness. King Ceyx tells him the story of his brother Daedelion, whose beautiful daughter Chione dared to criticize Diana, who then pierced her with an arrow.[87] Apollo, pitying Daedelion's devastating sorrow, transformed him into a sinister bird, whose features are similar to those of a strix: "[Apollo] gave him [Daedelion] a hooked beak, gave him curved

claws, but he left him his old-time courage and strength greater than his body. And now as a hawk, friendly to none, he vents his cruel rage on all birds and, suffering himself, makes others suffer, too."[88] No other passage from a classical text could better synthesize Phronimus's argument about the real existence of striges both in the ancient and the contemporary world. Murder, sin, and metamorphosis unquestionably speak of an on-going contamination between the creatures from below and humans. But what is even more remarkable is that, as Phronimus points out, these ancient stories harbor a religious and moral meaning, which lay unheard until the present of Phronimus's interpretation. Read in this manner, the final description of the despairing father turned into a vengeful bird is the most cogent symbol of this perverse commerce with the underworld. Striges are beasts of unquenchable suffering, solitude, and resentment.

The Undeniable Link between Classical Culture and Satan

No one symbolizes the image of a healer inspired by Satan better than Aesculapius, the alleged god of medicine. Phronimus reminds his friend that, like the Thessalian witch in Lucan's epic poem, Aesculapius knew how to bring the dead back from the underworld, and that for his defiant activity Zeus struck him with a thunderbolt.[89] Stesichorus, Polyanthus, Panyasis, Staphylus, and Telesarchus are only some of the numerous ancient writers who believed that Aesculapius died because he had dared resuscitate the dead against divine will.[90] More importantly, Aesculapius had revealed his true nature when he had appeared to the Romans as a snake. When "a deadly pestilence had corrupted Latium's air and men's bodies lay wasting and pale with a ghastly disease," Ovid writes in the *Metamorphoses*, the oracle of Delphi suggested that the Roman people seek Aesculapius's help.[91] The god of medicine appeared "in the form of a serpent with high crest [and] uttered hissing warnings of his presence."[92] Astounded by his eerie appearance, the Roman people worshipped this alleged god who, "moving his crest thrice[,] emitted with darting tongue a hiss in confirmation of his favor."[93]

How can Apistius deny the evident message of Ovid's text, Phronimus asks. How can he pretend not to see that the Romans idolized Satan, who first brought about a horrible plague in Rome and then, pretending to possess some hidden knowledge of medicine, showed up to be worshipped as god? To deny this evidence means to deny the existence of the devil tout court. Consider Pythagoras, the quintessential representative of an ancient obscure

philosophy. Didn't he receive a magical arrow from a priest of Apollo? Riding on this arrow, Pythagoras was able to "cross impassable places . . . rivers, lakes, swamps, mountains."[94] Don't striges do the same thing? Don't they fly to the Sabbath to mate with their demonic master? Phronimus reminds his friend that Augustine confirms the existence of such diabolical commerce. In the *City of God* Augustine states that "there is a widespread report . . . that Sylvans and Pans, who are commonly called *incubi*, often misbehaved toward women."[95]

Phronimus still fails to convince Apistius of the dramatic urgency of the witch hunt. In passing, he threatens Apistius that someone could take his blind stubbornness as a denial of Catholic truth and thus as an astute defense of Satan. However, Phronimus doesn't want Apistius to agree with him passively. Apistius must see his error. Whereas Apistius still can be saved, the strix summoned in the second part of the dialogue is a completely corrupt being. A strix is what Apistius could turn into if he persists in his refusal of the Catholic light.

One Must Distinguish between External Appearance and Internal Essence

Resuming his analysis of the striges' ability to fly, Phronimus thinks it is essential to distinguish between "essence" (essentia) and "image" (imago).[96] At the beginning of their discussion, Apistius had mentioned the absurd claim that, before taking off, striges first smear their bodies with some sort of magical lotion. Phronimus reminds his interlocutor that in the *Metamorphoses* Apuleius recounts the story of Pamphile, who turns into a bird to fly to the object of her desire. To do so, this wicked woman smeared some anointment all over her body. Apuleius describes the woman's transformation as follows: "While her body undulated smoothly, soft down sprouted up through her skin, and strong wing-feathers grew out; her nose hardened and curved, and her toenails bent into hooks. Pamphile had become an owl. So she let out a plaintive screech and . . . [s]oon she soared aloft and flew out of the house on full wings."[97] According to Apuleius's famous novel, Lucius, in the attempt to follow in Pamphile's footsteps, finds himself transformed into an ass.[98] What is truthful and what is false in this story? Pamphile's metamorphosis certainly reminds the reader of the striges flying to the Sabbath. But how can we combine a plausible narration (the woman muttering in front of a lamp; her ability to fly out of the window) with a clearly comical conclusion (Lucius becoming an ass)? Phronimus is convinced that Apuleius lies when he writes that Lu-

cius turned into an ass. Phronimus draws a basic distinction between essence and appearance. If we happen to spot a strix flying in the sky at night, we will probably think she looks like an owl because our memory of actual owls will affect our perception. Moreover, a devil may make a strix believe he has granted her the power of turning into a bird. Indeed, a tenet of Renaissance demonology is that the devil is able to blur human sight and even bring about temporary complete or partial blindness, which is called *aorasía*.[99]

In interpreting the story of Lucius and Pamphile, however, we must keep in mind that its author is a liar. He wants us to take his entire text as a piece of amusing storytelling. Through irony Apuleius aims to influence our reception so that the message of his writing remains hidden. As a deceitful text, Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* is under the aegis of Satan, who strives to confound both our physical and mental senses. Nothing in a demonic event is totally false or totally true. Phronimus makes it clear that what seems a straightforward lie "may originate from some truthful similitude" (trahere potuisse principium ab aliqua similitudine veri).[100] A correct (Catholic) interpreter must apply a flexible methodology, for the text to decipher is made of truth and lie, of fiction and reportage. For instance, I have pointed out that Apuleius may use irony to sidetrack the reader's interpretation. Before going for the unguent that is supposed to transform him into an owl, the character Lucius states that, when he becomes that bird, he will have to stay away from all houses. Lucius knows that housewives catch the owls that get inside a house and nail them to the door "to expiate with their own sufferings the disaster threatened against the family by their ill-omened flight."[101]

That in his bestial transformation Lucius retains his human consciousness testifies to the duplicitous character of a demonic metamorphosis. Altering their senses and imagination, Satan sometimes makes his disciples believe that they have turned into those sinister beasts called striges and are now able to rise up in the air. Phronimus reminds his friend that, according to Virgil, a similar fate befell King Proetus's daughters, who, while being punished by Juno for their pride, imagined themselves to be cows. To avoid being forced to drag a plough, they fled into the woods: "The daughters of Proetus filled the fields with feigned lowings . . . each had feared to find the yoke on her neck and often looked for horns on her smooth brow."[102] If in Lucius's case a physical transformation does not affect the mind and thus produces a sort of a freak with a bestial appearance and a human consciousness, in Proetus's daughters we encounter the opposite, in which a devil (Juno) troubles two young women's minds but leaves their bodies intact.

Striges Embody the Ancients' False and Demonic Stories

The ancients' stories are intrinsically evil because they are "partly true and partly imaginary" (partim solida, partim imaginaria).[103] Phronimus reminds his friend Apistius that a "certain Greek called Palaephatus" was convinced that myths originally were historical events that later poets manipulated and falsified to stir admiration in their readers.[104] The ancients themselves knew that their myths were false, corrupt stories. What was originally evident and real (a given historical fact or a given human being) later turned into something dubious and unclear. That is, a true story degenerated into a myth. Like a person metamorphosed into a strix, a mythic text shows signs of degeneration. Satan assaults not only men's physical and mental health but also the stories founding our human past. The Italian humanists who believe that Greek and Latin myths harbor some hidden wisdom have in fact fallen prey of a diabolical charm, like the women who are seduced by the devils' libidinous promises. These women's bodies have in fact turned into the visible manifestation of the ancients' demonic culture. The bodies of the striges are visible reminders of a past cultural depravation. They literally embody a past of demonic lies. To see and burn a strix equals reading and interpreting a corpus of false, demonic myths.

Phronimus, however, specifies that when the devil blurs and rewrites our past or violates our bodies, he draws no form of pleasure from it. In the *Summa*, Thomas stresses that the angelic beings don't know through the senses and thus memory doesn't pertain to them.[105] Angelic beings exist as messengers, that is, they are a voice carrying someone else's communication. The fundamental difference between a good and a fallen angel is that, whereas a good angel delivers the Word's intention, a devil is an emissary without a sender. Having been banned from heaven, demons have lost contact with the Word and have thus no good message to deliver. What do the devils say then when they distort our original stories and rape our bodies? After their fall from grace, devils only know and communicate their exile from meaning. The devils can't help spreading the perdition they experienced when they were expelled from God's realm. The chaos we perceive in the ancients' myths and in the body of a monstrous strix echoes the disorder reigning among the fallen angels.

Demons Feel No Pleasure in Writing Their Stories

The devils do not care about the stories they subvert and the bodies they contaminate with their semen,[106] because all the myths and perverted beings roaming through the created world are nothing but variations of one and only one historical event, Satan' s eternal banishment from Truth. In their narrations, devils may speak of humans who have been turned into beasts or who falsely sense they have become beasts. Devils may use rhetorical devices such as irony (Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*) to baffle our understanding. They may even step into their own perverted stories, as in the case of Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius*, in which we read of Menippus, a young man who, while "he was walking all alone . . . , met a woman who clasped his hand and declared that she had been long in love with him."[107] At the day of their wedding, this woman turned out to be a lamia, a demonic presence, and metamorphosed into a serpent.[108]

In the introduction to this book I explained that some Renaissance demonologists, such as the influential Girolamo Menghi, are convinced that "familiar spirits" fall in love with us. Phronimus holds that the word *lamia* itself proves that such a perverted form of love derives from an original fracture (the angels separated from the Word) and can only bring about chaos and division. According to Phronimus, *lamia* comes from the verb *laniare* (to mangle) or from the noun *lama*, which he translates as "vorago" (chasm).[109] The demonic stories Phronimus and Apistius have been analyzing throughout the first part of *Strix* speak of an eternal banishment. However, given that he does not know what pleasure is, why did the devil write stories of metamorphosis and separation, of unnatural love between humans and spirits? How can we possibly posit a writer who composes an entire literary canon (Greek and Latin literatures) without feeling any "pleasure of the text"? Doesn't a writer necessarily receive some pleasure from writing a story or a poem?

To answer this question, Phronimus explains to his friend, one must keep in mind that Satan visits those human beings who have deliberately called him. Striges usually sense the arrival of their masters by some sudden flame or warmth inside their breast.[110] The enjoyment these fallen women feel in summoning the devils equals the pleasure the ancients received in reading the stories Satan had inspired in them. Satan is the author of the classical canon because he directly summoned those mythic stories of divine rape, incest, sodomy, bestial love and transformation, exile and murder.[111] Again, let me reiterate that the inner warmth a strix feels when she sees her master at

the Sabbath is similar to the pleasure the ancients felt when Satan visited their minds and troubled their imagination so that they could jot down his monstrous and perverted stories.

Satan and the Pleasure Human Beings Receive from the Imagination—Satan Gave Birth to Striges in Human Imagination

Imagination plays such a pivotal role in the battle against Satan that Giovan Francesco Pico dedicated a famous treatise to this subject. In the opening chapter of *On the Imagination,* he underscores that "imagination" (phantasia) derives from "light" (fáos) and is "the state of things come to light."[112] Imagination, Pico explains further, "is placed on the border between intellect and sense, and holds the intermediate ground."[113] Imagination is what arises in the mind as intellectual perception, "which conceives and fashions likeness of things, and serves, and ministers to, both the discursive reason and the contemplative intellect."[114] Imagination is what we see either during an act of contemplation or during an intellectual endeavor.

If, as Aristotle states in *On the Soul,* men cannot think without images (phantasms), it is through these mental forms that Satan impregnates our mind with monstrous perceptions, thoughts, and stories.[115] Furthermore, like an infectious disease, a demonic "phantasm" (a fragment of thought, a mental image) roams from mind to mind, mutates, and becomes more insidious and threatening. This is an important point of our discussion. We have said that innumerable classical authors speak of the striges because Satan had "inspired" their imagination. But Seneca, Homer, or Lucan never saw these monstrous beings. These beasts were the offspring of the imagination. A strix was an image against nature because, unlike every natural phantasm, it did not originate from the senses. The ancients "remembered" the striges without having seen them. Satan knew that, once it has entered the mind, a phantasm becomes part of our memory and interacts with our future mental processes.[116] For it is a fact that memories themselves metamorphose. Before taking up the form of wicked women, striges were unnatural remembrances. Now they have turned into women who live in our towns and speak our language. We could thus say that striges are embodiments of memories.

Only reason can control the products of the imagination: "He who strives to dominate [imagination] persists in that dignity in which he was created and placed, and by which he is continually urged to direct the eye of the mind towards God."[117] Here Pico clarifies that reason is the primary

means through which the mind dissects, selects, and discards the tainted and corrupt phantasms and is thus free to pursue the divine. In other words, to dissect and burn the unnatural phantasm of a strix is a crucial step in our quest for God. Exegesis is the fire on which this infectious phantasm must be annihilated. Let us remember that, when a priest of Mirandola touched a possessed woman with a piece of Savonarola's heart, she screamed: "I burn! I burn!" When our reason fights and burns our inner striges (the perverted images instilled by Satan), it opens our mind to the "good phantasms," which may convey prophetic, divine insights.[118]

Interpretation is in fact essential not only for our private fight against the striges summoned by classical literature but also for our understanding of the hidden messages present in the Holy Scriptures. Pico reminds the reader that the "darkness of imagination" (imaginationis tenebrae) rules over both classical literatures and the sacred texts alike.[119] Both the revealed texts (Bible) and the perverted ones (pagan mythic stories, but also the striges born from human imagination infected by Satan) ask for an act of interpretation. Both the good and the evil texts need to be interpreted and clarified. Pico writes: "Remove the bark of the Sacred Scriptures, lay aside the curtain of the imagination—which is to the bark of the letter what the intellect purified of phantasms is to the spirit hid beneath the bark—and the spirit introduces itself into the soul, and guides it to a divine foretaste, which is a beginning of the future glory to be revealed in us." Imagination is the "bark" (cortex) covering the divine spirit that lays dormant within the Bible. But imagination is also the "bark" hiding Satan behind the stories of striges. Exegesis, which is itself founded on phantasms, is the antidote against phantasms' "darkness." Placing language against language, that is, interpretation against imagination, the mind moves from the letter to the spirit of the text, from darkness to light, from sight to insight.

Conclusion of Chapter 1

The Skeptical Apistius Is Now Ready to Meet a Real Strix

What follows is the sense of the final section of the first part of *Strix*. After having laid bare the "spirit" of classical literature (its being inspired by Satan), Phronimus is convinced that his skeptical friend has now acquired a better understanding of witchcraft and is thus ready to meet two new characters: an anonymous strix and Dicastes, a stern Catholic Inquisitor, who are now standing outside the church. At the beginning of this chapter I compared *Strix* to a sort of medieval mystery play staging the progressive emergence of

Catholic truth. Throughout the first part we have witnessed the confrontation between two opposite poles: the "blind" Apistius, unable to see the true nature of his classical upbringing, and Phronimus, the enlightened humanist who has rejected Satan's holy scriptures. The two new characters mirror a similar opposition, but with a crucial difference. If Phronimus and Apistius limited themselves to debating the existence and risks of evil, Dicastes and the strix literally embody the contrast between light and darkness, salvation and damnation. Right before meeting the Inquisitor and the strix, Apistius recognizes that Phronimus has indeed an amazing understanding of the "secrets" (arcana) hidden in ancient literature.[120] In other words, Apistius has been touched by Phronimus's discourse and begins to share his friend's point of view.

The Strix's First Words Are Expressions of Pain

The strix's first words express sorrow: "Heu mihi," which Leandro Alberti, the first translator of Pico's text, renders as "Heimé, dove son giunta?" ("Oh, where am I now?" or "How could I go this far?").[121] The anonymous woman dragged in front of two intellectuals debating evil's real presence feels lost. Her words are a moan. The Catholic Inquisitor promises her that, if she is willing to manifest all her evil deeds in front of these two gentlemen, she won't be tortured again. The woman has already confessed her crimes before witnesses, but the Catholic Dicastes needs to hear her crimes one more time. If they grant her a night of rest, the strix begs the Inquisitor, she will have a chance to put together a complete deposition for the following day.[122] But Dicastes is not sure that the two intellectuals will feel like walking again from the castle of Mirandola down to the square. Didn't the ancient Greeks embark on long journeys to listen to false oracles, an enthusiastic Apistius replies, and who wouldn't walk a mile to learn more about those things that now appear to him if not true at least plausible ("similia")? The first part of *Strix* concludes with Phronimus rejoicing at his friend's eagerness to pursue truth.

Strix: Chapter 2

✠

Striges Are Nymphs

The following day, the woman accused of witchcraft is brought before the three male characters again. Chained and handcuffed, the strix fears that she will be subjected to torture again. Renewing his promise, the Inquisitor reminds her that, to avoid torture, she must disclose the whole truth about her

crimes. Apistius, who has clearly overcome his original doubts, hastens to ask the first question. Did you ever go to the "game of Diana or Herodias" (ad ludum Dianae vel Herodiadis)?[123] Yes, the woman acknowledges, but she doesn't remember hearing a specific name for these night gatherings.[124] Interrupting the confession, Phronimus believes that the erasure of the two names (Diana and Herodias) is of crucial importance. Let us see to the name Diana first. When Satan ruled over the creation, Phronimus explains, it was such an honor to be associated with the name Diana that young women acquired the title of nymph (bride) and willingly mated with those false divinities. The ancients gave them specific names according to the places they inhabited, such as Oreads (mountain nymphs), Hamadriads (tree nymphs), Naiads and Hydriads (water nymphs), and Nereids (nymphs of the calm sea).[125]

The second name, Herodias, refers to a later time, when the Word announced his forthcoming arrival through John the Baptist. As the scriptures confirm, Herodias (Salome) performed an immoral dance for which she was rewarded with John's head on a platter. Herodias embodies the last attempt to silence the voice of Truth before the imposition of the Word's message of salvation. Because of her crime against God, Herodias is damned to wander the earth accompanied by Satan. Both Herodias and Diana thus speak of the same nefarious meetings of nymphs or striges, since the two names are in fact synonymous. Phronimus reminds his two interlocutors that in the canon *Episcopi*, a short but extremely influential instruction for bishops on how to respond to the "game of Diana," we read that it is imperative to fight this fantasy: "We must also remember that some depraved women, who have given themselves to Satan . . . hold that at night they ride certain beasts to follow Diana, pagan goddess (or Herodias), and an innumerable throng of other women. . . . Priests must preach to the people of God with great vehemence so that they understand that . . . the evil spirit, and not God, summons these fantasies in the Christians' minds."[126] The canon *Episcopi* doesn't use the title "nymph" for the depraved women deceived by Satan. It limits itself to quoting what these alleged striges claim in their statements. In his description of the pagan nymphs, Phronimus fails to mention that these beings were in fact deities, many of them daughters of Zeus himself. We could say that Phronimus has "updated" the concept of nymph in that his definition encompasses the whole history of this term, from its classical origins to its contemporary manifestations. Nymph and strix are names that influence and clarify each other. We have said that in strix we find a reference to a hybrid, a beast-woman that shows up at the edge of our dwellings with murderous intentions. If *strix* indicates the moment when this hybrid approaches us, *nymph* describes the

time when this beast-woman moves away from all social commerce and retreats into the woods to engage in the "game of Diana." In other words, *strix* and *nymph* refer to two opposite moments of this monster's biography. The mark Satan leaves on his followers' bodies ratifies the successful conclusion of a metamorphosis from human being to strix-nymph.

The Name of the Strix's Familiar Spirit Is Ludovicus—A Reference to Caesar's *Gallic War*

Resuming his interrogation, Apistius demands that the woman explain how she flew to those night meetings with other "nymphs." Her lover, her familiar spirit, took her there. His name was Ludovicus.[127] Why such a specific name? Like the term *strix-nymph*, the name Ludovicus synthesizes an entire biography. But whereas striges only have a communal identification and history, their familiar spirits show a personal name and past. Ludovicus, Phronimus cuts in, is a pagan name, but the only reference he can think of is in book 7 of Caesar's *Gallic War*. During the operations about the town of Gergovia, Caesar writes, the Aeduan Convictolitavis, to whom Rome had assigned the magistracy, receives a bribe from the country of the Averni. Sharing the money with a group of noble young men, Litaviccus (Ludovicus) and his brethren, Convictolitavis "urged them to remember that they were born to freedom and command."[128] Convictolitavis is convinced that the state of the Aedui is the last obstacle to the Roman conquest of Gaul. Although he recognizes that he has received some benefit at Caesar's hands, Convictolitavis chooses to betray Rome and its authority.[129]

The first allusion to Litaviccus is linked to an act of rebellion against a superior and just power. Won over by Convictolitavis's seductive rhetoric, Litaviccus decides to join him in his betrayal. Leading the army that was to be sent to Caesar, Litaviccus suddenly breaks into tears and falsely states that all his brethren and kindred had been put to death, and that to save themselves they can only turn their back to Rome and move to the country of the Averni. To prove his resentment of Caesar's power, Litaviccus slaughters the Roman citizens who are marching with him.[130] When he hears of Litaviccus's treachery, Caesar becomes very sorrowful "because he had always shown special indulgence to the state of the Aedui."[131] But Litaviccus will never repent. Having joined the enemy, he continues to stir up animosity toward Rome through enflamed messages to his fellow Aedui, who "plundered the goods of Roman citizens, massacred some, dragged off others into slavery."[132]

Ludovicus Has a Strange Body—His Body, Like His Name, Comes from the Past

What is the connection between the strix's Ludovicus and Caesar's Litaviccus? Ludovicus and Litaviccus may not be the same person, but they certainly share some essential biographical traits. The strix's Ludovicus is somehow an echo of the ancient Litaviccus, as if Litaviccus had taken up a second existence through this nocturnal being, or better yet, as if this nocturnal being had revealed Litaviccus's truest self. Like the strix-nymph, Ludovicus is an ancient-modern being (a character in the *Gallic War* and a demon that has sex with a woman in sixteenth-century Italy). And like the strix-nymph, Ludovicus is a hybrid, a monster. The woman accused of witchcraft confesses that her lover Ludovicus has in fact a very peculiar appearance. He is a man, but his feet are turned backward and look like those of a goose.[133] Like the name Ludovicus, the devil's feet are a cluster of biographical allusions. As usual, Phronimus has the answer. A first reference to geese is in Herodotus, who says that these animals were part of the sacred food of the Egyptian priests who worshiped Isis, that is, Diana, the goddess of nature.[134] But a more direct allusion is in book 10 of Pliny's *Natural History*. The goose, Pliny explains, "keeps a careful watch, as is evidenced by its defense of the Capitol during the time when our fortunes were being betrayed by the silence of the dogs."[135] Like the striges, geese stay up at night and watch over us. Geese can also stir libidinous feelings in human beings. Take, for instance, the story of the goose that loved the beautiful boy Amphilocus, or the one that fell for Glauce, the girl who played the harp for King Ptolemy. Finally, Pliny believes that "these birds may possess the power of understanding wisdom." A goose in fact "attached itself continually as a companion to the philosopher Lacydes, never leaving his side by night or day, either in public or at the baths."

Ludovicus's gooselike feet are twisted backward because he is a being that comes from the past. We have seen that it is in the classical past that the humanist Phronimus finds the origins of every demonic manifestation. But let us remember, too, that the essential legacy of Italian humanism is the retrieval of ancient culture. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian scholars understand that to apprehend the present time, one must read it in the light of classical antiquity. The Catholic humanist Phronimus knows that witchcraft must be exposed to the same exegetical lens. According to Phronimus/Pico's explanation, the demon Ludovicus is a hybrid (a man-goose) because his being is in fact a bundle of historical memories (Caesar's *Gallic War*, Herodotus, Pliny, and so forth).

Asked to give the details of her encounters with Ludovicus, the strix clarifies that, to summon her lover, she had to draw a circle on the ground and step over some blessed wafers. As Ulysses at once welcomed and kept at bay the souls of the dead by forming a circle with the blood of his sacrificial victims, so does the strix call for Ludovicus by creating a circular space that the devil will trespass and violate. In this space, the strix explains, she often had sex with Ludovicus before taking off for the night Sabbath, where they would repeat their sex acts and offenses against the body of Christ. In a direct reference to the witch hunt and executions in Mirandola, which had spurred heated criticism of Giovan Francesco Pico, the anonymous strix confesses that the priest Benedetto Berno (Pernius sacerdos) had given her the blessed wafers she crushed under her feet at the Sabbath. This priest was hanged and burned on August 22, 1522.[136] The Inquisitor Dicastes confirms that Don Benedetto was indeed a perverse and immoral man. This priest had a son from his own sister and used to walk around town accompanied by his demonic lover, a succubus called Armellina, whose female forms were visible only to him.[137] As Stephens puts it in *Demon Lovers*, "Benedetto flaunted his relations with Armellina."[138]

Ludovicus Visited the Strix When She Called Him Twice—Why Twice?

Like Don Benedetto, the strix sees her master everywhere, even now that she is in prison. Somber and concerned, Ludovicus comes to console her. At the beginning of their relationship, however, our strix had to call for Ludovicus. He would visit her only when solicited. But how did she express her desire to see him, Apistius is eager to know. Standing within the circle she had drawn, she pronounced his name twice. Phronimus is convinced that the act of repeating "Ludovicus" twice has a specific meaning. We have already remarked that Phrominus links every possible aspect of witchcraft to classical culture. We have said that, according to this Catholic humanist, the ancients' texts are Satan's "Holy Scriptures" and must be interpreted in the light of Christ's revelation. Paradoxically, Christian readers are the true interpreters of classical culture for they can bring to the fore the complete message of Greek and Latin civilization. Quoting from Origen's *Refutation of All Heresies*, Phronimus points out that Zaratas, Pythagoras's teacher, called the number one "father" and the number two "mother," thus positing the dyad as the principle ruling over the created world.[139] By selecting the number two instead of three as a calling device, Ludovicus (and Zaratas and Pythagoras before him) expresses

his rejection of the Trinity and all the sacraments of the Christian religion. More importantly, the number two indicates a rift, a division. Two evokes the strix who knocks on our doors in the attempt to violate our household. The strix enters and "breaks" our household. The anonymous strix indeed acknowledges having taken children away from their cradles to bring them to the Sabbath, where she would pierce their little fingers with a needle and suck their blood as much as her stomach could retain.[140]

The skeptical Apistius recognizes that, after hearing the strix describing her crimes, something in his soul is leaning more and more toward Phronimus's position, but only the Inquisitor Dicastes' fine reasoning could win him over once and for all. Phronimus replies that someone could see Apistius's swinging from one position to another as the sign of an inconstant mind.[141] He knows that Apistius's hesitation is a result of his upbringing. Apistius's classical education has taught him to cultivate "irony" (ironia), which is what one finds in the Socratic dialogues.[142] Doesn't Apistius's divided mind reflect Zaratas and Pythagoras's concept of the dyad as the core of the universe? Irony is the name of what keeps the mind divided.

Apistius Now Wishes to Believe in Witchcraft, but His Reason Resists His Gut Feeling

Apistius's mind is split between will and intellect.[143] Whereas "something in his soul" senses that witchcraft is indeed a real and pressing danger, his reason needs further support and evidence. Phronimus is confident that the Inquisitor will have the final word on this matter, for the real presence of striges in the world is unquestionable. In a slightly scornful tone, Phronimus, however, points out that in some cases will should lead intellect and not vice versa. To track down and execute all the striges infecting the territory of Mirandola is mandatory not only because they harm innocent citizens. Striges are also, and more importantly, the embodiment of a perverse creed. Phronimus reminds his suspicious friend that at times a strong and determined will, that is, an unflinching faith in Catholicism, should mold our understanding. But what is this "something in the soul" that has been touched by Phronimus's words? It is evident that here Giovan Francesco is speaking of some sort of initial insight that the mind of the "blind" intellectual has received, thanks to Phronimus's reasoning. Jean Gerson, whose philosophy is a fundamental point of reference for Giovan Francesco Pico, calls this initial, albeit central, insight "synderesis, the apex of the mind."[144] More specifically, Gerson calls synderesis a "movement and attraction toward the good."[145] Phronimus's passionate discourse

has touched the highest zone of Apistius's mind, his synderesis, where the soul perceives a natural and nonrational leaning toward what is good and truthful. However, although he "knows" the strix, Apistius's mind is still under the aegis of irony and is thus still lacerated, disunited. Phronimus and Apistius agree to resume their discussion after a brief lunch break.

Strix: Chapter 3

✣

Apistius Breaks Away from Irony and Embraces Truth—The Strix Dies

Each of the three chapters of *Strix* plays a specific role within the book. In chapter 1, Phronimus "proves" that modern witchcraft is rooted in classical antiquity. As a humanist well acquainted with philology and exegesis, Phronimus shows to his "liberal" friend that a strix is a monstrous being that must be dissected in the light of its mythological sources. Toward the end of chapter 1, when Apistius's skepticism begins to vacillate, an actual strix enters the stage. In chapter 2, the focus shifts from a theoretical analysis of witchcraft to the concrete questioning of the anonymous strix, who will be executed shortly. With a subtle psychological insight, Phronimus, at the end of chapter 2, states that Apistius's mind is now split between will and intellect. His mind's natural leaning toward the good (synderesis) has shown Apistius the real identity of the strix. Apistius would like to give full support to the Catholic persecution of these depraved women, but his "ironic," classical education still prevents him from giving the truth of Catholicism his full support.

Apistius's Theological Questions to the Inquisitor—*Strix* Becomes a Scholastic Treatise

Apistius's first words after the lunch break liken his lingering doubts to a "sharp sword" (lanceam) that has pierced his soul.[146] As a pious response to Apistius's disquiet, the Inquisitor invites him to share his doubts with him. In a striking move from the previous concrete debate over the striges' criminal commerce with the devils, the third chapter of *Strix* opens with a scholastic analysis of the theological explanation of witchcraft and the correct rhetoric to use against it. In other words, to enlighten a doubtful intellect essentially means to teach it a righteous language, that is, a language that speaks truth and speaks about truth. The Inquisitor will show that the expression of Catholic truth requires a scientific, non-ironic rhetoric. The truth manifested by the

Word's death and resurrection has wiped clean Greek and Latin false rhetoric and has imposed a new language of contrition and salvation. To cleanse the creation of the abominable monsters called striges, it is imperative to learn a new idiom. Before actually burning them at the stake, a truthful Catholic mind "burns" these monstrous bodies on the fire of a new language.

Why does God allow striges to be born? Why doesn't he prevent their sinful acts from happening? How can he tolerate their revolting crimes against innocent children? These are Apistius's initial questions for the Catholic Inquisitor.[147] In his response to Apistius's first dense questions, Dicastes underscores that the explanation of a theological truth must be accompanied by a suitable rhetoric. As Apistius himself points out, some believe that the scholastic method of "questions" (quaestiones) may in fact be the most appropriate method of theological analysis, and thus reject every other form of literary expression, first of all poetry, and fiction in general.[148] The Inquisitor reminds Apistius that the *Malleus* itself is based on the "Parisian style" of "questions."[149]

In its final chapter, *Strix* itself turns into a dialogic adaptation of a scholastic treatise. With Dicastes embodying the Catholic Law, the third and conclusive encounter between the Inquisitor and the skeptical Apistius unfolds as a systematic summary of the problem of witchcraft based on a "whether–or" rhetorical structure reminiscent of the *Malleus maleficarum,* a frequent reference in this final part of Pico's book. Apistius's first *quaestio* concerns the being of the striges. He wonders whether it would have been better for a strix not to be born or to be born but then suffer in hell forever. The choice between nothingness and existence, the Inquisitor responds, is not in men's hands. Even a revolting strix is part of God's amorous plan for his creation. This being against nature has a meaning, which is unknown to us now but may reveal itself in later times. As Joseph was first sold as a slave by his brothers but then became governor of the whole of Egypt, and the Word's messianic message manifested itself after his torments and death on the cross, so might the striges' aberrant deeds become comprehensible after they are annihilated on the purifying fire of the Inquisition.[150]

Whether the game of Diana is real or not is Apistius's second *quaestio*. Although Phronimus and Apistius had already discussed this subject in the previous two chapters of *Strix*, the problem of Diana and her night gatherings takes up a good portion of chapter 3 as well. In reality, chapter 3 tackles no new issue. The satanic nature of the ancients' mythic stories and the striges' real flight to the Sabbath are some of the topics that return in chapter 3 with no substantial variation. What differs is the style of their presentation. The

third and final chapter of *Strix* acquires the tone of a legal document justifying the use of capital punishment against the striges. Let us remember that with *Strix* Giovan Francesco Pico first of all intends to respond to those who had criticized his fervent support of the death penalty for a group of striges in his territory of Mirandola. If the first two chapters of *Strix* describe how Apistius regains his natural longing for the good, which had been blurred by his ironic classical upbringing, the third chapter details the reunification between the superior (synderesis) and the inferior part of Apistius's mind.

The Inquisitor's Attack against Irony and Rhetoric

Answering Apistius's query about the game of Diana, the Inquisitor explains that innumerable ancient documents testify to the existence of such gatherings during which devils mate with striges. The problem with these texts, however, is that their rhetoric is contaminated with irony, which renders them "uncertain" and duplicitous artifacts.[151] Take, for instance, Lucian or Apuleius, both of whom deal with important issues such as men flying up in the sky and encountering mysterious beings in distant lands (Lucian's *True Story*) and men turning into beasts (Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*). How to distinguish what is truthful from what is mere irony? And what is irony but a device of contamination? In irony, things are and are not themselves. Ironic texts have a double, monstrous, and ultimately insidious identity, for they offer their true meaning as a riddle, as a two-faced entity. Again, remember that for the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, the number two and not the Christian three symbolizes the creation. Platonic philosophers, the Inquisitor continues, want us to believe that there are two kinds of devils, not one. They claim that we should not confuse Socrates' familiar demon with the fallen beings that seek our perdition. Christian theology denies any validity to these confusing and false assumptions.[152]

Irony is what makes a text less visible, a message less audible. Irony is a rhetorical shadow over the page. But irony is also what keeps a mind divided. I have pointed out that at the beginning of the conclusive chapter of *Strix* the Inquisitor highlights the theological relevance of a nonrhetorical expression based on "scientific" *quaestiones*. However, the Inquisitor wonders whether an intellectual such as Apistius, whose education is grounded in pagan literature, can appreciate a style stripped of every form of ornate, elegant rhetoric.[153] The Inquisitor contends that irony equals rhetoric altogether, if by rhetoric we intend whatever makes a text "ironic," that is, unclear, ambiguous, duplicitous. A "rhetorical" text is the offspring of a male being (Satan, Ludovicus) who in-

seminates a woman's womb (a pagan or humanist text, the strix) with the sole intention to pollute God's creation with a monstrous, "ironic" hybrid. Irony is what beclouds the mind and leads it to its damnation.

So, does the Catholic Inquisitor believe in the possibility of a text purified of rhetoric, a blank page solely illuminated by the Word's words? Dicastes knows that human expression cannot be limited to the "Parisian" style of rhetorical debate, for a boundless wealth of possible literary shapes and forms is accessible. How to give birth to an uncorrupt, lawful text? A "chaste" (casta) expression is not merely made of "proper" themes and words.[154] What is the supreme goal of any form of writing but the pursuit of wisdom? And what is wisdom in our modern Christian culture but the longing for the Word's revelation? From its origin, Dicastes continues, Christians appropriated the skeleton, the bare forms of classical expression, and transfigured them into something radically different. "An articulate expression, composed in a suitable, distinct, and elegant manner," is not foreign to Christian eloquence.[155] Who could deny Jerome's, Augustine's, or Ambrose's masterful use of eloquence?

Pico's Theories of Christian Eloquence

✢

For a better understanding of Giovan Francesco Pico's view of eloquence we must pause and turn briefly to his important *Study of Divine and Human Philosophy*, in which he lays out the essential differences between classical and Christian culture. I focus in particular on book 1, chapter 8, whose eloquent title is "A Christian must read the books of the gentiles with circumspection."[156] With their lewd texts the ancients tried to impress their audience and gain their favors. A Christian's attitude toward writing is instead based on humility and charity. A Christian writes as he prays. "What we cannot find in the gentiles' books," Pico states, "is how to be led to the contemplation of God."[157] Pico uses a powerful simile to signify how Christians "exposed" the falsity of the ancients. As in Deuteronomy, a woman taken prisoner had to shave her hair, cut her nails, and take off her prisoner's garb before she could marry, so did Christians unclothe classical eloquence and expose it to a radical cleansing.[158] Let us remember that a total shaving (including the genitals) is also the first procedure the *Malleus* recommends before torturing a defendant.

If we accept that contemplation is the first and most pressing goal of writing, we must also understand the most appropriate venues available to a Christian author. Considering how the Church Fathers broached biblical

exegesis, Pico posits four possible approaches. We can synthesize the first three procedures as follows: first, the approach of the first doctors (primi doctores, hoc est antiqui), who focused more on how to convert the mind to God rather than on the discussion of theological details; second, the Parisian style of *quaestiones;* and third, the approach of those who aim to constitute a legal corpus in accordance with the Word's revelation. The fourth and final kind of approach is of central relevance for our study. Pico defines it as "Herculean" (herculeum) in that it leaves nothing intact but rather explores all philosophical literary areas, including poetry. If he had lived longer, Giovan Francesco concludes, his uncle Giovanni would have brought to perfection this "extreme" approach.

Let us go back Pico's reference to the woman shaved and undressed in Deuteronomy. If the first approach is remarkable exclusively because of its rhetorical ingenuity, the second shuns rhetoric and envisions exegesis as an exact science. After establishing the religious and moral foundations of Truth, Catholic authors must also take care of the legal repercussions of their truthful faith. The *Malleus* merges the second and third forms of expression, because it uses *quaestiones* both to determine the existence of witchcraft and to detail the judicial procedures against the striges. The fourth and final approach envisions a writer who has absorbed the first three practices and has turned them into a superior, radically new, and deeply persuasive form of writing. The essential novelty of a truly Catholic poetry is the harmonious relationship between imagination and reason. If pagan literature is based on duplicity and division (irony) and results in a monster (the strix), Catholic poetry leads the mind toward a unity with the divine.

The "art of rhetoric" (ars rhetorica) is thus of central importance for every Catholic, because a lawful rhetoric is also the result of a correct, chaste, and enlightened understanding of Catholic dogmas. It is thus evident that, if the bare bones of classical expression serve as the material structure of a purified Catholic language, a truthful inspiration can only derive from an accurate and persistent absorption of biblical eloquence. In other words, a righteous Catholic rhetorician is himself a sort of linguistic hybrid, at once user of a corrupt idiom (pagan literatures) and preacher of a translucent message of redemption (Christian revealed texts).[159] In a subsequent chapter of *The Study of Divine and Human Philosophy*, Giovan Francesco in fact reminds us that all the major Christian theologians, including Jean Gerson, insist that we embrace the "teaching of divine eloquence" (lectionem divinorum eloquiorum).[160]

What Does Persuasion Mean for a Christian Rhetorician?

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What does *persuasion* mean in Christian terms? What does it mean to believe in the abominable striges? What does *to believe* mean? I have said that the anonymous strix enters the dialogue when the skeptical, blind Apistius becomes able to perceive the truth of the Catholic Inquisition. Phronimus's sharp, unflinching discourse helps Apistius regain his synderesis, the mind's spontaneous attraction toward the supreme good. I have also remarked that at this point Apistius would like to believe but his intellect still doubts. The Inquisitor Dicastes will finally succeed in defeating Apistius's "irony" and reunite his divided mind. But what even the most pious and enlightened orator cannot attain is the gift of grace. Only in the Bible can a Christian reader find the path to a superior understanding. Faithfully quoting from his uncle's famous letter to the humanist Ermolao Barbaro, Giovan Francesco Pico reminds us that "the Holy Scriptures do not move or persuade . . . they rather urge and compel . . . their living, animate, burning, and pointed words penetrate and transform the deepest recesses of man's soul."[161]

The gift of God's eloquence is grace.[162] What lies dormant in the shadows of human rhetoric becomes a luminous, burning message in the heart immersed in the meditation of God's eloquence.[163] Let us remember that Giovan Francesco used a piece of Savonarola's heart to impose the truth of Catholicism over a throng of demons beclouding a poor woman's mind. The prophet's heart announced what was written in the Bible: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." In this sentence lies the core of Christian revelation.[164] The "copious splendor of Truth" awaits those who meditate on the Word's revelation, Giovan Francesco stresses in the preface to *Meditation on Christ's and One's Own Death*.[165] Pico tells us that to fence off the intrigues of Satan, the images and symbols of Christ's passion and death must dominate our imagination.[166]

We know that, as a number of classical authors confirm, striges are beasts of the netherworld. Their mourning echoes a state of perdition. People believe, Pico writes in *Meditation on Christ's and One's Own Death*, that on their way to Rome pilgrims cannot help but cross through an "ominous thicket" (lucum), where thieves and murderers lie in ambush. But *lucus* was the underbrush sacred to the gods, where humans sensed the close presence

of the divine. This lucus of extreme danger and death is where striges and "Diana" gather at night, where they plan our death. Lucus is the place that foreshadows a state of corruption and eternal perdition. Who wouldn't face this lucus with the appropriate weapons and the help of faithful friends?[167] And what is our most reliable friend but an alert and burning heart, the luminous lamp of Christian creed?

The Inquisitor Imposes the Belief in Striges as a Religious Dogma

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In the final pages of *Strix*, the allegiance to "the company of good friends" who lead us through the woods infested with demonic thieves and murderers assumes the form of Catholic catechism. Putting aside both the Parisian quaestiones and the treacherous rhetoric of the poets, the Inquisitor Dicastes posits the existence of striges as a subject of faith and addresses Apistius as follows:

> DICASTES: Do you believe that in the ancient times of the heroes the devils made themselves visible? As a member of our religion, do you believe that these creatures are always malignant?
>
> APISTIUS: I believe it.[168]

We may say that the Inquisitor subjects the skeptical intellectual to a new baptism founded on the fight against Satan and his monstrous striges ("I believe it"). After being baptized in the name of the Catholic witch hunt, the born-again Apistius hears the Inquisitor and Phronimus survey the dogmas of "our religion" in the presence of the strix, who is about to die in the name of Truth.

The Catholic creed according to this fictional Inquisitor rests on three basic articles. First, the pagan deities Diana and Venus are synonyms for Satan. The ancients' books are Satan's "sacred" texts. Satan-Venus or Satan-Diana still chases and corrupts men and women, making them believe he is human like them. The Homeric hymn to Aphrodite explains this point clearly. Trying to mate with Anchises, Satan-Venus takes up the form of "a pure maiden in height and mien" and addressed the young man as follows: "Anchises . . . I am but a mortal, and a woman was the mother that bare me."[169] "Not clearly knowing what he [was doing]," Anchises coupled with Satan-Venus.[170]

Second, wishing to degrade humans to the level of beasts, Venus-Diana-Satan always instigates the "obscene loves of boys" (obscoenos puero-

rum amores).[171] The story of Ganymede is the most famous myth on the curse of sodomy.[172] Sodomy in fact brings to the fore the deviant, bestial nature of human–demon sexual intercourse.[173] Don Benedetto Berno, one of the striges burned at the stake in Mirandola, had developed a similar bestial desire for a child. He crept into the child's room at night and sucked almost all the blood from the child's veins.[174] When his parents found him, their son was disfigured. Having almost lost his human appearance, the little boy looked like a shadow. The contact between Satan-Venus and a human being (Don Benedetto, for instance) "gives life" to subsequent monstrous metamorphoses either through blood (the deformed, unrecognizable child) or through sexual contact. A strix is the symbol of this perverted, sodomitical intercourse. As sodomites engage in sterile and bestial acts that bring death into the world, so do the screech owls from the netherworld announce and give death to humankind. Both sodomites and striges are abominations.

Finally, the abomination called strix must be burned. We know that these beings against nature are literary infections, works of an imagination inspired by Satan-Venus. By burning these monstrous bodies, we burn a canon of infected texts. The Bible itself, God's book, compels us to cleanse the creation of these unnatural creatures. In Leviticus, we read: "their blood will be on their own heads"; "you will not allow a sorceress to live."[175] No metaphor lingers in a divine passage like this. In his hymns, Orpheus explicitly states that the "deity" Venus is "both visible and invisible."[176] Venus's darts wound and infect the reader's soul in obscure, insidious manners, whereas God's truthful statements demand a response, not an interpretation. In Pico's dialogue, to say "yes" to the Bible's truth means to shed the blood of a being against nature, a bird singing the perdition of the netherworld.

Pico's Poem on the Opposition between Venus and the Virgin Mary

✢

Poetry as a Form of Exorcism

Before closing this chapter, I'd like to go back to Pico's four-part distinction of exegetical expression in *The Study of Divine and Human Philosophy*. We have seen that Giovan Francesco posits a fourth, new "Herculean" style that manipulates both legal and poetic rhetoric. This style does not refrain from blending and turning previous forms into new literary artifacts. Giovan Fran-

cesco gives us an eloquent example of this "modern" form in his poem *The Expulsion of Venus and Cupid* (*De Venere et Cupidinis expellendis*). In these verses, Pico aims to turn the corrupt language of the ancients against itself. *The Expulsion of Venus* serves as a linguistic antidote, for it uses an infected rhetoric (names, mythic references, metaphors, syntax) to purify rhetoric itself. One could certainly say that, like a strix, Pico's poem has a contaminated nature. But, unlike a strix, *The Expulsion* does not intend to spread its contamination but rather to erase it.

The following is my prose translation of the opening section:

> The mind [animus] longs to banishs the Idalian flames, the attacks of insane Cupid and the furors of Dione. Oh chaste mother, genitor of Jesus, oh virgin, you alone have the power to suppress the lewdness of the eternal furies with a holy birth. Please, I beseech you, drive away the Venuses [Veneres] and those aberrant deities that the corrupt antiquity [male sana vetustas] imagined as winged brothers. Expel them all with a new melody [novo . . . cantu].[177]

The first lines are a declaration of intents and could be considered a summary of Pico's thought. If the "deities" Venus and Cupid use traditional poetry to slither into the mind and sicken the imagination, Pico's verses will work as a form of exorcism. His verses will detail a process of mental cleansing. Like any other exorcism, *The Expulsion* will summon, defy, and erase the "deities" lingering in the mind. The apex of a Renaissance exorcism is in fact the moment when the spirits infecting the mind finally pronounce their names, for their names synthesize the spirits' entire biographies. The priest then writes these demonic names on a sheet, which he burns at the end of the adjuration. *The Expulsion* has a similar structure and goal. By compelling the deities sickening the mind to reveal their identities, the poem drives them away once and for all. The classical invocation to the muses here takes the form of a prayer to Mary, the virgin mother of the Word. No "Venus," no winged deity dared to approach Mary, who gave birth to the Word in a perfect physical and mental purity. Mary embodies a being unblemished by the spirits' corrupt stories. As a truthful muse, the Word's mother will inspire a "new melody," which will dispel the winged spirits from the mind.

"The ancient poets" (prisci poetae), who falsely held that the "mother of love" (mater amoris) had arisen from the sea, "filled their texts with innumerable monsters" (variis implere poemata monstris).[178] The offspring of the pagan "mother of love," Pico insists, are monsters that wander through the created world in search of victims: "Emerging from Cyprus, many hordes of

these winged infants roam the earth, the oceans, and the spheres of the sky in naked and golden forms. On their back, they hold a piercing bow and a thick quiver. Their victims lose their minds, like the desperate Daphne, Peneus' daughter, who (according to the poets) ran away from Phoebus."[179] In Ovid's words, "the malicious" Cupid had pierced Apollo with a dart that triggered a ferocious love of the nymph Daphne, daughter of the river god Peneus.[180] Begging her father to rescue her from the god's lust, Daphne lost her human form and turned into a laurel tree.[181] The pagan poets knew that, because of these flying beasts, Jove himself, the god who held the royal scepter and crown, metamorphosed into a bull and a swan.[182] No living being can escape the enchantments of "Cupid." Wounded by his sharp "arrows," human beings not only turn into unnatural birds from Hades but they even descend to hell in an aberrant attempt to bring the dead back to life. Orpheus and the companions Pirithoüs and Theseus wandered through the depths of the netherworld (penetralia Ditis).[183]

As the men deranged by Cupid dared to reach the lowest regions of hell, so does the venom of Cupid infect the "deepest parts of the heart" (penetralia cordis).[184] The attack of this winged beast is sudden and swift, and so is his disappearance from the heart.[185] To protect our heart from this winged beast, we must oppose the Virgin Mary and her Only Begotten Jesus to the specters of Venus and her son Cupid.[186] *The Expulsion of Venus and Cupid* in fact ends with a detailed description of the crucified Word.[187] His open arms, the blood oozing from his open side, and his pierced palms signify the Word's infinite love for us, his constant presence within us. The image of the dying Word is a shield against "the flames of mother Venus."[188]

✠

To embrace the Word dying on the cross for all of humanity or to reject the "irony" of the winged beasts roaming through the creation brings us a new name. As the exorcist compels the "Cupids" possessing a human body to pronounce their names, so does the Inquisitor Dicastes grant a new name to the intellectual who has finally seen and recognized his past errors. From now on, Apistius will be Pisticus, "man of faith."[189] The anonymous strix, the being against nature, can now die.

CHAPTER TWO

TO RECALL THE SPIRITS' PAST Memory and Demonology in Strozzi Cigogna's *Palace of Marvels and of the Great Enchantments of the Spirits and of the Entire Nature*

✣

Have you come at last?
Virgil, *Aeneid,* trans. H. Rushton Fairclough

The previous chapter ended with the death of the anonymous strix. We know that, after being forced to detail her nocturnal encounters with the demon Ludovicus, she was burned at the stake in the name of truth. We also know that this fictional character in fact represents some ten men and women who were arrested and executed in the territory of Mirandola in the years 1522–23. With his work, Giovan Francesco aims to prove the actual existence of a perverted race, the striges, women and men who have metamorphosed into beasts of the netherworld. What we do not know is the fate of Ludovicus after the strix's death. We read of his sudden arrivals and departures, of his human-bestial appearance, of his unfulfilled promises to the strix. According to her, Ludovicus visited her even when she was in jail during her trial and reassured her of his unflinching support and love. We understand that the name Ludovicus comes from the classical past. By revealing his name, this demonic being wants us to know that his biography is somehow connected with a certain Littavicus, who, according to Caesar's *Gallic War,* betrayed the lawful power of Rome.

The encounter with the anonymous strix is only a brief episode of

Ludovicus's biography, however. Because he is a created being, Ludovicus must have an existence that precedes and follows his encounter with the ill-fated strix. An investigation of Ludovicus's life history would entail an analysis of his race, his place of birth, and past and current residence. Furthermore, we would have to answer a basic and essential question: why did Ludovicus and not another spirit visit and befriend this strix? In other words, what makes a given spirit interested in a given human being? How do demons select their victims and the aerial bodies they take on to approach their human interlocutors?

Before pursuing these queries, we must try to categorize the spirits according to their natures, powers, and purposes. I also remind the reader of a central distinction between our modern concept of demonic being and the theories present in what we broadly call Renaissance demonology. In our modern times, demons have lost their individuality. As I pointed out in the introduction, our modern, mainstream culture tends to speak of the devil rather than of demons or evil spirits because we resist seeing the Evil One as a real presence but rather as an imageless metaphor for evil. Renaissance demonology had a different approach to this problem. The two main branches of Renaissance demonology, Christian theology and Neoplatonic philosophy, were not two opposite disciplines. Even though they officially condemned the Neoplatonic theories on spiritual beings, Catholic demonologists were familiar with philosophers such as Ficino and Pico and, like the Catholic intellectual Phronimus in *Strix*, had a strong classical background. Thanks to this dialogue and mutual contamination, in the Renaissance the word *demon* always indicates a specific being in a specific context.

In this regard, the Renaissance philosopher and scientist Girolamo Cardano, whose texts are quoted and debated in most late sixteenth-century Neoplatonic treatises, offers a clear synthesis of this theological dialogue. Cardano believes that Christian theology has grossly oversimplified the character of demonic beings. In his daring autobiography titled *The Book of My Life*, the Neoplatonic Cardano holds that, like his father, he had a guardian spirit who followed him throughout his life. In like manner, Johann Wier, who in *De praestigiis daemonum* passionately contends that witches are delusional women with no supernatural powers, believes in the existence of *lares familiares*. As the character Phronimus in Pico's *Strix* interprets every form of witchcraft in the light of classical culture, so does Cardano believe that the ancients had envisioned the existence of different spiritual beings:

> In general, the characters of these guardian spirits among the ancients have been manifold and diverse. There have been restraining spirits,

> as that of Socrates; admonishing as that of Cicero, which appeared to him in death; there have been spirits instructing mortals in what was yet to come, through dreams, through the actions of the lower creatures, through fateful events; influencing us as to where we should go; luring us on; now appealing to one sense, now to several at the same time. . . . Likewise there are good and evil spirits.[1]

If, according to Pico's *Strix*, the classical canon should be read as a sort of demonic Holy Scripture, why can't we hypothesize a connection between classical categories of spiritual beings and the Christian concept of fallen angels? In other words, may we not use Greek and Latin texts to classify and clarify the demons' manifestations in the created world? A detailed taxonomy of spiritual beings (race, residence, powers, and goals) would also lead us to a better understanding of the spirits' manifestations.

Introduction to Strozzi Cigogna's *Theater*

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Its Problematic Structure

The most detailed Renaissance analysis of the spirits' existence and interaction with human beings is Strozzi Cigogna's *Il palagio de gl'incanti et delle gran meraviglie de gli spiriti e di tutta la natura loro* (The palace of marvels and of the great enchantments of the spirits and of the entire nature), published in 1605.[2] According to the subtitle, the book is divided into three "perspectives" (prospettive), thus evoking the image of a Renaissance imposing architecture, a sort of majestic theater in which the reader sits at the center of the audience. As I show later in this chapter, this dense and important text presents a number of contradictions. From a structural point of view, two central incongruities must be highlighted. First, the book is made up only of one "perspective" divided into four parts, and not three perspectives as the subtitle states. More importantly, in a detailed preface the author gives a summary of the book (which will disappear from the subsequent Latin translation) that does not correspond to its actual contents.[3] The main discrepancy concerns the content of the fourth and final part. According to Cigogna's introductory summary, book 1 is on God and his creation; book 2 discusses the existence of the spirits with a special focus on the good angels; book 3 analyzes the legions of the fallen spirits; and book 4 moves from the heavenly creatures down to the human race. This final section supposedly describes men's "nobility, origin, life, and death" and the nature of the soul and its immortality.[4] It also examines

the Word's incarnation and death for our salvation. Indeed, at several points in the first three sections of his book, Cigogna reiterates that the main topic of the final part of the *Palagio* is an examination of the connection between God and us, between his divinity and our humanity. However, while writing his long and complex treatise, Cigogna modifies its structure. If the third part studies the nature of the fallen angels, the fourth analyzes how the devils interact with human beings. In other words, the final part of the *Palagio* is in fact a treatise on demonology. This final section also includes a discussion of the night gatherings called Sabbaths, where witches mate with devils, and guidelines on how to distinguish between a demonic and an angelic visitation.[5]

Cigogna was accused of having plagiarized Tomaso Garzoni's *Seraglio de gli stupori del mondo* (Seraglio of the wonders of the world), an encyclopedic work published posthumously in 1613.[6] Garzoni, a popular and influential author of deeply erudite works, envisions his *Seraglio* as a building made of "ten apartments" (dieci appartamenti), each consisting of a variable number of rooms containing "various and admirable objects" (vari e ammirabili oggetti). However, the similarities between the two "palaces" are only external. Whereas Garzoni's *Seraglio* is very descriptive and imagines a reader strolling at leisure through a series of *Wunderkammern* loosely related to the topic of "wonders" (meraviglie) and "curiosities" (curiosità), Cigogna's *Palagio* is a Thomistic construction whose "perspectives" move from the spirits in heaven down to the beings inhabiting the world, with a final section on the secret pacts between devils and humans.[7] The *Palagio* is a Thomistic treatise in that its rooms or chapters unfold as areas of dialectical oppositions usually followed by a "room" containing the author's conclusive response. If the *Palagio* opens as "archival" research into the spirits' history and ontology, it ends as a detailed treatise on demonic beings and their disciples, very similar to the *Malleus maleficarum*.

The meaning of Cigogna's monumental *Palagio* in fact reveals itself in its fourth and final section on demonology. Why should we investigate the past of the spirits? To recall the spirits' history is of central importance if we want to defeat the innumerable demonic possessions now occurring throughout Europe. In the past lies the answer to the devils' present attacks against humanity. We may thus say that the *Palagio* is in fact a unique kind of treatise on demonology, for it places memory at the center of our defense against Satan's aggression. In fact, the encyclopedic nature of Cicogna's *Palagio* also evokes the Renaissance genre of treatises on memory and is reminiscent of classical works on rhetoric such as *Ad Erennium* and Cicero's *De oratore*. Famous students of memory techniques such as Giulo Camillo and Giordano Bruno

envisioned their work as the hypothetical memorization of the innumerable areas of a sumptuous building or theater.[8] Cigogna invites the reader to enter and walk through an imposing construction that will unveil the biography of the spiritual beings who roam through the lower regions of the sky. "To recall" the spirits, Cigogna believes, allows us to understand them and thus to overcome them.

Cigogna's Presence in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*

Cigogna's *Palagio* acquired some popularity in Europe thanks to a subsequent Latin translation under the title *Magiae omnifariae vel potius universae naturae Theatrum, in quo a primis rerum principiis arcessita disputatione universa Spirituum et incantationum natura explicatur* (Cologne, 1606). The influence exerted by Cignoga's lengthy volume becomes apparent when we consider that, in the initial chapters of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), we encounter a chapter titled "A Digression of the Nature of Spirits, Bad Angels, or Devils, and How They Cause Melancholy," whose main source is in fact Cigogna's *Magiae omnifariae*.[9] Even though Burton specifically mentions Cigogna along with Cardano in more than one passage, in reality the influence of the *Magiae* is much more pervasive than the English author lets on. Burton's taxonomy of the different sorts of spirits comes straight from Cigogna's book. In *Magiae omnifariae* Burton also finds a suitable analysis of the "aerial bodies" that the evil spirits are able to acquire.[10] Burton adds that on this subject "Strozzius Cigogna hath many examples."[11] Several of the additional secondary sources mentioned in this section of Burton's *Anatomy* also derive from Cigogna's *Magiae*.[12] The reader is invited to reread this section of the *Anatomy* in the light of my analysis of Cicogna's treatise. The connections and echoes are unquestionable. For example, Burton writes that "the familiar spirits . . . are mortal," as we read in a number of sources, among them "Saint Hierome," who "in the life of Paul the Eremite tells a story how one of them appeared to St. Anthony in the wilderness, and told him as much."[13]

I have conducted my analysis based on both the Italian *Palagio* and the Latin *Theater* (*Theatrum*). Given its much greater circulation, I quote from the Latin version, with references to the original only if necessary for a better understanding of the text. Throughout I refer to the book as *Theater*. Although it had initially received the approval of the Inquisition, Cigogna's treatise was placed on the Index in 1623.[14]

Book 1 of the *Theater*

✠

The first book of the *Theater* opens with a praise of God, the sole architect and constructor of the universe.[15] Cigogna believes that a night sky is the most eloquent evidence of God's presence in the world. Echoing the second book of Cicero's *De natura deorum*, a discussion of the Stoics' theology, Cigogna writes:

> If we turn our gaze up to the sky and contemplate the beauty and splendor of the fixed and the moving stars, how could we deny the existence of God? Consider the sun, the inextinguishable flame of the sky . . . and the nocturnal moon, whose silver phases are in a constant transformation. Although they [the sun and the moon] proceed with different and even contrary trajectories, their movements are perfectly constant and maintain an admirable order and harmony.[16]

The "beautiful theater" of the created world, the imposing beauty of a night sky, the harmonious dance of the stars prove the existence of a superior spiritual artificer.[17] By contemplating a night sky, our outer senses are reminded of another real, albeit invisible, theater, heaven, the abode of the good spirits and of the souls of the saved. We could say that our visible sky works as a similitude of God's majestic residence.[18] For our senses, our visible firmament is somehow like God's and the good spirits' eternal dwelling. From this divine space the evil spirits were banned at the beginning of time. Expelled from God's residence, these spiritual beings were doomed to roam through the air in search of contact with humans.

In the introduction and chapter 1 of this book of mine, we saw how the Franciscan Girolamo Menghi and the humanist Giovan Francesco Pico speak of the transient appearances of the fallen spirits. It should be clear by now that, to approach us, the fallen spirits' body must visit us as a form of recollection, as a citation from the past. In a crucial passage from the third part of *Theater*, which analyzes the legions and dwellings of the fallen spirits, Cigogna defines the body of the spirits as follows: "The body that the spirits use to make themselves visible to us is not a real, natural body, but rather the instrument through which they operate. It [their body] is a sign [signum] or mark [indicium] of their presence [ad praesentiam significandam], like some clothing they wear and have no problem in fashioning [sibi facile comparare potest]."[19] The fallen spirit's body is a sign of their visibility. The spirit's

body is a quotation, a reference, and a mark of remembrance. To recognize a spirit (imagine you see a spirit and say: "I do know you. I do remember you") means to recognize the memory the spirit expresses through his visible body. To remember a person always means to remember a certain set of events linked to that person (when we met him or her; our interaction; the places we saw together; the moments we spent together; and so forth). The created world, the dwelling of the fallen spirits, is indeed a Renaissance theater of memory. As we shall see, according to Cigogna's book, the collective memory of humankind is inherently linked to the history or biography of the spirits, whose forms have haunted the creation since the beginning of time.

Angels See God Only as a Simile

Let us enter Cigogna's theater. Although the first book of the *Theater* considers "the architect of this admirable universe," the creator seems to have withdrawn from his own creation.[20] As Cicero had already stated in *De natura deorum*, Cigogna reminds us, God cannot be defined.[21] The angels know the divinity as a simile.[22] Not even the angels could sustain a direct vision of God. If God is a simile for the spirits, so are the spirits similes that grant us a simile of God. Let us remember that the angels do not have physical bodies. Their bodies *look like* bodies but are not bodies. They are similes. God is a simile for the angels, and the angels are similes for human beings. In fact, the forms in which God appears and addresses human beings in the Old Testament are angelic manifestations, as Augustine confirms in *The Trinity*.[23] Before Christ, God revealed himself to us through angelic appearances, which humans erroneously took as direct divine manifestations. At the end of book 3 of his treatise, Augustine states: "whenever God was said to appear to our ancestors before our savior's incarnation, the voice heard and the physical manifestations seen were the work of angels. . . . [The angels] took created materials distinct from themselves and used them to present us with symbolic representations of God."[24] It is thus evident that the incarnate Word, his death and resurrection, affected both the nature of the angels' revelations and our perceptions of them.

The first part of the *Theater* offers little originality. Its exclusive aim is the foundation of a lawful definition of God. After having posited the universe as the work of the Christian God and having thus refuted all the pagan and heretical theories on multiple and eternal worlds, the second book of Cigogna's *Theater* opens on the superior celestial area of the creation, "where God, the Intelligences, and the blessed minds reside."[25] If the first

book dwelled on the divine foundations of the world according to Christian theology, the second takes a closer look at this immense theater and focuses on the "spiritual substances" that exert a fundamental influence on our human condition. Echoing the opening paragraph of Cicero's *De natura deorum*, Cigogna underscores that to deny the existence of the spirits would mean to believe in the mortality of our soul.[26] Because our destiny is strictly connected to the spirits, it is of paramount relevance that we investigate their origin and biography.[27]

Book 2 of the *Theater*

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In his strenuous defense of the spirits' real existence, Cigogna, in book 2 of *Theater*, ends up contaminating Catholic theology with classical culture. Although in theory this section of his work should be exclusively devoted to the study of the angels and blessed souls who sing God's praise in heaven according to the Christian faith, the second book primarily discusses the definition of spiritual being according to the ancients' thought. As a consequence, Cigogna's taxonomy of spirits results in an utterly "impure," tainted view of the vault of heaven, in which Christian angels converse with pagan demons and the souls of the dead act like Platonic spirits.

Cigogna's Contamination of Christian and Pagan Spiritual Beings

Rather than opposing a correct (Christian) to an erroneous (pagan) concept of demonic existence, a Renaissance encyclopedic text such as Cigogna's *Theater* contends that a dialogue between the two visions may in fact offer a more complete understanding of the spirits' visibility. Let us bear in mind that Satan and his cohorts of fallen spirits existed and interacted with humans before Christ's revelation. In other words, before the Word unveiled Satan's abominable and deceptive behavior, demons had already manifested themselves to the world through deceptive visible forms. The devils' bodies of metaphors existed before the incarnate Word exposed their malignant nature. As a consequence, to recall how the fallen spirits presented themselves in the classical era means to retrieve essential information about the spirits' biography that precedes the Christian theological systematization.

After a brief introduction in which he reminds the reader that the fourth and final book of his *Theater* will focus on Christ, through whom human beings apprehend the laws and divine meaning of the created world, Cigogna

explains that the ancients didn't have a clear and unified perception of the spirits' nature. In the classical era the spirits were obscure and precarious presences. Cigogna writes that, whereas the Platonists and Stoics believed in the spirits, the Sadducees, Epicureans, and Peripatetics denied them vehemently.[28] In Cigogna's view, although Plato's authority eventually overruled every contrary theory and imposed his belief in the spirits' real presence, profound disagreements undermined the Platonic view of spiritual existences.

What the Epicureans and Stoics Thought about the Spirits

The crux of the ancients' division on this essential issue revolves around the visibility of the spirits, who, in this section of Cigogna's *Theater,* are not distinct from the gods.[29] If they exist, some philosophers theorized, the spirits must have a soul, and thus also all the "members necessary to its functions, which would be held together by some denser element."[30] If a human being's soul is inextricably connected to the body, a spirit's presence would entail some sort of physical shadow, "a dense element" similar to the aerial bodies of the Christian demons. Contradicting his previous statement about the Epicureans' denial of the spirits' existence, Cigogna's allusion to a classical definition of the spirits' almost physical consistency echoes Epicurean theology as the character Velleius describes it in book 1 of *De natura deorum*.[31] "If the human form surpasses the form of all other living beings," Velleius explains, the spirits must "possess the form of man."[32] The fundamental difference between a human body and a spiritual presence is that the spirits' "form is not corporeal, but only resembles bodily substance; it does not contain blood, but the semblance of blood." In the Epicurean universe, which consists in infinite atoms of matter moving through an infinite space, the spirits-gods' presence is "perceived not by the senses but by the mind, and not materially . . . but by perceiving images owing to their similarity and succession."[33] In Epicurean terms, the spirits' physicality is a similitude. Their blood resembles blood but is not blood. Their almost-body is a visual echo of the spirits' invisible forms.

The Stoics, for whom the universe is a rational living creature, certainly agreed that the spiritual beings "often manifest their power in bodily presence."[34] For the Stoics, the spirits often appear to us in human forms to show their care for us.[35] Their human form is a visible sign, a message of concern. However, Cigogna is convinced that the Stoics supported the Platonic view of the spirits not because they, like the Epicureans, truly believed in them but only because the spirits' alleged existence exerted a positive influence on public life and morality.[36] In other words, both the Epicureans and the

Stoics seemed to perceive the exigency of some spiritual beings literally or metaphorically inhabiting the area between the heavens and the earth but were unable to come up with a credible philosophical formulation. Cigogna believes that, for the Epicureans and the Stoics, the spirits are almost-existing entities in that they either possess a nonphysical physicality or "live" in the consequences they exert in the world. In either case, the Epicurean and Stoic spirits are conceivable as beings only if compared or related to humans (their blood is *like* our blood; their human forms signify their concern for us). We could say that the Epicureans and the Stoics understood that spiritual beings exist in history, that is, that they acquire a biography, only insofar as they approach human beings.

What Platonic Philosophers Thought about the Spirits

Cigogna later states that Platonic thought, whose historical evolution he does not define clearly, believed in the existence of the spirits but did not care to prove it.[37] Plato, says Cigogna, relied on what he had learned from his master Socrates, who "would have rather died than tell a lie." The whole Platonic system, Cigogna seems to infer, is founded on Socrates' unflinching belief in the spirits. Whereas important Platonic philosophers such as Proclus posited a great number of intelligible and intellective creatures between God and human beings,[38] Plotinus, Porphyry, and Jamblichus "believed in four categories of reasonable creatures, gods, demons, heroes, and finally men."[39]

Confounding demons and heroes, who according to these categories should represent the link between humans and gods given their human–divine origin, Cigogna writes that for the Platonists the demons were "sons of the gods" but that their genesis was inexplicable.[40] These demonic beings, says Cigogna, flee every time their secrets are about to be revealed.[41] Their presence is felt in moments of particular danger and during the moments preceding the soul's departure from the body. The spirits' secret, which is somehow connected to their birth, is also the core of their existence. The spirits at once visit us and withdraw from us, deliver warning messages but fall short of granting us a full explanation of their presence and disappearance.

Do the Spirits Die?

Ignoring the spirits' origin, the Platonists are also uncertain about the spirits' possible extinction. Do the spirits die? According to the Platonic Cardano, Cigogna states, the spirits are not immortal. Citing a well-known passage

from Cardano's *De subtilitate*, Cigogna reminds us that Cardano's father had a guardian demon for more than thirty years, and that in August 1491 seven demons debated with him about the eternity of the world. These spirits confessed that their existence comes to an end. Spirits are "almost ethereal men [homines. . . quasi aërei]," but they can't live longer than three hundred years.[42]

Cigogna points out that, according to Plutarch's *The Obsolescence of the Oracles*, a spirit's death could explain why an oracle suddenly and unexpectedly becomes silent. Some believe that when a spirit in charge of a given oracle dies, the oracle turns into a memorial of the deceased spirit.[43] In Plutarch's *Obsolescence*, Cigogna also finds one of the most poignant accounts of the spirits' mortality. The character Philip relates the uncanny story of a group of passengers on a ship sailing toward Italy. "It was already evening when, near the Echinades Islands, the wind dropped, and the ship drifted near Paxi. . . . Suddenly from the island of Paxi was heard the voice of someone loudly calling Thamus . . . an Egyptian pilot."[44] The ominous voice demands that Thamus "announce that Great Pan is dead." When the ship approached Palodes "and there was neither wind nor wave, Thamus from the stern, looking toward the land, said the words as he had heard them: 'Great Pan is dead.'" Great expressions of lamentation came as a response from the land. If we took this story as a truthful account of a real event, it could mean that the spirits live a life of seclusion and isolation, an existence devoted to brief and erratic contacts with human beings. Their deaths go unnoticed, and silence invades the places where the spirits used to deliver their warning messages to us.

Cigogna, however, also underscores that, from a Christian point of view, the oracles have become silent not because their spirits have died or have decided to desert them but because, with his death and resurrection, Christ destroyed Satan's simulacra and imposed an eternal silence on the false idols.[45] In other words, the Word has deprived the spirits of the places allotted for their dialogues with humans and has exiled them from us. The spirits lived before and after the Word's sacrifice for all of humanity. Their biographies preceded and followed the Word's. What has changed is the way we human beings interpret them.

The Spirits Do Exist but Their Existence Is a Secret

After Christ, the Spirits' Messages Have Changed

The fundamental paradox of the spirits is that their existence is at once unquestionable and, almost always, undetectable. If God created a visible

world made of innumerable physical beings to manifest his unfathomable power and magnificence, Cigogna writes, it is unreasonable to think that he would have posited no being between himself and the human race.[46] Most of the philosophers, including Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, are convinced that the air is the region of the spirits. And if we consider that, as the celestial bodies in the sky and the winds traversing the earth prove, the "vast spaces of the air" between the earth and the heavens are in constant motion, how could we possibly deny that this infinite area is in fact populated by several legions of intelligible spirits? If innumerable are the species of bodies without soul (for instance, the stones), and innumerable are the races of men, why shouldn't we posit infinite variations of creatures without a body? The air we breathe is the realm of the spirits.

Cigogna believes that dreams are the strongest evidence in favor of the spirits' existence.[47] We have seen that the spirits shy away from any direct encounter with human beings. For reasons unknown to us, at times the spirits are compelled to approach us, but they do it suddenly and discreetly. However, it is a fact that, after the incarnate Word's revelation, the spirits' messages have changed. Since Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the spirits have been speaking to us about our salvation. Their messages have acquired a clear-cut tone and a distinct goal. The spirits now speak to damn or to save us. Their words, when we perceive their messages as such, concern the moments after our death. In antiquity, on the contrary, the spirits were concerned about the dangers and risks looming in our lives. Who sent them and why were unclear.

In Antiquity, the Spirits Warned Human Beings about Imminent Dangers

The story of Eudemus the Cyprian, a friend of Aristotle's, is a good example of a spirit's warning. On his way to Macedonia, Eudemus reached the city of Pherae, which was ruled by the tyrant Alexander. Becoming suddenly very ill, Eudemus had a dream "in which a youth of striking beauty told him that he would speedily get well, that the despot Alexander would die in a few days, and that he would return home five years later."[48] Although the first two prophecies turned out correct, the third did not: at the end of the five years Eudemus died in a battle far away from home. This kind of spiritual communication, which is very frequent in classical culture, posits a series of questions. It would be natural to investigate the reasons behind this revelation. The spirit in the form of a beautiful young man has no influence over Eudemus's life. In fact, its communication was wrong in its final and most

important aspect. In fact, Eudemus never went back to Cyprus.[49] Why did the spirit decide to visit Eudemus? And why did he choose the image of an attractive youth? These essential aspects of this spiritual visitation defy any easy interpretation.

The visible form of this young boy is first and foremost a sign of concern. That is, the beautiful youth is a link between a spirit and an aggrieved human being. We could say that the boy is a form of connection, *form* meaning both "type" or "kind" and "image." Since, as Aristotle states in book 3 of *On the Soul*, human beings cannot think without images, the form of the young boy works as a message, as a statement of sympathy. But is the form of this youth a product of the dreamer's mind, or does he come from the invisible spirit? To whom does this beautiful form belong? Who has created this form? If, as Cigogna says, dreams are the primary evidence of the spirits' existence, how should we interpret the image of a familiar person? Cigogna mentions the story of Simonides, who once found the corpse of an unknown man lying on the beach and buried it.[50] Later, before boarding a ship, Simonides had a dream in which the spirit of the dead man warned him not to travel on that ship because it was doomed to sink. Cigogna doesn't seem to notice that, at least in theory, this story shouldn't be included in his discussion of the spirits' oneiric communications. By *spirit*, Cigogna here seems to mean "soul of the dead," thus questionably blurring the distinction between angelic or spiritual being and human soul. But *spirit* here could also mean "sense" or "image," that is, we could hypothesize that the "spirit" of the dead man is in fact the image that a spiritual being selected to warn Simonides about his voyage. This spirit may have witnessed Simonides' act of compassion (his burying of the dead) and have felt compassion toward this pious man. Like the youth reassuring Eudemus, the image of the dead man comes to the dreamer's mind as an expression of closeness and empathy.

Spiritual Appearances, Dreams, and the Physical Nature of Human Memory

If a spirit is a manifestation of concern, a visible act of empathy, the spirit's presence has no past and no future. The spirit is the present of that spirit's concern for us. The spirit is the "now" of an expression of sympathy, like a card sent to reassure or console a friend. The card works, so to speak, when we open it and read it. If to see a spirit always means to encounter his visible form of concern, to be asleep or to be awake at the moment of this spiritual encounter makes no difference. This is why in the same chapter Cigogna

seamlessly shifts from stories of dream visions to analyses of factual visitations. But another important element must be borne in mind: classical and early modern medicine believed in the physical nature of the images stored in our memory (*phantasmata*). In *On Memory,* Aristotle explains that "memory is . . . neither perception nor conception, but a state or affection of one of these, conditioned by lapse of time."[51] A phantasma, Aristotle holds, is "a sort of impression of the percept, just as what we do when we make an impression with a seal."[52] As a consequence, if the spirits use the phantasmata stored in our mind to present themselves as familiar beings (as beings we remember because their images are "imprinted" in our memory), their visibility is strictly linked to the physicality of the *phantasmata* themselves. The paradoxical thing is that the spirit is a nonphysical creature, but his visible form (how he presents himself to us) comes from our almost-physical debris stored in our memory. As we shall see, Cigogna dedicates more than one chapter to the problem of the spirits' alleged flesh.

When the two angels arrived in Sodom, "Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. As soon as Lot saw them, he stood up to greet them and bowed to the ground."[53] Lot honors the angels with the hospitality due to foreigners who appear at your doorstep "in the evening."[54] In a similar setting, three men had previously appeared to Abraham "while he was sitting by the entrance of the tent."[55] In both cases, a man welcomes his spiritual guests at the threshold of his house, and in both cases the spirits share a meal with their host. Cigogna reports an even more significant example of spiritual encounter. When the young Tobias set off on a long journey to the city of Media to recover ten talents of silver from Gabael son of Gabrias, he "went out to look for a man who knew the way to go with him to Media. Outside he found Raphael the angel standing facing him, though he did not guess he was an angel of God."[56] As Abraham and Lot encounter the angels "outside," so does Tobias see Raphael waiting for him before the entrance of his dwelling. Accompanied by a dog, the angel and the boy will safely travel to Media. They will share meals together. They will sleep next to each other. But at the moment of his departure, the angel explains: "when I was with you, my presence was not by any decision of mine, but by the will of God. . . . You thought you saw me eating, but that was appearance and no more."[57]

The appearance of an angel sharing a meal with a human is like a message delivered in a dream. Like in a dream, "two men in brilliant clothes" appeared to the women who had entered the tomb of Christ.[58] To see a spirit is like dreaming because to realize that a spirit is a metaphor (the two men addressing Lot at the outskirts of Sodom; the two men in white in the tomb

of the Savior) entails a temporal hiatus between seeing and understanding ("you thought you saw me eating"). But the spirit is an immediate, instantaneous vision, a phantasm that imposes itself on us in the present moment.

The difference between the good and the bad spirits, Cigogna seems to infer, lies in the fact that, whereas the good angels stop "at the threshold" (their human forms are also metaphors of discretion and respect), the evil spirits often violate our homes and our bodies. Remember, Cigogna writes, the biblical episode of the demoniacs of Gadara, who came out of the tombs and shouted against Jesus: "What do you want with us, Son of God?"[59] The Gospel makes clear that these spirits wish to inhabit bodies. Since they know that Jesus wants them out of those two men, the spirits beg the Son of God to let them assail a herd of pigs, which then "charged down the cliff into the lake and perished in the water." This is certainly one of the most puzzling accounts in the Gospels. If the sole goal of the evil spirits is the corruption of human beings, why do these devils beseech Christ to allow them to possess a herd of pigs? And why do they lead these beasts to commit suicide? We can't help but perceive a certain despair in these spirits' words, as if by holding on to two human bodies these demons felt more connected to the creation, as if these evil spirits in fact felt some form of sadness or futile repentance for their original rebellion against the divinity.[60]

The Nature of the Spirits Is a Mystery

The Problem of the "Where" of the Spirits

It is a fact, Cigogna writes at the beginning of a following chapter ("What the angels and the spirits are, and whether, according to the philosophers and the Church Fathers, the spirits have a body"), that the sacred texts are much more explicit about the nature of God than about that of the angelic beings.[61] The spirits, Cigogna underscores, are the true mystery of the created world. As the previous chapters of the *Theater* have shown, the spirits have always existed, but their ontology is extremely difficult to define because of the paucity or inconsistency of the theological sources. However, "the intellect of the mortal man" has always been eager to glean some knowledge about them, through either some certain reasoning or probable conjectures, which, according to Aristotle, are the sole way of investigating the superior and celestial things.[62]

Our understanding of the spirits, Cigogna stresses, is intrinsically hypothetical because, although their realm lies between God and humans, the spirits are not indispensable to our salvation. This is why Western culture, including the Christian scriptures, is so unclear and evasive about the spirits.

We do not even know how to call them. Paraphrasing Augustine's first sermon on Psalm 103, Cigogna writes that we believe in spiritual appearances even if we do not see them. According to Augustine, "the spirits are angels, but as spirits they are not angels. They become angels when they are sent [to us]. The term 'angel' defines a role, not a nature."[63] In other words, the spirits are truly unique creatures in that their being is nothing but their capacity. They are only what and when they act. The spirits are gestures.

As gestures or effects, the spirits challenge Aristotle's notion that "things which exist are somewhere."[64] In the *Physics*, Aristotle asks himself "what is place?" and responds that "place would not have been inquired into, if there had not been motion with respect to place."[65] What exists, Aristotle believes, must have a limited presence in "the innermost motionless boundary of what contains it."[66] As boundary, space is the surface that contains a limited being. But the spirits exist in space only insofar as they are gestures of meaning, that is, angels. One could go so far as to posit two distinct locations for these immaterial beings, a spiritual and a factual "where." If the perception of a space, as Aristotle says, is inextricably linked to motion, the spirits manifest their presence in a given "where" when they descend among us with their metaphorical forms.

Cigogna is aware that the relationship between the spirits' location and their visible deeds is an intricate and essential point of debate. Offering a biased and intentionally vague summary of John Damascene's and Duns Scotus's angelology, Cigogna claims that both theologians support the notion that the spirits have bodies. In particular, Cigogna transcribes a key passage from *The Orthodox Faith*, in which John Damascene states that all created beings, if compared to God, are base and material.[67] An angel, Damascene emphasizes, is "incorporeal and immaterial if compared to us" (incorporeus autem et immaterialis dicitur, quantum ad nos). In a similar way, says Cigogna, Duns Scotus recognizes that, if we posit that an angel cannot inhabit an infinite space (which is God's prerogative), we must infer that he cannot reside in an infinitely small space either.[68] Cigogna understands that Duns Scotus's solution of this paradox (an immaterial being who is necessarily in a space but cannot take up an infinite space; an intellectual being without a body who is however "somewhere") is far from clear. Duns Scotus in fact states that an angel occupies a "determined space but in an indeterminate way" (habet locum determinatum indeterminate).[69] It is evident that the spirits move from an indeterminate to a determinate presence when they appear to us through their visible metaphors. That is, as John Damascene suggests, when they "operate" in a given space in an intelligible way.[70] Damascene seems to

say that the spirits are in fact their actions, what I called their visible signs (or signatures) in the created world.

Respecting the Thomistic structure of his *Theater,* Cigogna, in the following chapter, reports the opposite theological interpretation of the spirits' presence in a "somewhere" and their disputed physicality. It is now time to read those authors who deny that the spirits have bodies. I stress again that the question concerning the spirits' "where" arises only because of their rapport with us. Let us remember that John Damascene, an author frequently quoted in this section of the *Theater,* tries to define the angels' consistency by establishing a double comparison—between the divinity and the angels, and between the angels and us. Both the spirits' *ubi* (their residing somewhere) and their physical *esse* (their being in relation to that somewhere) resemble (are somehow *like*) our *ubi* (where we exist) and our *esse* (what we are). When Augustine defines the angels as corporeal, Cigogna, before transcribing an extensive citation from Augustine's *The Spirit and the Soul,* stresses that Augustine doesn't mean that the spirits are made of flesh but rather that they are "circumscribed by a place" (loco circumscribuntur).[71] That is, a spiritual being is corporeal in that a soul has its place in a body.

Why is the spirits' *ubi* so relevant to the definition of their being and existence? We have said repeatedly that the spirits visit us as similes. If, as Augustine says, the spirits become angels only if they traverse our places and mark them with their visible metaphors, we may infer that the spirits inhabit a space they are always about to leave. As Cigogna skillfully shows in this part of the *Theater,* Christian theologians understand that, in their transfer from a nonplace to a place, the spirits may seem to move from a nonbody to some form of a body. Let us reiterate that in the Renaissance discourse on demonic presences, the spirits acquire a biography only when they interact with us, and to do that they must appear as corporeal beings.

The Spirits and Human Flesh

The Gospel of Luke (8:30) reports the case of a legion of spirits invading one man's body.[72] What is the relationship between the invading spirit and the invaded body? Might we hypothesize that the spirits become incarnate through the man's flesh? A demonic possession is in fact a rhetorical perversion, for a spirit uses an actual human body as if this body were not real flesh but only a simile (a metaphorical manifestation of the spirit's presence). The blending or contamination of two different races (angel and human being) and two different natures (the spirit's visible metaphor and a man's

physicality) is an act against nature. The specter of such perverse mingling in fact haunts Christian theology from its remotest origins. Doesn't Genesis (6:1–3) speak of the "filii Dei" (God's sons) who saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and mated with them?[73] The existence of some abnormal beings called "giants" (gigantes; Gen. 6:4) testifies to the possibility of some perverted association between spirits and humans. Although Cigogna insists that influential theologians such as John Chrysostomus define as "folly" (dementia) the belief that in Genesis the expression "filii Dei" refers to angels and not simply to lewd men, the fear of some sort of unnatural mingling between spirits and humans runs through Renaissance culture and demonology.[74] After having dispelled this insane idea about spirits having sexual intercourse with women, Cigogna, however, acknowledges that other important authors, for instance, Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities*, contend that "many angels of God now consorted with women and begat sons who were over bearing and disdainful of every virtue."[75]

When Were They Born?

The ambiguity of the previous biblical episode is a symptom of the paradoxical nature of the spirits, beings who are above us but receive their role and identity (messengers, angels, as Augustine says) from interacting with us. And conversely, we attempt to glean some understanding about ourselves by reflecting on the spirits. What does it mean "to be circumscribed" by flesh, to exist in flesh and as flesh? In the economy of the creation, why does Genesis mention the birth of Adam and gloss over that of Satan? If the spirits are superior beings so close and crucial to divine will, why does the biblical author (Moses) fail to mention them? Our knowledge of the spirits, Cigogna reiterates, is tentative and hypothetical. We do not even know when they were born.[76] Some Church Fathers, such as Jerome, Ambrose, and Cassian, contend that the creation of the spirits preceded that of the visible world. It is impossible to ascertain, Jerome writes in his commentary to the Pauline epistle to Titus, for "how many eternities [aeternitates], how many eras [tempora], how many centuries the Angels, Thrones, Dominions, and the other orders served God" before the birth of the human race.[77] "It is unquestionable," confirms Cassian, "that God created all the celestial orders before the beginning of time."[78]

Yet in book 11 of the *City of God*, Augustine strongly defends the literal meaning of the opening sentence of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This sentence "implies . . . that . . . the heaven

and the earth were the beginning of the creation."[79] Augustine is convinced that the birth of the angels is implied in the expression "Fiat lux" (Let there be light). "If we are right in interpreting this light as the act of creating the angels," Augustine continues, "surely, then, they have been made to partake of the eternal light. . . . Thus the angels, illumined by the light that created them, became light and were called 'day' because they took part in that unchangeable light."[80] If an angel turns away from the light that gave him life, Augustine concludes, he "becomes unclean" (fit immundus). For Cigogna, the distinction between spirits of light and spirits of darkness is strictly linked to the moment of their origin. To posit a temporal hiatus between the creation of the spirits and that of the world would entail that the unclean angels waited to manifest their betrayal. Because the angels are pure intellect and pure will, their betrayal could only take place in the original instant of their arising from the light of God. Some angels said no to God as soon as they were created. Otherwise, we should conclude that even some good spirits might decide to turn against the Creator now, thus undermining the stability of the heavens.[81]

The Spirits and the Word's Incarnation as Man

Cigogna believes that the creation was a gift of the Father to his Only Begotten, the Word, who was destined to become incarnate to grant the human race a "privilege," which would make us superior to the angelic beings.[82] Although, as the prophet Ezekiel confirms, the first angel, Lucifer, had received infinite graces from the divinity, the Father in his unfathomable wisdom decided that his Word would become man.[83] In Cigogna's view, the Father imposed his will on the angels without explaining why the Son would have to degrade himself to the level of human beings. Why didn't the Word assume an angelic form? Aren't the angels superior to humans? This, according to Cigogna, was the reasoning behind the unclean spirits' subsequent rejection of divine law.[84] The spirits' defiance was thus the result of pride only in the sense that they couldn't accept that the Word would be willing to assume a human body to reveal himself in the creation. The unclean spirits realized that, in assuming a human form, the Word confirmed that men were created in the image and likeness of God.[85] What the fallen angels seem to resent is our physicality (our body; how we look), because our body mysteriously mirrors the Word's image.[86] Our body somehow echoes the Word. The spirits, on the contrary, are doomed to an unendurable in-between-ness, neither deities nor divine reflections.

As the book of Revelation recounts (12:7–9), Michael and his angelic cohorts fought against the "Dragon" and his unclean spirits, and hurtled them down to earth, thus forcing Satan and his devils to live among the beings who had caused their sedition.[87] Although the successful war against the evil angels decreed the good angels' supremacy, its result was in fact nefarious. If our physical forms (our being in the likeness of God) were the origin of the spirits' resentment of divine will, when they were thrown down on earth the evil spirits turned their hatred toward us. The earth became the location of a forced, unnatural cohabitation. It is essential to bear in mind that the spirits were not meant to inhabit the created world. For the fallen spirits, the visible forms of the human race became constant reminders of their exile. The devils' attacks against our bodies, their entering and devastating of our organs and minds, their deadly infections, are nothing but repeated expressions of hatred.

It is of particular significance that, after summarizing the heavenly war between Michael and the Dragon, Cigogna cites a page from the book of Job (40:15–41:26) in which God challenges his faithful worshipper by summoning two monstrous beings, Behemoth and Leviathan.[88] Without distinguishing between the two beasts whose names are removed from the quoted text, Cigogna contends that in this passage God's words describe the fallen spirit's appearance. Given that the devils lack any visible form, God cannot help but portray Satan through a long series of metaphors. According to his description, Satan is a cluster of similes. This beast, God explains to Job, "eats grass like an ox" (Job 40:15) and "makes its tail as stiff as a cedar" (40:17); furthermore, "its bones are bronze tubes" (40:18) and "his frame like forged iron" (40:18). "His strength resides in his neck," God says of this beast (41:14), for "its heart is as hard as rock" (41:16). This being, God concludes, "he looks the haughtiest in the eye" (41:26). Pride is both the cause of the angels' earthly exile and the form of their appearance.

How Many Spirits Fell from Heaven? How Many Remained Faithful to God?

Is it possible to determine the number of spirits hurled down on earth? How many angels remained faithful to the Father? If we consider that nature imposes its rules in an almost perfect way, we must infer that most angels did not betray the divine architect. It is undeniable, Cigogna points out, that monsters and all creatures against nature are much less numerous than natural beings.[89] Being naturally drawn toward the good, the angels that

fell from grace in fact betrayed their natural impulse. Cigogna conjectures that, because the human race outnumbers every other inferior animal species, so do the spirits, who are superior to us, exceed the sum of all human beings. In his description of a night vision, the prophet Daniel remembers seeing the "Ancient One" seated on a throne made of fire (7:9). "A thousand thousands waited on him," adds Daniel, "and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" (7:10). By this hyperbole, Cigogna explains, the prophet implicitly suggests that the good spirits are innumerable, as the author of the book of Revelation confirms: "I heard the voice of many angels . . . they numbered . . . thousands of thousands" (5:11). However, although Christian theologians have investigated the angelic hierarchies and faculties in detail, their names are hidden to us. As Cigogna points out, we only know a handful of these infinite and invisible beings, for the scriptures exclusively mention Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael.[90] Cigogna reminds us that during the Second Council of Rome (745), Pope Zachary explicitly stated that divine authority unveiled only three angelic names.[91]

Focusing on two eighth-century "false, heretical, and schismatic priests" by the names of Adelbert and Clement, the council condemned as diabolical a prayer in which Adelbert wrote an invocation to the following spirits: "I pray to you and conjure you and beseech you, angel Uriel, angel Raguel, angel Tubuel, angel Michael, angel Inias, angel Tubuas, angel Saboac, and angel Simiel."[92] As Jeffrey B. Russell explains, "Uriel, 'divine light' is a common figure in Christian, Gnostic and Jewish tradition and is present in the pseudepigraphical Book of Enoch," whereas Raguel "or Reou 'El, 'the friend of God,' was a Jewish archangel occasionally listed in Christian tradition as one of the seven princes of the angels. . . . An angel Raguel appears in the Book of Enoch. . . . [Tubuel] might be a corruption of the Biblical Tubal, son of Japeth, or indeed of the Biblical Tobias."[93] As far as Adinus is concerned, Russell clarifies that he "appears as a human name in Ezra ii, 15 . . . and in I Esdras, v, 14," even though "a more likely derivation is from Adonai. . . . Sabaoc is evidently Sabaoth, which is of course one of the names of God" but also an angel in the Gnostic tradition. Simiel "was probably Simouel, the angel presiding over the mouth of Heschwan . . . or Samael, 'superior poison,' another name for Satan."[94]

The angels' anonymity responds to God's will. For reasons unknown to us, the divinity has commanded that the angels be indistinct creatures grouped in infinite and silent legions. These beings, ranked according to their powers and missions, lead a potential existence. They are ready or about to exist. They exist only insofar as the divinity dispatches them to us. That

is, to see an anonymous angel means that a message is about to be heard. Like the reversed question mark that in written Spanish is placed before every question, the clean spirits are syntactical signs. They ask us to look at reality with a questioning tone. For they intend to tell us that something is about to happen.

Book 3 of the *Theater*

✠

Emphasis on the Fallen Spirits

At the beginning of the third part of the *Theater,* Cigogna reiterates that God has granted different qualities and powers to the nine angelic orders. God makes a diverse use of the angels "so that through them portentous signs and miracles be manifested."[95] If the previous section of Cigogna's treatise had offered a general view of the spiritual beings with a special focus on those who had remained faithful to God, book 3 directly tackles the nature of the fallen angels, a major theme of the entire treatise. Let us remember that the *Theater* should be read as a unique and strange treatise on Renaissance demonology, whose fourth and final chapter on how to respond to the innumerable satanic possessions plaguing the world is preceded by a historical analysis of spiritual manifestations.

Resuming his discussion on the nature of the devils' visibility, Cigogna wrongly states that, in his treatise *On Christ's Flesh,* Tertullian likens the spirits' bodies to Jesus's double nature.[96] Cigogna mentions Tertullian only to stress that the spirits' visible bodies are not natural, real flesh and blood. These visible forms are "signs" of their manifestations. In his distorted rendition of Tertullian's theology, Cigogna contends that if the spirits were able to assume a physical body the way Jesus did, they would become incarnate and thus turn into some sort of "monsters," at once spiritual and human beings. In fact, writing against the Christian Gnostic Marcion and his followers, who denied Jesus's corporal nature, Tertullian in *On Christ's Flesh* vehemently reiterates that the incarnate Word was not like an angel. It is imperative to bear in mind, Tertullian writes in a key passage of this treatise, that no angel has ever descended among us to be crucified in order to defeat death.[97] It is true, Tertullian continues, that angels at times can "transfigure in human flesh" (in carnem humanam transfigurabiles) and in this form converse with human beings.[98] But the fundamental difference between the (good and bad) angels' human aspect and Christ's is that, in his act of incarnation, the Son acquired a complete human biography, with a birth and a violent death, a beginning,

a middle, and an end.[99] The incarnate Word had a real body and a real existence, whereas the angels' appearances are intermittent and incomplete narratives. The spirits enter and leave others' stories.

The spirits enter our biographies through the air, most Christian theologians believe. By condensing a mass of air into a visible (human or animal) form, the spirits momentarily participate in our existence.[100] These masses of condensed air are like water turned into crystals or glaciers by the cold. Supporting his argument with a long quotation from Bonaventure, Cigogna infers that, to give form to their aerial bodies, the spirits must mix air with the vapors exhaled from the earth or water.[101] As a cloud has in itself the natures of several elements, Bonaventure writes, so do the angels' visible bodies result from a blending of air and earth or water.[102] If we look beyond this metaphorical phrasing, we understand that the spirits are perceived as creatures of contamination. Although they live in a nontemporal condition, they temporarily descend into time to become entangled in our vicissitudes. They blend an invisible matter (air) with pure materiality (earth and water). God made the first man out of mud. In that sense, the angels' temporary bodies are not that different from ours.

Can a Woman Bear a Demon's Child?

In a previous section of this chapter, we saw that the good spirits limit their process of contamination to a sudden and usually discreet manifestation (they appear at the threshold of a home; they lead us away from a corrupt place; they warn us of an imminent danger). We understand, however, that the unclean spirits know no discretion. The fallen angels even try to merge their unreal bodies with our flesh and blood through acts that mimic sexual intercourse. Can a devil inseminate a woman with his sperm? This is the main topic of the final chapter of this book, which focuses on the seventeenth-century Franciscan theologian Sinistrari. In Cigogna's *Theater,* we find the inconsistency typical of most Renaissance treatises on demonology. Following the mainstream opinion on this subject, Cigogna is convinced that the correct answer to the question of the devils' ability to father half-human and half-demonic beings is a straightforward no.[103] A devil acquires a female form (succubus) in order to seduce a man and steal his sperm, which he later inserts in a woman's womb when he mates with her as a male (incubus). However, the historical examples Cigogna mentions in this chapter blatantly contradict this view. This inconsistency between theoretical belief and actual cases of demonic birth is in fact present in most treatises on demonology.

First of all, Cigogna writes, we must remember that many believe that some "fauns and animals of the woods called incubi" assault women to quench their own lust. In France, these creatures go by the name Dusii.[104] It would be unwise to question this well-spread creed on the actual existence of these beings. Merlin himself, Cigogna continues, was considered the son of a devil and a noble British woman.[105] Merlin's magical powers were nothing but the natural result of his demonic origins. In chapter 8 of Hector Boece's *Scottish History*, Cigogna finds a second eloquent example. Boece reports the amazing story of a girl who was raped by an incubus.[106] When her parents found out she was pregnant, she confessed that a beautiful young man visited her secretly every night. Three nights after hearing this confession, the parents and priest, storming into her bedroom with blazing torches, beheld a monster clinging to the girl's body. Hearing the priest recite "Et Verbum caro factum est," the devil flew off the roof with horrible screams. After a few days, the girl gave birth to a monstrous being that a group of midwives promptly removed and burned on a pyre.[107]

Can the Fallen Spirits Affect the Course of the Skies?

Night Fires and the Souls of the Dead

These stories confirm the theological creed that when they were thrown out of heaven, the unclean spirits fell down on earth, which became their place of detention until the end of the world.[108] Although they maintain their angelic nature, the fallen spirits have acquired some aspects of our human condition. At this point of his work, Cigogna holds that, unlike the good angels, who with God's permission can manipulate the course of the heavens, the fallen spirits are bound to the lower regions of the air and exert no influence on the skies. Cigogna contends that God, responding to Joshua's plea, stopped the course of the sun for almost an entire day through his angels' intervention.[109] When Jesus died on the cross, the Gospels report, the sun and the moon darkened. Similarly, Cigogna holds that in 1533, when Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola was murdered and his uncle's library burned down, a comet was visible for forty days.[110] It is important to bear in mind that, as the previous chapter on Pico's *Strix* showed, Giovan Francesco was a man of deep Catholic religiosity. According to Cigogna, in 1514, when devastating wars were shaking the world, the spirits made three suns appear in the sky, each of them accompanied by a bloodstained sword.[111]

In a subtle but decisive thematic shift, Cigogna later contradicts his original statement on the fallen spirits' inability to affect the skies. I have

already remarked that the *Theater* fails to offer a clear and theologically sound distinction between saved and damned angels, between pagan and Christian spirits, between demonic and angelic powers. In Cigogna's book, the word *spirit* first and foremost signifies a nonhuman presence and its nonhuman manifestations. Why did "the spirits" decide to pervert the natural course of the sky with luminous and persistent comets, multiplied suns and moons, groups of stars shaped as ominous emblems? If the good spirits alone have the power to alter the skies, we should read their interventions as something similar to the image of a Renaissance emblem (three suns accompanied by three bloody swords). In this specific instance, the angels' emblem would comment on men's violence and perversity (the unnatural image of a sun multiplied by three). It would work as an apocalyptic mise-en-scène. But right after listing numerous examples of angelic emblematic manifestation, Cigogna in the same chapter reports cases in which the sudden alteration of the sky foreshadowed plagues and all sorts of calamities. Not a commentary on human sinfulness, this form of vision is simply the sign of an upcoming affliction. Citing from Girolamo Cardano's famous *On the Variety of Things*, Cigogna holds that the "spirits of the fire" (ignei spiritus) are responsible for these foreboding apparitions.[112] In Cardano's work, Cigogna finds the case of a comet that appeared in 1556 in Germany. Similar to a half moon, this comet was dark and gloomy, with very long and burning rays.[113] In that year, an unseasonable and unhealthy heat persisted from March to the end of April.[114]

According to Cigogna, the igneous demons created this monstrous figure in the sky. As Michael Psellus confirms, the creation is plagued with six different forms of demons: "Aetherei" or "ignei" (ethereal or igneous), "aerei" (aerial), "aequei" (aquatic), "terrestres" (earthly), "subterranei" (subterranean), and "lucifugi" (light shunning).[115] In particular, the first species of demon is also called Lelioúrion, which stands for "ardent" or "burning."[116] This sort of demon lives in the upper section of the air, closer to the moon, and has thus the power of affecting the way we see the planets. The image reported in Cardano's book symbolized a persecution (plague, drought) that would befall the earth, the realm of the fallen spirits. Cigogna reports another amazing story from Cardano's treatise. Cardano speaks of a younger friend of his who, on a night trip from Milan to the village of Galarate, was stalked by a horde of spirits in the form of herdsmen riding a flaming chariot.[117] These beings kept repeating "Cave, cave!" (Watch out! Watch out!). They were finally sucked into the earth when the terrified man started praying to God. Galarate, Cardano explains, was later ravaged by a horrible plague.[118] Cigogna contends that these spirits are often seen at the place of an execution and near cemeteries.

They appear at night as fleeting flames, as flashes of fire. In Latin, this spirit is called "ignis fatuus" (in Italian, "fuochi fatui").[119]

Let us pause for a moment to consider what we see in the sky. According to Cigogna, the emblems appearing in the sky (persistent and dark comets, suns and moons, clusters of stars) are visible statements written by the spirits. These emblems on display in the sky have more than one meaning. They may summarize a social catastrophe brought about by our human perversity (for instance, a ravaging war) and thus are intended to make men face their sinfulness. The abnormality of three suns in a row reflects our own perversion. However, these mysterious forms in the sky may also work as signs of torment or infection. That is, they may say that a given city or nation is about to suffer. Why did the demons of the fire keep screaming "Watch out!" to Cardano's Milanese friend if they were rushing after him to harm him? Isn't that a contradiction? Quoting from Antoine Mizauld's *Cometographia*, Cigogna states that some believe that these "ignes fatui" are in fact the souls of the dead coming back from purgatory.[120] It is a fact, Cigogna contends, that sounds similar to voices often come out of these fleeting flames. According to Cigogna's *Theater*, the transient flame that follows us at night may be an image (a simile) of the flame in which a soul is purifying itself in another invisible realm of God's creation. The flame of the spirit would be another, less usual form of simile. The fire we see at night is *like* the fire purifying the souls in purgatory.

Castor and Pollux as Two Pale Fires

In antiquity, Cigogna continues, the spirits or souls that carve emblems in the sky and flicker at night as pale fires were the two Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux.[121] As flames, these two alleged deities accompanied the ships in their night courses during the most turbulent tempests by hiding in the ships' most secret areas.[122] I have already discussed the crucial contamination between pagan traditions and Christian theology throughout this book, starting with the introduction on Girolamo Menghi's *Compendium* and following with the chapter on Pico's *Strix*. It should be evident by now that Cigogna's *Theater* amplifies the Renaissance vision of the spiritual beings as hybrids, beings whose biographies are patchworks of disparate references. Once again, the spirits lived before the Word's incarnation and his subsequent disclosure of divine truth. The ancients knew these demons of the fire as the famous twin sons of Leda.[123] Homer sings of them as follows: "Bright-eyed Muses, tell of the Tyndaridae, the . . . glorious children of neat-ankled Leda . . . children who

are deliverers of . . . swift-going ships when stormy gales rage over the ruthless sea."[124] In the first book of his *Odes*, wishing Virgil a safe voyage to Greece, the Latin poet Horace invokes Castor and Pollux's protection and calls them "gleaming fires" (lucida sidera) that lead the ships to a secure harbor.[125]

Throughout antiquity, men tried to foresee the future by invoking these "gleaming fires." Cigogna reminds us that the notorious practice of pyromantia, mentioned in many Renaissance treatises on demonology, is a typical example of this form of demonic worship.[126] After throwing some pitch powder into a fire, men endeavor to conjure up these spirits and alter the course of their own existences. Working for our perdition, these spirits often require that their worshippers commit horrendous crimes against nature. For instance, Cigogna writes, in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* we find the story of the magician Achaz who burned his own child alive in the name of Baal, one of these demons of the fire.[127] Cigogna's complete list of magical practices is in fact a faithful summary of Martin del Rio's *Disquisitiones* (book 4.2.7). Along with pyromantia, del Rio also mentions capnomantia (based on the smoke arising from the seeds of sesame or poppy) and libanomantia or thurisumaria (the smoke exhaled from incense).[128]

Let us summarize Cigogna's description of these igneous spirits. First of all, we perceive them when they concoct awesome and unnatural forms in the sky. The image of a set of dark, burning suns or a persistent and luminous comet is a product of these spirits. Greek and Latin culture called them Castor and Pollux, and granted them a divine biography made of numerous variations.[129] These beings are also visible at night as fleeting flames lurking in desolate landscapes (cemeteries, places of capital execution). They also appear to the ships traveling through tempestuous seas, making the sailors believe that their presence is a divine sign of support. They also may take the form of ruthless deities who demand the lives of our beloved.

No less fierce and misleading are the aerial demons who, as Psellus says, reside in the lower parts of the atmosphere.[130] In the book of Job, we read that Satan murdered the pious man's sons and daughters by summoning a ferocious gale that made the house fall in on them while they were at dinner.[131] According to Exodus, Cigogna continues, these aerial spirits shattered the land of Egypt with hail.[132] At Doomsday, as the book of Revelation foresees, four angelic spirits standing at the four corners of the earth will prevent the winds from blowing over the creation. Their mission will be the devastation of land and sea.[133] Innumerable are the classical and medieval sources supporting the existence of this species of spirits. According to Diodorus of Sicily, in Libya when there was no wind, "shapes [were] seen gathering in the

sky which assume[d] the forms of animals of every kind; and some of these remained fixed, but others [began] to move, sometimes retreating before a man and at other times pursuing him, and in every case, since they [were] of monstrous size, they [stroke] them such as ha[d] never experienced before with wondrous dismay and terror."[134]

Spirits of the Water

Better known are the aquatic spirits, who, stealthily walking over lakes or rivers, drown children and make the water exhale infectious vapors.[135] Sometimes they show themselves to us as nymphs, also called fairies. In Olaus Magnus's *History of the Northern People*, we find the account of the Swedish king Hotherus who one day, while hunting in the countryside, got lost because of a dense fog.[136] He took shelter in a cave, where he encountered a group of young ladies standing next to a fountain. These nymphs explained to Hotherus that they, invisible to humans, often participated in battles and supported their friends. After giving Hotherus some important information about a possible war against the Danish king Balderus, the nymphs and the cave disappeared and Hotherus found himself in the middle of the vast countryside. Olaus Magnus also reports the story of the Danish pirate Oddo, who used to attack and sink his enemies' ships with the help of these spirits.[137]

Like the other species, these spirits may appear with special frequency during moments of tragic transformation. Wars, famine, and plague seem to call for these spirits' manifestations. The spirits of the four elements signify moments of crisis. Take, for instance, the case of the monk who, after an altercation with some brothers, walked out one night to look for his horse.[138] Approaching a river, the monk suddenly saw a peasant, who offered to carry him on his shoulders over the water. The monk thanked this man for his timely kindness and mounted on his shoulders. But looking down, the monk realized that this peasant's feet were not human but goatlike and that therefore this creature was a demon who intended to drown him in the river.[139] We have already encountered this kind of puzzling discovery in Pico's *Strix*, where the anonymous witch confirmed that the devil called Ludovicus who coupled with her looked like a handsome man but had goatlike feet.

I have pointed out that this bestial element in the spirit's visible body may reveal the incongruity of the spirit's manifestation. The goatlike feet are not only a mark of bestiality; they first and foremost signify that the spirit's apparition is itself against the nature of things. When a good angel visits a

human being, his visible body has often no remarkable trait. Mystics often limit themselves to stating that an angel of the Lord visited them in such and such situation, without offering any particular depiction of the angel. The term *angel* itself marks a presence that needs no specificity. In many cases, we are told nothing about the angel's face or mien, apart from some optional reference to his luminous presence. Only the evil spirits, who linger in the waters or air or fire or earth, offer themselves as peculiar, odd, unique images.

Spirits of the Earth: Genii, Larvae, Lares, Penates

All evil spirits aim to cause us suffering and perdition. However, given their frequent conversations with us, the devils of the earth are the most ferocious and ruthless,[140] which is why the *Theater* dedicates four long and detailed chapters to this species of demonic being (chaps. 7–10). The ancients had a variety of names for these spirits. Some called them genii, Lares (or gods of the household), specters, or meridian demons. Others defined these devils as satyrs, fauns, or familiar spirits.[141] These different names, however, are not synonyms. In genii and Lares, Cigogna contends, the ancients saw some reference to the souls of the dead, which were also connected to the deities of the household, as I showed in the introduction on Girolamo Menghi's *Compendium of the Art of Exorcisms*. We saw that in this popular book the demonologist Menghi speaks at length about the mysterious apparition of a spirit who looked after a young man in Mantua. In his *Theater,* Cigogna confirms that, according to Augustine, in antiquity people believed that whereas the souls of some good relatives returned to protect them, the bad souls frightened humans as they roamed the creation in search of respite. The name of these damned souls was *larvae* or *lemures*.[142]

Such a variety of possible names shows that, unlike the demons of the fire, air, and water, this spiritual being has a multifaceted and thus much more dangerous nature. The complexity of this "genius" lies in the fact that this kind of devil lives around and within us. This devil affects the ways we perceive our lives and our past, the persons that inhabit our memory. Lurking in our families, these evil spirits disturb our deepest attachments, our sense of belonging, and our longing for communion. In one of his epistles, Horace calls this being "the genius . . . that companion who rules our star of birth, the god of human nature, though mortal for each single life."[143] In Horace's definition, two elements are of crucial importance. This is the spirit that leads us throughout our existence; he is not only some sort of familiar spirit but is "the god of human nature." This devil is so close to our nature that he even

accompanies us to the netherworld. In fact, Horace doesn't say that this demon disappears after our death. This spirit follows us wherever we go even after we have shed our flesh. This is the demon of life and death.

In his commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid,* a crucial reference in this part of the *Theater,* Servius confirms the extreme importance of this being when he writes that each part of the human body is dedicated to a deity. The forehead is for the "genius."[144] Our mind is thus offered, opened to the "genius," who is at once an external and internal presence. But this spirit is not only in dialogue with our mind; he has also something to do with our dead. Our mind, we could infer, converses with the deceased through this genius. As Cigogna explains, Servius and other ancient philosophers contend that "a human being is made of soul, shadow, and body. When we die, our soul flies to heaven, whereas our body stays on earth and our shadow descends to hell. At times, souls and shadows appear to the living. The first is called 'genius,' and the second is 'larva,' that is, 'infernal shadow.'"[145] I have already stressed that Cigogna's theoretical explanations are at times contradictory, incorrect, or simply vague. More than pursuing an exegetical synthesis, Cigogna inserts abstract statements to expose the reader to a subsequent avalanche of citations from biblical and classical books. In this regard, his *Theater* is certainly a product of baroque sensibility. In this particular case, Cigogna makes a faulty reference to a Neoplatonic stance on the destiny that awaits the soul after death. I broached this subject in the introduction, where I discussed Plotinus's theory on the relationship between the soul and its demon (*daimon*). The demon accompanies the soul either to its final ascension or to its renewed descent and incarnation.

What is the difference between the soul, its demon or "genius," and the shadow? We are dealing here with a new contamination of sources. We could first say that the shadow is how the living see the dead. Cigogna may also refer to book 4 of *De rerum natura,* in which Lucretius contends that the surface of a body sends out some light membrane or skin that floats in the air.[146] Lucretius calls this almost imperceptible film "simulacrum," but he is convinced that these membranes are not the souls of the dead that come back to haunt us.[147]

In Cigogna's *Theater,* other references come into play. Cigogna insists that shadows have an "infernal" character. According to Apuleius's *On the God of Socrates,* larvae are the souls of those who committed evil acts during their lives. In *The City of God,* Augustine believes that by *larvae* Apuleius means "harmful demons who once were men."[148] However, according to Cigogna's *Theater,* the shadow is not a bad soul but rather a particular manifestation of the soul. We may clarify the relationship between the soul, its demon, and the

shadow by reading two central passages from the *Aeneid*, both focused on the relationship between Aeneas and his dead father Anchises. In book 5, Virgil describes how Aeneas offers a sacrifice in honor of his father's memory. After pouring on the ground "two goblets of unmixed wine, two of fresh milk, two of the blood of victims," Aeneas invokes the "soul and shadow of [his] father" (animaeque umbraeque paternae).[149] A shadow is the image (imago) of the deceased. As a ghost, a shadow (umbra) blends the present of a vision with the past of a memory.[150] A ghost is an image that doesn't exist because it only represents a visual memory.

But let us continue our reading of Virgil. As soon as Aeneas had finished his offering, "from the foot of the shrine a slippery serpent trailed seven huge coils, folded upon seven times. . . . At last, sliding with long train amid the bowls and polished cups, the serpent tasted the viands, and again, all harmless, crept beneath the tomb."[151] The sudden presence of a serpent slithering through the bowls and cups offered to the memory of Anchises certainly signifies a response to Aeneas's prayers. However, Aeneas is not sure whether this beast is the "genius" of the place, given that each place has one, or "his father's attendant spirit" (geniumne loci famulumne parentis).[152] The serpent is neither Anchises' soul nor his shadow. Aeneas guesses that it could be a manifestation of his genius, who is thus a distinct being and not merely a quality or power of the soul, even though it plays an essential role in the soul's health and destiny.[153] The genius is not an image (imago) of the soul. It rather appears to signify that the soul of the deceased is aware of the sacrifice in his honor. The serpent only signifies that the sacrifice is working.

Aeneas encounters the image of his father when he is finally allowed to walk through the regions of the netherworld, the "land of shadows" (umbrarum hic locus est).[154] First, at the shore of the river Cocytus, where Charon transports the souls over the marsh of Acheron, Aeneas learns that the ferryman may not carry the souls whose bodies still lie unburied. "Thick as the leaves of the forest that at autumn's first frost drop and fall," Virgil writes, innumerable souls plead with Charon to take them on board.[155] But not every soul may leave the shore. If its bones haven't found a resting place, for a hundred years a soul "roam[s] and flit[s] about these shores; then only [is it] admitted and revisit[s] the longed-for pools."[156] Aeneas later meets the soul of his friend Palinurus, who still lay unburied because he had fallen from the stern and drowned. "Cast earth on me," begs Palinurus.[157] To lie unburied means that flesh still chains the soul to the visibility of its body. At death, the soul must discard the image of its biography. The shadow or image (umbra, imago) of a dead person

is not its soul but rather a visible expression that somehow enables a form of communication. The soul's visible figure is a figure of speech.

The hurdle that Cigogna faces here is that, according to Catholic teaching, souls' apparitions occur very rarely and only through the intermediary action of angels. In *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* (On the care to be given to the dead), Augustine makes it clear that death severs every possible connection between the living and the deceased.[158] But it is a fact, Augustine admits, that at times images of dead persons visit us with requests or suggestions. What we see is not the dead person's soul, which is forever detached from the realm of the living. We see a "simile" (similitudinem) of the person we knew.[159] Unbeknown to the dead person's soul, an angelic being may summon a "phantasm," a memory, to convey a warning, a reassurance, or a threatening message to the living.[160] In this case, the spiritual figure that speaks to us has nothing to do with the person we remember. Unlike a "genius," the simile (larva, imago) of a beloved one that suddenly presents itself to us comes from someone else, an angel or devil who is unknown to us. The spirit uses the image of the dead relative only because that image is familiar to us, but the dead person himself has nothing to do with the spirit that appears to us by using his or her form.

We understand now what Cigogna means by *larva*. Larva is a visible sign that the evil spirits can manipulate and use against us. That is, the remembrance of a beloved person turns into a figure of speech that the demons appropriate to affect our deepest feelings.[161] The classical cult of the Penates or Lares, whom Aeneas saved from Troy on fire and carried with him throughout his journey, was based on this false, demonic connection with the dead.[162] It is crucial to understand, Cigogna reiterates, that before Christ's death and resurrection, Satan and his demons exerted an unrestrained power over the created world. Therefore, although in the Old Testament God had already and repeatedly warned men against the false idols and the deceitful images of Satan through his prophets, only Jesus Christ imposed a new language of truth and reconciliation between heaven and earth.[163]

Before the incarnate Word, Satan and his cohorts manifested themselves through figures signifying familiarity and protection. For instance, similar to Penates, the protective figures of Castor and Pollux could appear as igneous presences (fires or stars allegedly leading ships to safe harbors) and as human beings fighting on our side. As Valerius Maximus reports, when the Roman dictator A. Postumius and the Tusculan leader Mamilius Octavius clashed at Lake Regillus and for a while neither army seemed to be prevailing, "Castor and Pollux, appearing as champions of Rome, totally routed

the enemy forces."[164] In the same chapter, titled "On Wonders," Valerius Maximus relates that Castor and Pollux became visible as human beings in other circumstances. While P. Vatienus, a man working in the prefecture of Reate, was traveling to Rome by night, he saw "two exceptionally handsome young men on white horses" who announced to him that King Perseus had been taken prisoner the previous day.[165]

Two handsome young men riding two white horses, two bright fires shining through a tempestuous night, two little statues of the Penates following Aeneas out of a burning city visualize a message of communion, of solitude overcome. We have said that "larva" is the image of a deceased person transformed into a linguistic sign. A larva comes to us as the fulfillment of a desired reunion (to see our dead one more time) but also as the manifestation of some uncanny message (we are aware of the fact that to see the spirit of a dead person is unnatural). Demonologists, Cigogna underscores, know that the evil spirits, by troubling our visual organs and our memory, can make us believe that a man is an ass or a horse, and vice versa.[166] As Sylvester Prierio explains in the important *De strigimagis*, devils can produce a temporary or partial blindness called *aorasía*, which distorts, reduces, or removes the images (phantasms) we receive through our eyes and retain in our memory.[167]

Let us remember, Cigogna stresses, that a disturbed visual perception is also a natural symptom of melancholy. Melancholic people converse and dispute with visual figments they themselves have created in their minds. Melancholics address these figures as real, external presences and ask for their advice. It is thus easy for the evil spirits to obfuscate our sight and our memory, and make us, at least temporarily, melancholic.

The Spirits of the End

As signifiers, the images of the dead may in fact express more than one signified. Let us clarify this important point. A larva is the figure of a deceased person whose signified is part of a larger deceptive discourse. A larva means that some form of mendacity is taking place. But not all figures of departed relatives or friends are larvae. According to Cigogna, we must distinguish between a larva and a specter because, whereas larvae signify a generic threat, specters always convey a message of death and devastation specifically directed at those who see them. A specter, Cigogna explains at the beginning of the following chapter of the *Theater*, is also called Alastor, or Executioner according to Zoroaster, or Exterminans according to John the Evangelist, who adds that this terrifying spirit is called Apollyon in Greek and Abaddon

in Hebrew (Rev. 9:11).[168] In John's words, this is the angel of the abyss, leader of the monstrous locusts that will drop onto the earth when the fifth angel unlocks the shaft of the abyss (Rev. 9:1–3).

These are the spirits of "disasters," as John states in the scriptures. A sense of apocalyptic devastation accompanies the appearance of these spiritual beings. The *Theater* is generous with ominous examples. Take, for instance, a story reported in the famous *Genialium dierum* by the famous jurist Alessandro Tartagni. Translating only the second half of this amazing event, Cigogna narrates that one night, on his way back to Rome after the burial of a dear friend who had passed away after long suffering, an honest and honorable man took shelter in a hotel.[169] Still awake in bed, this man suddenly saw his dead friend stand in front of him. The deceased looked pale and disfigured the way he was before being buried. Without saying a word, the dead undressed and lay in bed next to his friend, who, overwhelmed by horror and fear, kicked the specter away from him and withdrew to the opposite side of the bed. The specter stood up and, collecting his clothes, disappeared in silence. Some time later, the man became very sick and almost died.

Although this gentleman lived, one boy died as a result of the visitation of such a spirit. In Cardano's *On the Variety of Things*, Cigogna finds the story of a Venetian aristocrat who one night saw a man with a horrible face peek into the bedroom where he slept with his wife and his children.[170] Convinced that thieves had broken into his house, the man grabbed a sword and a torch, and stormed through every single room without finding any intruder. The following day, however, one of his children was found dead. Several other reports, Cigogna adds, confirm that these spirits assail and hug their victims to communicate their imminent death, as a Milanese craftsman learned on his way home during the third hour of the night.[171] Realizing that a shadow was following him, this poor man tried to run away from his stalker but to no avail. The shadow reached him and pushed him down to the ground. The shadow then embraced his victim so tightly that the man almost choked. This man died eight days later. We are not told what this shadow or spirit looked like and why it had chosen this Milanese craftsman. But in 1567 in Bohemia, Cigogna continues, another spirit in the form of a wealthy man who had recently passed away hugged his victims to death. The spirit's victims were this man's acquaintances. This angel of the abyss, as John the Evangelist calls him, walked the streets of this Bohemian city and hugged those who had known the deceased man. Some of them died; some others became severely crippled and ill. All of them insisted that the shadow of their friend had greeted and embraced them on the street.

Familiar Spirits

The Spirit in Love with the Young Man in Menghi's Story

These angels of the abyss, these messengers of death at times present themselves as friends and companions who relate to us in the most direct and informal ways. Death may come to us through a sign of kinship and familiarity, a hug or a handshake. What is the difference between these deadly spirits and the so-called familiar spirits, the subject of chapter 10 of the *Theater?* In this section, Cigogna studies the spirits known as sylvans, fauns, or familiar spirits.[172] As the specters follow and hug us, so do these new spirits at times shake hands with their human interlocutors and address them on friendly terms. As Olaus Magnus reports, in Iceland one can visit a promontory that burns like Mount Etna and seems to be a place where the souls expiate their sins.[173] In this alleged purgatory, "spirits or shadows" (spiritus seu umbrae) converse and shake hands with the living, as if they were the souls of their departed friends or relatives.[174]

Cigogna feels compelled to underscore that, even though these spirits do not harm us in a direct way, their intentions are always pernicious. More than causing our death or spiritual perdition, these familiar spirits seem interested in scaring and taunting us. One side of their character seems to express some childish pleasure in seeing others frightened and frazzled.[175] Tartagni's influential *Genialium dierum,* Cigogna writes, offers an eloquent example of this species of spirits. Gordianus, a dear friend of Tartagni, once lost his way in a forest while traveling back home with a friend.[176] Woods and steep mountains surrounded the two companions. At nightfall, all of a sudden they heard something like a human voice coming from above. Looking up, they saw three huge human figures dressed in long black gowns. Their faces had long white beards and gruesome expressions. One of them, unexpectedly, undressed and started to jump around and make lewd gestures (saltus gestusque indecoros) to the two stunned men.

Compared to the previous category of demonic beings, these familiar spirits are at first glance fairly innocuous. Imagine for a moment a bearded giant dancing around naked in the woods and making obscene proposals to two fatigued and terrified men. These spirits certainly have an amazing sense of humor. So, what is their demonic, destructive side? We have already encountered this sort of spirit in the introduction to this book, where we discussed Girolamo Menghi's story of a young man in the city of Mantua who was stalked by a familiar spirit in the form of a tutor or servant. Faithfully quoting from Menghi's *Compendium of the Art of Exorcisms,* Cigogna

confirms that at times these familiar spirits fall in love with human beings.[177] The familiar spirit in Menghi's account was indeed burning for love, Cigogna eloquently writes.[178] Keep in mind, Cigogna adds, that Socrates' private demon itself is usually considered a familiar spirit.

What do the three playful sylvan spirits in Tartagni's story have in common with Socrates' demon and Menghi's spirit obsessed with a young man? All of them signify a psychological condition: concern and intellectual intimacy in Socrates' case; sexual teasing in Tartagni's; and the torture of an unrequited love in Menghi's. A familiar spirit touches our deepest fears and uncertainties (sexual identity; moral inquiries). There is something inherently unbecoming in this spirit's appearance. A familiar spirit doesn't cause the death of our children. He doesn't mark the sky with unnatural suns, moons, or comets. He doesn't bring about infectious winds and plagues. A familiar spirit seems to arise from within us, and his demonic, obscene nature lies in his revealing what is supposed to remain unexpressed.

Subterranean Spirits

In the darkest and most remote recesses of the created world live the final two kinds of spirits, the "subterranei" (subterranean) and "lucifugi" (enemies of the light). If the familiar spirits arise from the depths of our mind, these final demons are synonyms for blindness and secrecy. These are the ultimate embodiment of distance and opposition between the visibility of the Word's grace and the darkness of the abyss. Caverns, basements, cellars, the thickest forests—all are areas of limited light and air. A sudden clouded perception may signify the presence of these spirits. These devils come to us when our physical and intellectual sight is in danger, when our discernment becomes doubtful. In the land called Sarmatia, also known as Scythia, Cigogna reports, many people are convinced that these spirits lurk in the dark zones of their houses and that they become violent unless they are properly treated and fed.[179]

As the demonologist Lorenzo Anania explains in *De natura daemonum*, the subterranean devils are collecting money and valuable goods for the Antichrist, the son of iniquity, who will use their financial support to subvert the creation.[180] In the book of Revelation (17:3–4) we read that the prostitute of Babylon, who will be drunk with the blood of the martyrs and will ride the scarlet beast, will be "dressed in purple and scarlet and glittered with gold and jewels and pearls." The emergence of the devils of the underground, the enemies of light, will signify the outbreak of the final war between the Word and the fallen angel. The demons of the underworld will arise to visibility at the

beginning of the end. At the present moment, the meaning of these demons is not fully disclosed. Their fleeting appearances (in the basements and closets of our dwelling places, in the deepest caves of the earth) remind us that the created world is coming to an end.

Book 4 of the *Theater*

✝

A Treatise of Demonology

The two central sections of Cigogna's vast and intricate *Theater* have detailed the intermittent traces left by the infinite demonic cohorts that have been haunting the creation since the beginning of time. Classical culture, the Holy Scriptures, as well as medieval and modern literatures and chronicles report infinite instances of spiritual appearances whose intimate meanings will become apparent only at the end of time. If the spirits are now visible messages and eloquent images, at the moment of the Word's Second Coming their communications will become silent. At Doomsday, a sudden and perfect silence will rule over the creation. When the divine judge returns to separate the damned from the saved, the relentless and tortuous conversing between humans and spirits will come to an end.

Cigogna is convinced that the increasing number of spiritual apparitions and demonic possessions can only mean that the end is approaching. However, the Antichrist has not yet revealed himself. He is still addressing us through his infinite spirits. At the beginning of this chapter, I stressed that in the preface to the original Italian *Palagio,* Cigogna had incorrectly stated that the fourth and final section of his book would dwell on the "nobility" of the human race, on humanity as an image of the divinity, and on the Word's return at the end of time. Rather than praising humankind, the fourth part both of the *Palagio* and the *Theater* speaks of the horrendous connections, dialogues, and couplings between devils and men. Losing its deeply erudite character, book 4 of Cigogna's work turns into a traditional and cautious treatise of demonology according to the thematic and structural guidelines laid out in the *Malleus maleficarum*.

Renaissance legal and theological analyses of witchcraft always offer an introductory section that emphasizes the real existence of demons and witches. If we read the *Theater* as an example of this literary genre, we could say that Cigogna's book first defines the divinity and his creation (book 1); then dwells on the spirits, God's first creatures (books 2 and 3); and finally studies how the evil spirits endeavor to corrupt the human race (book 4).

However, the two central perspectives of the *Theater* (books 2 and 3) are the actual core of Cigogna's literary architecture. In the same way that the first part on God offers no original theological element, so does the fourth and conclusive section limit itself to reiterating a number of received ideas and stories on demons and their followers. We could say that book 4 of the *Theater* flattens and simplifies the religious, philosophical, and literary complexity of the previous two parts.

In book 4, "familiar spirit" becomes the name of the devil who visits his female worshipper at night, leads her to the Sabbath, and there mates with her in front of other witches.[181] Cigogna himself knows of a place where witches probably have their night orgies with Satan. In a forest close to the village of Castelnuovo, which is located in the area of Vicenza, Cigogna once spotted a clearing that had a circle some twenty feet in diameter marked on the ground.[182] The grass marking its perimeter looked rotten and never grew back. It is well known, Cigogna adds, that these circles usually are a sort of dance floor where women and men give free reign to their lewdest intentions and express offensive words against God. Within these limits, the devils, usually called "fantasme" (ghosts), dance with their worshippers and possess them sexually.[183] In chapter 1 on Giovan Francesco Pico, we saw that the mystic Caterina Racconigi was one of the fantasme in defense of God. Some believe that these fantasme originally were the souls of lascivious human beings, who even after death are slaves of their immoral tendencies. Often assuming a "human form" (effigiem humanam), these spirits present themselves as servants and caretakers, and never leave their victims alone.[184] The spirit in love with the young man in Mantua from Menghi's *Compendium* would fall into this category. We should thus conceive of a half-human and half-spiritual soul whose human memories have produced a fallen angel. We come back to this point in the next chapter.

The *Theater* celebrates the history and biography of the beings that live only insofar as they relate to us. Residing somewhere above us (the lowest and least luminous regions of the heavens or next to the Trinity's light), these beings speak to us to pervert or save us, to enlighten or becloud our sight. Cigogna's Renaissance *Theater* brings back fragments of these beings' past. If the spirits exist as instantaneous messages, as sudden and fleeting manifestations, the *Theater* is the paradoxical attempt to define some form of angelic biography, and thus to humanize beings that are not human.

CHAPTER THREE

"THE SHADOWS AND THEIR BELOVED BODIES" Medicine, Philosophy of Love, and Demonology in Pompeo della Barba's *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet*

✣

You have forgotten me.
Homer, *The Iliad,* trans. Richmond Lattimore

In the earlier chapters of this book I have tried to shed light on the Renaissance concern, or should I say obsession, with the spiritual beings' at once hypothetical and real existence. If the preface to this book opens with an eloquent quotation from Machiavelli's *Discourses* in which the author of *The Prince* tentatively posits the presence of "intelligences" that pervert reality to express their compassion for us, the introduction discusses the amazing story of a "male" demonic being in love with a youth, as we read it in Girolamo Menghi's *Compendium of the Art of Exorcisms,* a popular work of Renaissance demonology. What becomes apparent even from the first two parts of this book is that in the Renaissance the concept of the so-called spirits is extremely difficult to define. It is not only a question of determining who believes in the spirits' existence and why, that is, the cultural and philosophical background that would support the creed in spiritual beings. Whereas the great historian Francesco Guicciardini had ties with Florentine Neoplatonism (his godfather was Marsilio Ficino), Machiavelli's first literary work was a translation of Lucretius's *De rerum natura,* the Epicurean "scientific"

demystification of human fear of the divine, which exerted a significant influence on Machiavelli's thought. For Lucretius, "there is nothing before us but body mixed with void."[1] And still Machiavelli thinks that spiritual intelligences may exist and that they warn humans about upcoming tragedies.

In the Renaissance, the hiatus between the human and the divine thus also envisions a blurred in-between area of contact, confrontation, and possible blending, a no-man's-land where human identity, desire, and physicality may encounter and possibly merge with what is not human. In the Renaissance, we could say, a spirit is not merely an entity that comes from above or afar, an improbable and unexpected messenger of the divine. A Renaissance spirit indicates a potential encounter, a potential disclosure of "something" that is very close to the human condition and perhaps participates in the human condition itself. A spirit is something (a revelation) that in fact completes and "clarifies" a human being. Let us remember that for Machiavelli the spirits speak to us because they are concerned and compassionate. A Renaissance spirit has the quality of a neighbor, so to speak. This "neighbor" visits human beings with a body of similes, of visible metaphors, because this "neighbor" is *like* us, that is, both different from and similar to us.

In my reading of Cigogna's monumental *Theater* I pointed out that, in the Renaissance, every attempt to define the nature and origins of the spirits reveals that the spirits' biographies and existences are strictly connected and interwoven with those of humans. To define and narrate the past of the spirits has a meaning only insofar as we bring back the memories of the spirits' encounters with us. It is thus evident that the concept of a spirit's "body" has some sense only if we see it as a sign of communication. A spirit's "body" is the sign of a spirit's "compassion" toward us.

Before trying to define the consistency of the spirits' visible bodies (Are their bodies made of air? Do the spirits enter corpses and fool us into believing that they can resuscitate the dead? Are their revelations solely affections of the mind?), we must understand that the word *body* is the visible sign of an encounter. In the Christian tradition, *angel* itself tends to be a word without a proper image. Infinite angels visit the mystics, defend them against Satan, offer solace and insight, save lives. However, descriptions of their actual "bodies" (What do these creatures look like? Do all of them appear elegantly dressed in white?) are scarce and somehow superfluous. "To see an angel" usually evokes a sense of luminosity, an invasion of light, or the stereotypical image of a monstrous being, a youth in a white gown with two eagle-like wings. Isn't the angel's monstrosity a sign of his "compassion," of his going *beyond* what is natural in order to reach and approach us?

Love and the Spiritual Beings

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Isn't love itself an extraordinary occurrence? Doesn't the phrase "to fall in love" indicate a *fall* from what is usual, safe, and recognizable into an unnatural condition of loss? Doesn't the lover feel that he exists only insofar as he expresses care and compassion toward his beloved? Doesn't the lover perceive his existence as a constant "being toward" the beloved? And isn't the lover's physicality (what does the lover look like?) somehow superfluous? In his monstrous condition (a being outside of himself; a being toward the beloved), the lover is a sign of compassion, a "body" of concern. A lover cares *toward* his beloved.

Let me rephrase the problem I am addressing here. In dealing with the concept of spirit in the Italian Renaissance culture, we have been facing two basic problems. First, we have seen that the trite expression "Renaissance syncretism" means much more than a mere conflation of cultural backgrounds (Christian angelology and demonology blending with Greek and Latin cultures). It has in fact important theological and philosophical consequences. Do the spirits have a past? What is the relationship between the spirits' biographies and the classical accounts of spiritual manifestations? If the fallen angels were in fact the innumerable deities that interacted with humans (for instance, remember the household gods Lares and Penates or Castor and Pollux in Menghi's *Compendium* and Cigogna's *Theater*), where were the good angels before the Word's incarnation? How do the spirits in the Old Testament relate to the spirits in classical cultures? Second, the spirits' destinies are strictly connected to ours. The spirits exist insofar as they "are toward" us. This is a central facet of the Renaissance concept of spirit. I have explained that the spirits' monstrosity (appearances of human-bestial beings such as young men with imposing wings; beings that take up the forms of schoolteachers or butlers to be near their beloved) is itself the primary sign of their closeness. As I said earlier, their monstrosity is the sign of their transcending or defying what is natural. This is also the mark of the love experience.

Renaissance Philosophy of Love: The Splendor of the Beloved

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Renaissance syncretism finds in the philosophy of love its highest and most complex expression. If fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy is the land where

the spirits came back to express their compassion, the Italian Renaissance is also the culture that dedicated an infinite number of treatises to the study and definition of love. "Treatise of love" or *trattato d'amore* is in fact the technical name of a vast literary and philosophical genre that flourished primarily in Renaissance Italy, in particular in the northern and central regions of the peninsula. The immense corpus of love treatises published in Italy in the sixteenth century still awaits a comprehensive analysis.[2] This important genre started with Marsilio Ficino's bestseller commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, which soon exerted a considerable influence on French, Spanish, and English literatures. Although he had already completed it in 1469, Ficino published his commentary in Latin with the title *De amore* in 1484. Ficino's Italian version, titled *Sopra lo amore* (On love), came out only in 1544, many years after Ficino's death in 1499.[3]

Although I refer directly to Ficino's *De amore* and *Sopra lo amore* along with several other love treatises in later sections of this chapter, let me introduce a few essential points here. What is the sense of love? This is the fundamental question posed by Ficinian treatises of love. And what is the relationship between the possible sense of a love experience and the physical senses? As we shall see, the central tenet of this philosophy is that love is a private spiritual path that finds its origin in the *splendor* of the beloved's body, which leads the lover toward a perception of the divine. *Splendor* is indeed a technical word in Renaissance philosophy of love.[4] The origin of this reference lies in several famous passages of *De amore*.

The term *splendor* first appears in the initial pages of *De amore*. Ficino introduces the character Phaedrus, who delivers the very first speech of the *Symposium*, as follows: "Phaedrus, whose appearance Socrates admired so much that one day, on the banks of the Ilissus River, Socrates was so excited by the beauty of Phaedrus that he became carried away, and recited the divine mysteries."[5] What the accurate English translation renders as "beauty" in the original Latin is "splendor."[6] Phaedrus's splendor is a result of his "appearance." Moreover, "appearance" in the modern English version seems to refer to Ficino's Italian translation rather than to the original Latin. There is in fact a crucial, albeit subtle, difference between the Latin "indoles" in *De amore* and the Italian "apparenza" in *Sopra lo amore*.[7] Although "indoles" has both an intellectual and physical connotation (a person's "demeanor"), in his Italian version Ficino clarifies that the physical element of Phaedrus's "splendor" lies in his physical "appearance."

But what is the connection between someone's physical splendor and love? In book 2, chapter 9, Ficino defines love as follows: "love is the desire of

enjoying beauty. But beauty is a certain splendor attracting the human soul to it."[8] Later, in book 5, chapter 7, commenting on Agathon's speech in the *Symposium*, Ficino writes: "The poet Agathon . . . clothes this god in human form, and paints him as attractive, like men: *Young, tender, flexible or agile, well-proportioned and glowing*."[9] Love is "glowing" (nitidus) because it is similar to a "resplendent," beautiful surface. Ficino translates as "glowing" the expression "khróas dè kállos" from the corresponding passage in Plato's *Symposium* (196a). The word "khróas" indicates the superficial appearance of a given thing, its skin. A "beautiful appearance" could be another acceptable translation. In a later section, Ficino adds that love is "nitidus" (glowing) because it "shines of pleasant colors."[10] In his Italian version, Ficino concludes this chapter by reiterating that love is "splendido" (resplendent).[11] The ultimate "splendor" (splendor), the source of everything that is "splendido" in the creation, is God the Father.[12] Again, Ficino's Italian translation clarifies the direct connection between the "resplendent" or glowing surface of what is beautiful (the luminous skin of the beloved) and its essential source, God Himself. The title of chapter 4 of the same book 5 of *De amore* is in fact "Beauty Is the Splendor of God's Face."[13]

The beloved's skin exudes, so to speak, a luminosity that sparks a spiritual flame within the lover. The splendor of the beloved's body is a visible reminder of God's presence and our longing for Him. The beloved's body, we could say, is a luminous surface of divine memories. If love arises from the body of the other, how could one possibly make sense of the apparent contradiction between a sensual perception and the necessity of denying the experience of the senses? For to indulge in the love of the senses in fact represents a serious, albeit deeply tempting, misinterpretation and misuse of the splendor coming from the other's body.

Important connections between my previous analyses of the spirits' visible bodies and Renaissance philosophy of love should be apparent. Like transient bodies taken up by the spirits to communicate their compassion to us, the body of the beloved is first and foremost an apparition, a sudden presence whose splendor is so overwhelming that it generates a profound sense of void and longing in the lover. Isn't an angelic apparition often accompanied by a blinding luminosity?[14] We could conclude that the body of the beloved has a double, split nature. The body of the beloved is first of all splendor and luminosity; that is, it is a clear and luminous surface. Second, the beloved's body is *also* its actual physicality (his flesh), which is paradoxically a subsidiary, inferior, and almost superfluous component. In the love experience, what matters is the beloved's splendor, not his flesh.

In these few pages I have drawn two basic parallels between the love experience and the encounter between a human being and a spirit according to Renaissance culture. I have said that the lover is similar to the compassionate spirit since the focus of the lover's existence is the beloved. Remember the spirit in love with the youth in Mantua. However, I have also compared the splendor of the beloved to the luminosity of a spiritual appearance. *Spirit* again is a double, ambiguous word. Spirit is at once the act of desire (lover) and the source of that very desire (beloved). Spirit is the luminous flesh of the beloved (his splendor) and the lover's longing for that splendor.

Biographical Sketch of the Physician and Philosopher Pompeo della Barba

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In this chapter, we examine the Renaissance Neoplatonic concept of love by focusing on *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet* (*Spositione d'un sonetto platonico*) by the physician and philosopher Pompeo della Barba (1521–65). Della Barba studied medicine at the University of Pisa, from which he graduated between 1543 and 1548; in 1559 he was called to Rome to serve Pope Pius IV. The combined study of natural philosophy and physiology was quite common in the Renaissance. Remember, for instance, Girolamo Cardano, whose invaluable texts cover a variety of medical and philosophical areas. In my discussion of della Barba's book, I also refer to his controversial *First Two Dialogues* (*I due primi dialoghi*, 1558), whose daring discussions of human genitalia and sexuality were immediately condemned by the Catholic Church. As a consequence, della Barba's *First Two Dialogues* soon became one of the rarest books of the Italian Renaissance.[15] As far as I know, no scholar of Renaissance culture has ever perused this book, let alone dedicated a substantial study to it.

The Dedicatory Letter

✢

Love and Friendship

In his dedicatory letter to Francesco Torello, "Doctor in Law for the Duke of Florence," the physician della Barba insists that to speak about love is first and foremost an expression of friendship.[16] "Several friends," della Barba writes in the opening sentence, "had asked me to compose an exposition of the sonnet

that I read in the Florentine Academy during the month of April [1548]." The emphasis placed on friendship is typical of this philosophical genre. The effects of a love experience may be devastating and deeply troubling, but friendship corresponds to a superior form of reasoning in which the subject pauses to process and transcend the effects of the love event. If love is perceived as a sudden internal division (the lover is not in himself anymore, for now he lives outside of himself in the beloved), friendship is the rational support a lover finds in other men. In other words, male friendship unifies what has been divided. Through his dialogue with other men, the male subject is able to attain the spiritual and mental wholeness and stability that has been shattered by love. I come back to this central topic after our reading of *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet*.[17]

In the subsequent preface to *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet*, della Barba reiterates that friendship is the very foundation of men's social interaction. Referring to book 8 of Aristotle's *Ethics*, della Barba contends that friendship is more necessary than justice itself, because a just man is first and foremost a man who knows how to connect with other men through friendship.[18] Della Barba's *Interpretation* discusses the experience of someone else, a "common friend" (un amico nostro), who has composed a sonnet to synthesize his personal love experience. Della Barba's book thus appropriates the knowledge of a common friend and extrapolates its universal meaning. Exegesis, we could say, is an act of friendship. By interpreting his friend's poem, della Barba expresses the affection he has for his friend (la benivolenze che lo gli porto) but also deepens the bond between himself and his listeners.

A First Reading of the "Platonic Sonnet"

"The Platonic Sonnet on the First Effect of Love" reads as follows:

L'ombre a gl'amati corpi ognora intorno
Vagando stanno ai lor sepolcri appresso
Sciolte da cruda mano, ondè che spesso
Fra'l volgo or questo or quel ne pate scorno.

Miser, la spoglia mia pur fa ritorno
A l'empio sito ognora, ove lo stesso
Spirto gli svelse, et or se n' va con esso
Chi ne begl'occhi suoi ne porta il giorno.

Ombre felici, almen non è disdetto
A voi l'urna fatale, el sacro loco
Che v'asconde il mirare l'amico aspetto.

Questo infelice corpo a poco a poco
(privo dell'amoroso e caro oggetto)
A forza manca in sempiterno foco.[19]

My English version in prose follows:

The shadows [ombre], who always stay close to their beloved bodies [amati corpi], constantly roam around the sepulchers after a cruel hand has separated them [from their bodies]. The populace often derides them because of their condition.

Oh miserable, my shade [spoglia] always returns to the sorrowful place where the beloved lady, whose beautiful eyes carry the light of my spirit, stole my spirit [spirto] away and now makes it [the spirit] follow her.

Oh happy shadows, you who at least are not deprived of your fated tomb, the sacred space that hides the contemplation of that familiar form [amico aspetto].

This unhappy body of mine (since it is deprived of its beloved and dear object) is slowly dying in an eternal fire.[20]

Let me first highlight a few basic points of this difficult, ambiguous, and convoluted sonnet, whose main theme is a separation resulting from violence. The poem is based on a simple comparison: the lover is like a dead body because his beloved lady has taken away his, the lover's, soul. The first quatrain refers to a well-known belief in which the souls of those who have been murdered visit the place where their violated bodies have been buried. The "shadows" ("ombre," line 1) are the souls of the deceased, and their "beloved bodies" ("amati corpi," line 1) are their own corpses. These dead human beings "mourn their own death," as Nancy Caciola writes in her analysis of the medieval and early modern popular belief in "ghostly possession," that is, possession in which the soul of a dead person and not a demon invades the body of a living person.[21]

In the second quatrain of the sonnet, della Barba introduces the identification of the poet's body ("spoglia," line 5) with the souls of the deceased. By using the word *spoglia*, della Barba blurs the distinction between the physical and the spiritual in that, although *spoglia* literally means "remains" and thus alludes to the subject's corpse, in this sonnet *spoglia* in fact indicates both the subject's soul and his body. This point is crucial. The Italian *spoglia* also echoes the verb *spogliare*, "to undress, to deprive of, to strip away." Thus, *spoglia* is what remains after a violation, after the subject has been *spogliato* (stripped or deprived) of his natural unity (body plus soul).

The first tercet describes an opposite situation. The writer now calls "happy shadows" ("ombre felici," line 9) the souls that stay close to the "fated" tombs where their "beloved bodies" are hidden. In other words, even though the shadows of the deceased will never succeed in meeting their own bodies, they at least know that their corpses are resting. In contrast, the author's "body" ("corpo," line 12, which at the beginning of the poem was likened to a deceased's soul) is on fire because the poet is "deprived" ("privo," line 13, similar to *spogliato*) of his love object, that is, his beloved. Let me repeat that this is a difficult and ambiguous poem that requires great attention.

Della Barba's Interpretation of the *Dream of Scipio*

✢

The Importance of Dreams and Fables

This preliminary analysis could lead us to believe that della Barba's *Interpretation* is nothing more than a poetic description of a hypothetical lover according to well-known tenets of Ficinian Neoplatonism. Yet this is not what the Italian physician has in mind. To better understand della Barba's philosophical approach, we must turn to his commentary on the *Dream of Scipio*, the sixth and final section of Cicero's *On the Republic*. Cicero narrates that Scipio Africanus the Younger, on his arrival in Africa, meets King Masinissa, who had assisted his uncle Scipio the Elder in defeating Hannibal. Masinissa and Scipio the Younger spend the whole day remembering Scipio the Elder, and at night the nephew has a vision in which his deceased uncle unveils the nature and destiny of the soul and describes the inner structure of the cosmos. As is well known, *The Dream of Scipio* has survived thanks to Macrobius's commentary.

Della Barba discusses both Cicero's original brief text and Macrobius's subsequent expanded exegesis. In the opening pages of *Philosophical Discourses on the Platonic and Divine Dream of Scipio* (*Discorsi filosofici sopra il platonico*

et divin sogno di Scipione), della Barba underscores that "fables" (favole) have a highly educational component. He explains that at times it is advisable or necessary to resort to incredible or fantastic tales:

> [Authors narrate fables] when they want to speak about the soul of the demons or of similar subjects. They use fables because they know that the naked and direct narration of these secret and occult things is not commonly accepted. . . . The veil of figurative discourse protects these things and preserves them in their majesty and gravity. . . . With its overwhelming splendor the dignity of such high and profound things . . . would not be understood by men's weak intellect and would in fact darken the eye of the mind.[22]

Fables are narrative screens, so to speak, which prevent the "eye of the mind" from being blinded by the "splendor" of the "secret and occult" reality. Philosophers and theologians resort to the "veil" of fables when they tackle difficult issues, such as "the soul of the demons." Like the analysis of the devils' souls, the occult meaning of a love event requires the veil of a "fabulous" transcription.

In della Barba's view, fables work like dreams. Similar to fables, dreams "cannot be understood unless they are interpreted, because [they] hide their meanings under figures and veils."[23] Dreams, as Macrobius confirms at the beginning of his commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, are the first and most important form of a superior, supernatural communication.[24] Both dreams and fables expose their meanings through a symbolic, indirect expression. A "fabulous," dreamlike tale is at once false and truthful in that its truthfulness does not lie in its literal level but rather in the meaning hidden within the narration. Let us remember, della Barba insists, that in book 10 of *The Republic* Plato invents the story of the soldier Er, who, slain in battle, revives to describe what he had learned about the world beyond.[25] Both Plato and Cicero resorted to dreamlike fables to share their insights on such a fundamental topic as the destiny of the soul after the death of the body.

In *The First Two Dialogues*, his analysis of human sexuality and other "secrets" of nature, Della Barba reiterates the importance of fables and "enigmas" to every intellectual endeavor.[26] Before he tackles the topics of human semen and the formation of male and female genitalia, della Barba contends that both Plato and Aristotle believed that nature was something both miraculous and divine.[27] This is why Plato stresses the importance of speaking of philosophical (and physiological) subjects in an indirect, enigmatic way.[28]

The physician and philosopher della Barba thus invites us to read his *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet* as a fable, a dream, and an enigma. In this text, the comparison between a murdered human being who wanders around the tomb of his corpse and the lover who is without a soul because it has been snatched away by the beloved is not merely a moving, poetic image.[29] In della Barba's view, this poetic "veil" is necessary to the discussion of the "secret" nature of the love experience. The "fable" narrated in the sonnet foreshadows the meaning of the love event, whose full and direct disclosure would blind the reader's inner sight.

Similar to an Angel, the Beloved Carries a Message for the Lover

Lucretius's Concept of Images as Material Particles Coming off the Bodies

The opening page of the *Interpretation* lays out the basic philosophical foundations of the treatise. Della Barba writes that, as Plato teaches, love occurs when "the image of the beautiful passes through the lover's eyes and reaches his soul, which moves up to meet it [the beautiful image], as if it [the beautiful image] were somehow similar to it [the soul], or better yet as if that image belonged to it [the lover's soul]."[30] Love is a form of recognition in the sense that, when the image of the beloved's resplendent body enters the lover's eyes, the lover suddenly realizes that he has always missed that beautiful image to make his soul complete. The luminous image of the beloved's skin is an instance of recollection. The lover suddenly remembers that he has always sensed the imperfection of his identity and now attributes this incompleteness to the absence of the beloved's image.

Similar to an angelic communication, the sight of the beloved's body carries a message for the lover. The resplendent body of the beloved has something to say. Its revelation concerns the lover's inner incompleteness, the fundamental void that lies within his soul. Almost translating from the sixth chapter of the sixth book of Ficino's *De amore,* della Barba contends that a human being is divided into three parts, body, soul, and spirit, and that only through his spirit does man receive the image of the beloved's luminous skin.[31] The spirit, which "is a certain very thin and very clear vapor produced by the heat of the heart from the thinnest part of the blood," transports the images of the external world through the viewer's eyes down into his soul.[32]

The reference to man's spirit is of particular importance for my analysis. Della Barba supports his insistence on the spirit's crucial role in transferring images by reminding us that Lucretius had already discussed the role of

"rerum simulacra" (images of things). "As Lucretius shows in the fourth book of natural history," della Barba writes, the lover yearns to see the beloved's body because

> From man's aspect and beautiful bloom
> Nothing comes into the body to be enjoyed except thin images [simulacra]
> And this poor hope is often snatched away by the wind.[33]

Translating Epicurus's "eídola" with "simulacra," Lucretius contends that bodies constantly send out thin atomic films that "flit about hither and thither through the air."[34] "It is these same," Lucretius continues, "that encountering us in wakeful hours terrify our minds, as also in sleep, when we often behold wonderful shapes and images of the dead, which have often aroused us in horror while we lay languid in sleep."[35]

Images of Bodies Reach Us through Our Spirit

For della Barba, Our Spirit Is Like a Mirror

Images (simulacra) of others' bodies constantly visit us, both when we are asleep (in dreams) and when we are awake. No essential difference exists between the images we see "in wakeful hours" and those that visit us "in sleep." What is even more interesting in Lucretius's analysis is that he does not distinguish between images of the living and those of the dead. The air is filled with the thin particles emitted by human bodies. Infinite images of bodies float in the air. Even after a person's death, his or her image (simulacrum) persists in the air as a visual memory of the deceased. A chaos of images fills and traverses the air. These images approach us through our spirit, which has an in-between nature, less material than the body but also less immaterial than the soul.[36] Blending Lucretius's theory with Ficino's *De amore*, della Barba holds that man's spirit is "shining like a mirror" (rilucente come specchio) in which the soul encounters the image of someone else's body.[37]

If a subject's spirit is like a mirror, however, the image it reflects is not the subject's but rather someone else's. In other words, when the lover's soul looks into the mirror of its spirit, it finds the image (simulacrum) of the beloved. This "terrifying" encounter (the lover discovers the other's image imprinted in his own soul) makes the lover recognize his own nothingness, his being a boundless void. This recognition is the core of the love experience.

The Image of the Beloved's Body Lies at the Center of the Lover's Soul

When the Platonic philosophers say "love is nothing but death," della Barba continues, they refer to this basic and fundamental insight: thanks to the image of the beloved reflected in my soul, I realize that my existence is a living death in that I live something that is not.[38] If the soul and its operations (its thoughts) cannot be separated, della Barba insists, it is correct to say that the lover's soul revolves around the image of the beloved's body.[39] The image of the beloved's body has become the core of the lover's soul. However, let us keep in mind that, according to Ficino's *De amore,* human identity has three distinct parts: soul, spirit, and body. Given their greatly different natures, the reactions of these parts to the invasion of the beloved's image cannot be identical. The image of the beloved body stays in the lover's soul as a permanent, immutable presence. The image of the beloved body lives in the lover's soul as a firm reminder of the lover's nothingness. We could say that the image of the beloved body becomes an internal condition, a sense of awareness. Therefore, the lover's soul no longer needs to see the beloved's body, because its image (simulacrum) has metamorphosed into a form of self-knowledge. Different is the reaction of the lover's body and spirit. These two other components of the lover's identity do not remember the beloved's body. The spirit, we must remember, is nothing but a "thin and clear vapor." Although the soul holds onto the image of the beloved as an immutable insight into the soul's intrinsic nothingness, the lover's eyes and his spirit need to see the beloved's body again and again. Thus the lover is a being divided between soul (a tormenting and firm awareness of the lover's nothingness), on the one hand, and eyes and spirit on the other.

Of course, the beloved's positive or negative response to the lover's longing determines the subsequent evolution of the love experience. If the beloved loves the lover back, the lover "loses himself" in the beloved.[40] That is, the lover senses that his soul (which "had died" when the lover had fallen in love) in fact resides in the beloved, and that the beloved is willing to give it back to the lover as a love gift. Ficino offers a moving synthesis of this kind of reciprocal love in book 2, chapter 8, of *De amore:* "Whenever two men embrace each other in mutual affection, this one lives in that; that one, in this. Such men exchange themselves with each other. . . . While I love you loving me, I find myself in you thinking about me, and I recover myself . . . in you, preserving me."[41] On the contrary, when the beloved does not love the lover, "there the lover is completely dead. For he neither lives in himself . . . nor does he live in the beloved."[42] In Ficino's own words, "the unloved lover is completely dead."

The Condition of the Unloved Lover Is the Kernel of della Barba's Book

The just-quoted passage from *De amore* is the actual launching pad for della Barba's *Spositione*. Unlike any other author of Renaissance treatises on love, della Barba selects one particular element of this philosophical tradition (the unloved lover's inner death) and makes it the core of his analysis. Della Barba first reminds us that the opening stanza of the "Platonic Sonnet" had mentioned the souls of those who wander around the places where they had been buried after a violent death. How could we possibly deny, he asks, that those who are loved but do not love back are in fact murderers?[43] If, as Ficino says, the unloved lover is dead, who but the beloved is responsible for the lover's death? This is della Barba's first central conclusion.

Expanding on the themes of the first quatrain of the "Platonic Sonnet," della Barba writes:

> Similar to those shadows (or maybe we should call them souls) who, separated from their bodies, roam around their sepulchers and neither can nor want to walk away from their beloved bodies, so does the lover wander around the place where he lost the other part of himself, that is his soul. And like those shadows, he [the lover] walks around the house of his beloved . . . in part because he finds delight in seeing the object of his love, and in part because he hopes that he will be able to get back his own soul.[44]

The reader will remember that in the introduction to this book we encountered the story of the "spirit in love" from Girolamo Menghi's *Compendium of the Art of Exorcisms*. Like the famous Renaissance demonologist and exorcist, della Barba analyzes an instance of unrequited love. Like the "unloved lover" in della Barba's *Spositione*, the spirit in love from Menghi's *Compendium* cannot help but follow his young male beloved. Menghi tells us that love compels this spirit to take up different visible forms (butler, schoolteacher, and so forth) only to stay close to the object of his affection.

Della Barba likens the lover's separation from his soul to the myth of the androgynous according to Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium*.[45] Della Barba writes that, according to this "very ancient fable, which is also present in Leo Hebreo's seminal *Dialogues of Love*," division and a profound longing for reunion lie at the core of the human condition.[46] The separation of the androgynous into two parts and this creature's subsequent search for the missing half equal the lover's quest for his lost soul. Body and soul, the physician della Barba underscores, are not two distinct components of human identity.

For the Physician della Barba, Body and Soul Are Not Separable Entities

The Lover's Arteries Pulsate with Love

Della Barba contends that the body is not the passive receptacle of the soul. Both body and soul participate in men's original separation, in their "mythic" division and yearning for reunion. According to the physician della Barba, the phenomenon of love pertains to the "professors of philosophy and medicine."[47] Let us remember that, in *On the Soul*, Aristotle studies how the soul's passions affect the body. Galen himself wrote an entire book "on the cognition of the soul's affections and their possible remedies." In another treatise titled *On Prognosis* (*De praecognitione*), della Barba continues, Galen reports the famous story concerning the physician Erasistratus, who understood that the malaise of the young Antiochus, son of King Seleucus, was in fact the result of his great love for his father's wife.[48] As Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella point out, the story of Antiochus is "the account that received the greatest attention by poets and physicians throughout the centuries" and was popularized by Valerius Maximus's *Memorable Doings and Sayings* and Plutarch's *Life of Demetrius*.[49]

Erasistratus, Galen writes, had "found the arteries [of Antiochus] pulsating madly with love." Galen had a similar experience when he "was called in to see a woman who was said to lie awake at night, constantly tossing from one position to another."[50] "By chance," Galen explains, he found out that this woman was in fact "racked with grief."[51] When someone coming from the theater mentioned the dancer Pylades, the woman's "expression and facial color changed and . . . I found that her pulse had suddenly become irregular in several ways."[52] She was in love. As Mary Frances Wack explains in her seminal study of medieval medical interpretations of lovesickness, "in Galenic medicine the operations of the soul are a function of the body's humoral composition, so that his view of love is ultimately somatic," even though Galen fails to specify "the humoral basis of lovesickness."[53] For Galen, "love is a practical, not a theoretical problem."[54] He orders his patients suffering from lovesickness "to take frequent baths, to drink wine, to ride, and to see and hear everything pleasurable."[55]

Marsilio Ficino had mentioned the same story of the doctor Erasistratus and the young Antiochus sick with love in book 13, chapter 1, of the *Platonic Theology*, but Ficino believed that this tale proved that "the soul dominates the body."[56] Ficino is convinced that four basic emotions (desire, pleasure, fear, and pain) "entirely dominate the body. . . . These emotions are motions of the rational soul; for the soul desires, rejoices, fears, or feels pain to the extent it

adjudges something good or bad."[57] As a consequence, Ficino adds, "the body is entirely subject to the motions of the soul." Let us remember that, according to Ficino, the rational soul "in a kind of perpetual light" is constantly turned toward God.[58] Ficino goes so far as to state that "the human body yields to its soul with the utmost ease."[59] In Ficino's view, the body is totally passive and receptive of the rational soul's motions. This receptivity is evident in human beings of a remarkable intelligence who "often have soft flesh and are slender."

The physician della Barba insists that love is not a merely psychological experience. Desire is not exclusively determined by the rational soul. Love is an event that blurs the boundaries between the physical and the spiritual, because it affects both the soul and the body. This is why della Barba contends that only those who (like him) are versed both in medicine and in philosophy can grasp the meaning of this phenomenon. If love transforms the lover, this transformation involves the lover's identity as a whole, body and soul together.

The Physical and Sexual Aspects of Love in della Barba's *First Two Dialogues*

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The physiological side of the love experience is the core of della Barba's *First Two Dialogues*, in which the Italian physician broaches the delicate issues of human semen and sexuality.[60] This work opens with a discussion of the nature of twins. How is it possible that two creatures can look identical? And why do some children resemble more their mother than their father or vice versa?[61] To answer these important questions, we must first of all reject Aristotle's belief that women do not secrete any form of semen.[62] According to Aristotle's *On the Generation of Animals*, "since it is not possible that two seminal discharges should be found together, it is plain that the female does not contribute semen to the generation of the offspring."[63] For Aristotle, "the female contributes to the material for generation, and . . . this is in the substance of the menstrual discharges."[64] As Armand Marie Leroi synthesizes in *Mutants: On Genetic Variety and the Human Body*, Aristotle contends that "the semen caus[es] the menstrual fluid to thicken rather as . . . fig juice causes milk to curdle when one makes cheese."[65] How to explain then the birth of twins? For Aristotle, "sometimes . . . there is simply too much of the preembryonic mix. If there is only a little too much, you get infants with extra or unusually large parts, such as six fingers or an overdeveloped leg; more again, and you get conjoined twins; even more mix, separate twins."[66]

Attacking Aristotle's opinion, della Barba underscores that nature is never wrong, so if it has provided women with genitalia it must also have given them the faculty to produce not only menstrual blood but seminal fluid. Because male semen and menstrual blood are of two different natures, we should conclude that the offspring of a given couple would always resemble either the father or the mother. For the father's semen or the mother's menstrual liquid would always dominate the fetus's formation and would thus determine the features of all this couple's children. In reality, della Barba is convinced, the "similitude" (similitudine) between one parent and his or her child derives from a common principle, the semen, which is produced by both parents.

Della Barba's delicate discussion of male and female semen is important for my analysis of his interpretation of the love experience. We could say that *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet* and *First Two Dialogues* are in fact two sides of the same coin, two chapters of the same book. But what is semen anyway? Where does it come from? Della Barba's theories on seminal fluid derive from Hippocrates' *On Sperm* (or *On Generation*), which the Italian physician quotes in several passages.[67] Unlike Aristotle, Hippocrates believes that men and women secrete both the male and the female semen, and more importantly that the semen derives from the entire body and not from the genitals only.[68] The genitals gather and mix up the humors and spirits descended from the entire body and turn them into an amalgam that is white and foamy, similar to the waves from which the goddess Venus first arose.[69] When a lover longs for his beloved, he first and foremost desires to become one thing with his beloved through physical, sexual contact. The "obscene parts" of male and female genitalia where the two lovers feel so much pleasure symbolize this union. When they make love, two lovers feel that "they are liquefying" and "with a great vehemence wish to transform into each other."[70] Della Barba reminds us that Lucretius, a frequent source for all the works of this Italian physician, describes this physiological and psychological event with similar words: "if one is wounded by the shaft of Venus, whether it be a boy with girlish limbs who launches the shaft at him, or a woman radiating love [amorem] from her whole body, he tends to the source of the blow, and desires to unite and to cast the fluid [umorem] from body to body."[71]

For della Barba, the Soul Is a Mix of Flesh and Spirit

Dante's Purgatory on the Three Parts of the Soul

The unmistakable word play of *amor–umor* (love–fluid) in this passage helps us understand della Barba's insistence on the crucial connection between the

spiritual and the physiological aspects of love.[72] Della Barba goes so far as to say that physicians should not consider the soul to be an issue outside their competence, for the soul itself is a mixture of flesh and spirit.[73] Whereas human semen results from the parts of the soul called vegetative and sensitive, the rational soul "comes from without" (vien di fuora), because it is God who instills the soul in the fetus when the formation of the brain is completed.[74] To explain this key point of his theory, della Barba quotes a passage from canto 25 of Dante's *Purgatory* (vv. 68–72), in which the Latin poet Statius clarifies a mystery that has been haunting the pilgrim Dante throughout his journey in the netherworld. Dante doesn't understand why the souls in hell and purgatory seem to be subjected to physical and not spiritual punishments. How can a soul experience physical pain if it does not have a body?

Della Barba's reference to this specific canto of Dante's *Comedy* is important for our understanding of his *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet*. In *Purgatory*, Statius first of all reminds Dante that the three parts of the soul (vegetative, sensitive, and rational) are not three distinct entities but rather three facets of the same soul. According to the character Statius, the soul, after its separation from the flesh, arrives at the place of its damnation or purification. However, even if it is now separated from its body, the soul still retains its vegetative and sensitive faculties. Therefore, the soul cannot help but interact with the air that surrounds it and thus create an aerial form that follows the soul wherever it goes.[75] This "aerial body" is called "shadow" (ombra), because like a shadow it is visible but impalpable.[76] It should be evident why della Barba borrows Dante's theory of an aerial body of the soul. Through Dante's deeply inventive interpretation, della Barba once again highlights that the soul and the body are not two distinct entities. As he underscores both in *First Two Dialogues* and in *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet*, the soul and the body constantly affect each other.[77] The ties between soul and body transcend death itself, as Dante confirms. The "shadows" of the dead suffering in the other world are the remnants of bodies that used to exist and that continue to follow their souls in the netherworld. These shadows approach the Italian pilgrim and do not hide their pains.

The Origin and the End of a Man's Biography

His Parents' Seminal Fluids and, after Death, His Aerial Body

We must thus infer that the seminal fluid and the shadow of the dead are strictly connected to each other. We have seen that, according to della Barba's *First Two Dialogues*, both the father and the mother emit semen. We have also

seen that, for the physician della Barba, the two seminal fluids determine the vegetative and sensitive faculties of the fetus's soul. But we have also learned that, as Dante says in *Purgatory*, these two faculties of the soul create an aerial body, the shadow or ghost that approaches and interacts with the living. The parental seminal fluids and the aerial body represent the two opposite points of a given individual's biography. The seminal fluids are the beginning and the aerial body is the conclusion of the subject's biography. We must also remember that the shadow's appearance (what the shadow looks like when it visits the living) depends on the seminal fluids emitted from both parents. Again, the physiological and the spiritual cannot be separated.

One final point: if the aerial body is a physical memory (it is physical because it originates from the vegetative and sensitive parts of the soul), this physical memory is something that the shadow shares with those living persons who knew the deceased and still remember him or her. In other words, if the shadow is a memory, this memory belongs both to the shadow itself and to the living person who sees the shadow. Being a visible and physical memory, the shadow is in fact a "shared body," a visible experience that the dead share with the living, that a deceased lover shares with his still living beloved. This point is crucial to the rest of my analysis of della Barba's love treatise.

Della Barba's Definition of Love Is Indebted to Leo Hebreo's *Dialogues of Love*

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Inclusion of the Physical Nature of Love

Let us resume our reading of *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet*. After the introductory section, della Barba lays out the structure of his book, which is divided into seven chapters. Like every Renaissance treatise on love, chapter 1 discusses the meaning of the word *love*. No author of this sort of philosophical genre fails to introduce his analysis with a preliminary chapter on the different forms and categories of love. Still following the canonical rules of this genre, chapter 2 examines the causes and effects of love. It is from chapter 3 onward that della Barba's *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet* shows its original traits. If the first and most important effect of love is, "as the Platonic philosophers say, the soul's separation from the body and its death, in the third section we . . . see how many possible deaths the soul can experience according to Plato."[78] "In chapter 4," della Barba continues, "we . . . try to understand who are the souls that, after their death, roam around the sepulchers.

We . . . also analyze the nature of the demons." Chapter 5 then looks at how Aristotle posits the soul's separation from the body, whereas chapter 6 considers what the "good Christians" have to say about this subject. In the seventh and final part, della Barba discusses the meaning of shadows and fate according to the Peripatetic thinkers.

Without mentioning his source, della Barba borrows his main definition of love from the second part of Leo Hebreo's *Dialogues of Love* (1535), according to which love "derives from will [and] appetite" and is divided into three forms: "natural, sensitive, and voluntary or rational" (naturale, sensitivo, e volontario rationale).[79] If we consider the traditional structure of Renaissance love treatises, we understand that della Barba's choice of this particular definition is significant. Let me repeat that the threefold distinction comes from the second book of Leo Hebreo's treatise. Like most authors of love treatises, including Ficino, Leo Hebreo in the first book of his *Dialogues* offers an initial and more abstract definition of love: useful, delectable, honest.[80] As we shall see in a moment, della Barba reverses the order of the two definitions and manipulates their meanings. What interests della Barba is the interconnection between the physical and the mental nature of love. He intends to stress that love is first and foremost a "natural" event. Quoting again from Leo Hebreo, della Barba writes that this kind of love "is an inclination, determined by nature, to pursue its goal."[81] In other words, love is first of all a physical drive that concerns every living element of the created world.

The second kind of love, a "sensitive love," sees the blending of physical drive and some form of knowledge. "Irrational animals" know how to pursue what is convenient for them (for instance, food, copulation, or rest). However, this kind of knowledge is instinctive and not rational. Only the third and final form of love (voluntary and rational) includes the double presence of reason and physical drive.[82] Within this third kind, della Barba inserts the distinction between "honest," "useful," and "delectable" (onesto, utile, dilettevole).[83] Whereas this traditional division lists the "honest" love as its last and highest manifestation, della Barba rearranges the triad and posits "delectable" as the pivotal form of love. Delectable love merges both the physical and spiritual side of the human condition and thus can be either "honest" or merely "useful," according to the lover's willful choice.[84]

According to della Barba's interpretation, both the body and the soul are present in every truthful manifestation of love. The body is not less valuable than the soul. Both sides of human identity are present in the experience of love. Love's teachings, so to speak, spring from the interaction between the body and the soul. Let us keep in mind that, according to Ficino, love

exclusively concerns the intellect. "The desire[s] for coitus and love," Ficino writes in book 1, chapter 4, of *De amore*, "are shown to be not only not the same motions but opposite."[85] To support his anti-Ficinian view, della Barba quotes a long passage from Apuleius's *On Plato and His Doctrine* (*De Platone et eius dogmate*), in which the Greek philosopher lists three kinds of love. The first is "divine"; the second reflects "a corrupt soul and will"; and the third is a mixture of the two.[86] This third form of love is at once close to the divine love because it involves reason but also "earthly" because it does not reject the delights of the flesh. How could we define the love described in the "Platonic Sonnet"? Della Barba is convinced that in this poem the lover experiences this third form of love, something that is neither entirely divine nor entirely bestial.[87]

Love according to the Aristotelian School

If the first chapter of *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet* founds its definition of love on Platonic philosophy, the second chapter aims at a "scientific" description of love's "causes" according to the Aristotelian school.[88] As I said at the beginning of this analysis, the first two sections of the book follow the canonical structure of this philosophical genre, even though they also present an original insistence on the physicality of love, which will become particularly relevant in the subsequent parts of the treatise. According to the Peripatetic thinkers, della Barba writes, every natural passion has four causes: efficient, material, formal, and final.[89] Although some contend that the stars are the efficient causes of everything that takes place on earth, the truly efficient cause of a love experience is "its object" (the beloved), "which enters through the windows of the eyes and wakes up love from its slumber."[90] The second cause (material) is either the heart, as Lucretius and many others claim, or the liver, as Galen holds in *Quod animi mores corporis temperaturas sequantur* (That the faculties of the soul follow the temperatures of the body).[91] According to Galen, the heart is the site of the choleric temperament, whereas the liver is the place of the concupiscent one. Galen thus believes that love finds its material origin in the liver. But, della Barba asks himself, how could one possibly explain that the physician Erasistratus discovered that his patient suffered from love by checking her pulse, since it is related to the heart's beats? The fact is that many accidents or consequences derive from each temperament. Love, which springs from the concupiscent temperament, usually brings about a number of different emotions, such as hope, ire, or fear, which in fact concern the choleric temperament.[92]

The formal cause of love, della Barba writes, concluding his analysis, is nothing but an unbridled desire, and its final cause is of course its beloved object. But what is essential to remember is that the first and most enduring effect of love is that it produces a spiritual division within the lover. Love separates the lover from himself.[93] This separation is spiritual in the sense that it first affects the psyche of the lover, his mind and his soul, but it also has physiological effects, as Galen and Erasistratus confirm. The physician della Barba underscores that a merely physical division in the lover's body (his losing an arm or a leg) would be less serious and radical than a separation that affects his mind and subsequently also his body. Love is a nonrelationship in that the lover is at once separated from the beloved and separated from himself. The Platonic philosophers, della Barba concludes, define this dual separation as death.

How Many Times the Soul Dies according to Platonism

Three Cosmological Views

"In How Many Ways a Human Being Can Die according to Platonic Philosophy and How the Soul Joins the Body" is the title of chapter 3 of *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet*. According to della Barba, the soul experiences a first type of death when it enters the body, which in the *Dream of Scipio* Cicero defines both as "bondage" and as "sepulcher."[94] Della Barba refers to the passage in which, in his dream, Scipio Africanus the Younger asks the deceased Scipio the Elder "whether he and [his] father Paulus and the others whom we think of as dead, were really still alive."[95] The Elder explains that only those who have escaped the "bondage of the body" (e corporum vinculis) "as from a prison" (tamquam e carcere) are truly alive. What we humans call life, Scipio the Elder concludes, is in fact a death. The body is thus a sepulcher in that it constrains the soul within its limits.[96]

Every Platonic school, della Barba explains, agrees that the soul's entering the body is a form of descent from above. All Platonic philosophers are convinced that the soul exists before the body and that it encounters its death when it comes down from a superior area of existence and enters the sepulcher of the body. However, Platonism defines the connection between the "above" and the "below," the heavens and the earth, in more than one way. At this point of his treatise, della Barba embarks on a lengthy and difficult digression on three cosmological views, which he takes from Plato and Plotinus, but also and more directly from Pico della Mirandola and Leo Hebreo. I give only a short summary of this section. "The first school," della Barba writes, "believes

that this machine we call world is divided into two parts." One is active, and the other is receptive and passive. In Leo Hebreo's wording, the earth is the feminine matter, and "the body of the heaven, which is the male, covers it and surrounds it with a constant movement."[97] According to this view, "moon" is the threshold beyond which the soul falls into the decadence of the "mutable part of the world" and experiences her death.[98]

"Moon" is the hinge that connects the superior, immutable world of life and the inferior, physical world of death. For della Barba, a second Platonic theory envisions the world as a set of three levels, each of them made of four elements. Directly borrowing from the second part of Pico's *Heptaplus*, della Barba explains that this Platonic school defines the moon as "earth" because the moon is "the lowest and vilest of all the stars" as earth is the lowest of the four elements (earth, water, air, fire).[99] The higher stars (Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) are also made of the four elements but their consistency is much more refined and pure. Finally, the fixed stars are the highest level made of the four elements, where the ancients placed the Elysian Fields. Again, the third and lowest level (moon-earth) is the sepulcher of the fallen soul.

The third and final Platonic theory mentioned by della Barba comes from Plotinus's *On Heaven* and posits no similarity whatsoever between the higher and the lower parts of the cosmos. The two parts are in fact radically different and do not share the same constituents.[100] As a consequence, the soul's fall from above to the "vilest" part of the world is significant and negative. "The very experience of descent," Plotinus writes in a key passage that della Barba recalls in his text, is itself a form of punishment. Some "failure" or "sin" (amartía) of the soul brings about its descent.[101]

Why Suicide Is Bad for the Soul

Even though the blending of soul and body is a form of fall or death, it is wrong to think that through suicide the subject will recover the original purity of an uncontaminated soul. This is an important point of my analysis, and thus I need to explain it more clearly. When the soul falls from the higher regions of the cosmos, it certainly experiences a division, a severance from itself. During its sojourn on the lower part of the world, the soul longs for a reunification with itself. The soul's separation from itself in fact coincides with the encounter with the body, which is the "sepulcher" in which the soul is doomed to reside for a given period of time. The body, we could say, represents a stage in the soul's process of metamorphosis or transformation. The monstrosity of the flesh is only a moment that will lead the soul to a renewed

separation (from the body) and subsequent reunification (with itself). In other words, according to this view, when the subject acquires a body, that means that he is distant from himself.

Human beings are not allowed to interfere with the soul's journey of metamorphosis. Suicide, being an act of violence, would "bind" the soul to the lower part of the cosmos in a much more forceful way.[102] In his biography of Plotinus, the disciple Porphyry remembers that "he [Plotinus] once noticed that I . . . was thinking of removing myself from this life. He came to me unexpectedly while I was staying indoors in my house and told me that this lust for death did not come from a settled rational decision but from a bilious indisposition."[103] Porphyry's "eagerness" or "lust" (prothumía) toward death was in fact a product of the "disordered passions" of the body, as della Barba says, and not a rational decision of the soul. Della Barba mentions the famous passage from Plato's *Phaedo* in which Socrates, who had already expressed himself as being against suicide, explains that "the shadowy apparitions . . . are the ghosts of those souls which have not got clear away, but still retain some portion of the visible, which is why they can be seen."[104] The ghosts' visibility is a result of their being "beguiled by the body and its passions."[105]

The only acceptable way of responding to our desire for our pristine purity is through philosophy. Della Barba reminds us that Socrates, during the last hours of his life, reiterated his strenuous opposition to every form of violence, including suicide. For Socrates, a philosopher knows that our human condition is a hybrid, that we are mixtures of different natures, souls imprisoned in the sepulchers of the bodies. Echoing Plato, della Barba reminds us that philosophy is nothing but "a meditation on death," and as such it prepares the philosopher for the moment when his soul will finally detach itself from the body and will arise back to its origin.[106]

Focus on the Souls Clinging to Their Dead Bodies

In his *Interpretation*, della Barba intends to study those souls that still retain a certain "visibility" as a result of their attachment to the body and its passions. These shadows signify that the souls are still attached to their biographies, to their passions and sufferings. These ghosts have a contradictory nature because, even though they are souls of deceased individuals, they still cling to the bodies they used to have but have lost forever. Although their bodies are decomposing corpses, these souls still maintain a visible veil, a visible and enduring memory of their lost bodies. We could call these souls monsters or hybrids, beings of a contaminated nature. These souls have "almost-bodies."

We have seen that, in his *First Two Dialogues*, della Barba explicitly mentions Dante's concept of aerial body to underscore the physical component of the soul and of the shadows that visit the living.

The souls' almost-bodies, as I would like to call them, are the topic of the section of della Barba's book titled "On the Souls That Roam around the Sepulchers." Della Barba reiterates that the souls that were subject to passions and despair are not free from their bodies. Victims of violent deaths and suicides strive to bring their existences to a closure. This was the case of the desperate and furious Dido, who warned Aeneas that her shadow would haunt and torment him forever.[107] This is why, the Italian physician continues, Plotinus in *The Immortality of the Soul* insists that the "oracles of the gods comman[d] appeasement of the wrath of souls which have been wronged."[108]

These Souls with Almost-Bodies

The Lares Familiares

Della Barba makes clear that the souls still clinging to their almost-bodies do not always have a negative nature. Similar to the angelic beings who are either evil or good, the souls of the dead may continue to live among us not only to take revenge against someone; they may also stay because their need to care for a particular person does not allow them to leave the place of their biography. Borrowing from Apuleius's famous distinction of different forms of demon-souls, della Barba reminds us that *lemures* are the souls that have renounced to their bodies; *larvae* are the souls that haunt houses; and *lares familiares* are the good souls looking after their friends or relatives, like guardian angels.[109]

The distinction between the living and the dead, between the demons, angels, and human beings, is complex and blurred. As Christians, della Barba writes, we must reject the Platonic and Neoplatonic assertion that the souls of the dead may turn into superior beings (demons or angels). However, the persistent presence of these souls with almost-bodies unavoidably leads us to the theological debate on the possible physicality of angelic beings and their interaction with humans. Della Barba makes a reference to an important passage from Lactantius's *Divine Institutions* in which the Christian theologian interprets the thorny episode of Genesis 6:1–4 on the "sons of God," who saw "how beautiful [women] were and . . . had children by them." In the second book of *Divine Institutions*, Lactantius contends that these "sons of God" were angels that had been sent by God to protect humankind from Satan. In their sojourn among human beings, these angels fell into temptation and mated with women. As a consequence, they could not return to heaven and lingered

on earth. Their children "were neither angels nor human beings" but rather of a "mixed nature."[110]

We should thus infer that the created world is populated with a myriad of species and souls. What della Barba has so far called "souls" (anime) should thus be divided into a series of subcategories. The souls who committed suicide, suffered a violent death, or had strong ties to the flesh still roam the world in search of respite. But we should consider also the good souls, the *lares*, whose attachment to this world is the result of concern and care. We should also consider the angelic spirits who mated with women because they fell in love with them. Like the souls still seeking peace, these spirits cannot return to heaven, nor do they reside in hell. Earth is the place of their exile. These spirits' offspring, the semihuman and semiangelic beings born of the sexual intercourse between angels and women, have a similar destiny. All these beings have a presence that is at once visible but less consistent. They are shadows, visible veils that linger among us as remembrances. In the next chapter of this book, I explain what the seventeenth-century Franciscan friar Sinistrari has to say about the visibility and physicality of the children of the angels and women, in his book *On Demoniality*.

Which Demons May Produce Some Sort of Seminal Fluid

The Demons' Involvement in Men's Lives

The relationship between humans and the spiritual beings is complex and may or may not involve an actual physical interaction. Della Barba reminds us that in *Strix*, Giovan Francesco Pico contends that the evil spirits often make their female worshippers believe that these women can fly to their night gatherings. In this case, the connection between humans and spirits takes place in the witches' imagination. But della Barba also mentions the eleventh-century Michael Psellus, author of the deeply influential *On the Demons' Activities*, who I've referred to in earlier chapters. According to Psellus, evil spirits must have some kind of physicality, because Christ stated that at the end of time they would be punished with fire.[111] Della Barba also explicitly refers to a controversial passage from Psellus's book concerning the monk Mark. This religious, who for a certain time had sought and interacted with "the demons of the air," contends that some evil spirits feed on air and water, which they first suck in like sponges and then release when it has reached the consistency of semen.[112] Let us remember that, according to Psellus, there are six different categories of spirits. Only the ones living in the water and abhorring the light are able to produce a fluid similar to semen.[113]

At this point in della Barba's *Interpretation*, the discussion of the spirits' nature, their visible appearances and physicality, and their interaction with humans is turning into a maze of seemingly contradictory opinions. By mentioning Psellus's daring view of the demons' ability to produce semen, della Barba has touched on the troublesome debate about the possible physical involvement between spirits and humans. However, he doesn't intend to expand this controversial subject, although he does insist on the reality of the demons' passions and concern toward human beings. He believes that Ficino and Christian theologians do not hold different opinions on this specific subject. In *De amore*, della Barba writes, Ficino explains that according to Platonists, "demons involve themselves very closely and zealously in taking care of the affairs of lower creatures, especially human beings. Because of this service, all daemons seem good. Some Platonists and Christian theologians have said that there are some other daemons which are evil."[114] In Porphyry's biography of Plotinus we find the most dramatic encounter between a human being and his allotted spirit. Porphyry narrates that an "Egyptian priest asked Plotinus to come and see a visible manifestation of his own companion spirit evoked."[115] This ritual took place in the temple of Isis. Expanding on Porphry's account, della Barba writes that the Egyptian priest asked the spirit to come closer to them so that they could have a better look at him. Della Barba imagines a scene in which a human being is face to face with his familiar spirit. The human being and the spirit look at each other and exchange a few words. The spirit soon disappears. This fleeting moment reveals the profound intimacy between the beings from above and the human race.

But an essential question follows. What did Plotinus actually see when he was face to face with his familiar spirit or private demon? According to Porphyry, the Egyptian priest congratulated Plotinus because, according to the priest, what Plotinus was seeing was in fact a god and not simply a demon. But what did this god-demon look like? When in the introduction I discussed the possible nature of the familiar spirit in love with the young boy of Mantua, I mentioned that according to Plotinus the *daemon* is also the soul of a deceased who, after turning into a *daemon*, is in charge of leading a human being toward his or her spiritual completion. We understood that the central connection between a spirit and a man is care and concern. In the episode from Menghi's *Compendium of the Art of Exorcisms*, the familiar spirit presents himself with a male body because this spirit is drawn more toward men than toward women. The visibility of the body, its presence, is a sign of mutual involvement. Please remember that, as della Barba stresses, the spirits of the dead also maintain a shadow of their body because of their persistent

attachment to the human condition. Furthermore, this veil is the "physical memory" of an actual body. Both the familiar spirit from Menghi's account and the shadows of the dead possess a physicality that is absolutely central to their being. The visible body of the spirit in love with the young man and the aerial bodies of the deceased signify their concern and attachment to the living.

The Shadow of Patroklos in *The Iliad*

Aristotle is certainly wrong in avoiding discussion of the spirits and their multiform natures and missions. The relationship between humans and the spirits is a true mayhem, a spiritual riddle. "We," della Barba contends, "must . . . firmly believe that the demons do exist and that the soul survives after death."[116] Again, the stress is on the interdependence between the soul and the spirit, the deceased and the superior beings. To support his statement on demons and the souls of the deceased, della Barba reminds the reader of the famous passage from *The Iliad* in which the soul of Patroklos visits his beloved friend Achilles while he is asleep. The shadow of "unhappy Patroklos" appeared "all in his likeness for stature, and the lovely eyes, and voice, and wore such clothing as Patroklos had worn on his body."[117]

The shadow of Patroklos is a memory that arises in Achilles' mind. That is, it is the soul of the deceased friend that visits Achilles' mind as a remembered image. Patroklos's soul wears the clothes he used to wear when he was alive. But the encounter between the two intimate friends is not a merely spiritual occurrence. Patroklos's "likeness" comes to Achilles to remind him that his body must be buried as soon as possible:

> You sleep, Achilleus; you have forgotten me; but you were not
> careless of me when I lived, but only in death. Bury me
> as quickly as may be, let me pass through the gates of Hades.
> The souls, the images of dead men, hold me at distance,
> and will not let me cross the river and mingle among them,
> but I wander as I am by the Hades' house of the wide gates.
> And I call upon you in sorrow, give me your hand.[118]

"You have forgotten me," the soul reproaches the beloved friend. The shadow of Patroklos appears so that his physical body can rest in the earth. The disappearance of the body will enable Patroklos to detach himself from his earthly experience and continue his journey among the "images of the dead men," who still do not allow him to enter Hades because of the persistent

"problem" represented by his body. "Give me your hand," begs the soul. Remember me. Achilles misunderstands the meaning of Patroklos's shadow, because the great hero tries to bring back the intimacy the two friends used to share: "But stand closer to me," Achilles asks his beloved, "and let us, if only for a little, / embrace, and take full satisfaction from the dirge of sorrow."[119]

Our Encounter with Someone Who Is Neither in This World nor in the Other

What happens afterward—when the body is finally put to rest and its shadow fades into nothingness—does not concern us, della Barba writes. We cannot know what exactly happens in the other world, "whether the soul goes to the Elysian Fields or to Heaven, or whether the Elysian Fields are located down in the center or on the eighth sphere . . . or whether the soul must purge itself in the Tartarus, or it wears a thin body and is exposed to cold or heat among us or lives around the sepulchers."[120] What does concern us is how the soul relates to us, speaks and appears to us. What matters is this unique and odd encounter between a human being and a "someone" who is neither there nor here, neither in the world of the deceased nor totally here among us. What matters is to understand this strange being that comes to us in the visible form of a memory (the "lovely eyes" of Patroklos). The "shadow" of the spirit is what regards us, a lingering memory in the form of a body. This shadow conveys a visible simile as a greeting, as a reaching out to us in a comprehensible way. Remember that the shadow must take up the form of a body that is no more. The shadow "looks like" a body. I have already explained that all major Renaissance demonologists (Prierio, Guazzo, and del Rio, among many others) insist that the demons' bodies are similes. But although we don't know what happens to the soul after the body's death, we know that deep down the soul accepts physical death as something natural and positive. Della Barba mentions the words Socrates spoke on his deathbed, as recorded in the *Phaedo*, in which the philosopher explains that swans welcome their death with loud and sweet songs. Their songs are not laments, as some believe. They sing "because they know the good things that await them in the unseen world."[121]

Again the topic of della Barba's treatise focuses on what takes place here on earth, when the soul is "still clothed with that passion or affection" toward its body.[122] That almost physical "clothing" is a shell that covers a void. The shadow of the soul reminds the viewer of a body that is now in a state of decay. The Epicurean Lucretius, who, like Aristotle, believed in the mortality

of the soul, likens the soul to "smoke" that "is dissolved into the high winds of the air."[123] The image of smoke rising and disappearing into the air reminds us of a corpse burned on the pyre of a funeral, as in the case of Achilles and his dead friend Patroklos. In the smoke of the soul we see the disappearance of the soul's "clothing," its visible remnant, its persistent memory.

Della Barba dedicates a relatively short chapter to Aristotle's thesis on the mortality of the soul.[124] In accordance with a common Renaissance misinterpretation of a key passage from *History of Animals*, the physician della Barba makes Aristotle say that the "rational soul" is generated in the fetus some forty days after conception.[125] However, this assessment applies to men more than to women, whose "rational soul" takes much longer to arise, sometimes up to ninety days. This discrepancy results from the fact that the male body is much warmer than the female's. But these are details of less relevance.

Aristotle Confirms That the Soul–Body Tie Is Never Severed

What concerns della Barba now is the intricate relationship between body and soul, for love, the essential topic of his book, can only be understood within the context of the soul–body dialogue. As Aristotle confirms in *History of Animals*, the fetus "starts moving" when the rational soul has entered it. This movement is the beginning of the soul's long journey first through the created world and then in the netherworld. The essential link between the soul and its body is never totally severed, because even after the body's death the soul often lingers around the places of its biography. In *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, Jean-Claude Schmitt reminds us that during that period "it was not rare for the dead person to return to the 'scene of the crime,' that is, souls were believed to come back (temporarily) from the netherworld (from purgatory, of course, to ask the living for their intercession, but also from hell) to the place where they had committed the essential sin marking their lives."[126] The dead "haunted the places that were familiar to them." Schmitt also mentions Hugh of St. Victor's *De sacramentis* (On sacraments), in which the theologian contends that "many instances" seem to mean that the "afflicted souls" have to endure their pain "in this world, and probably in the places where the sin was committed."[127]

Even when the soul has finally purged itself of its persistent memories (its enduring love feelings), the soul's connection with its body is not over. Let us remember, della Barba writes, that at Doomsday the souls will be reunited with their bodies for their salvation or their eternal damnation.[128]

But why should the soul resume its bond with the body? It is evident that the soul is incomplete without its body. The end of time will see the final and everlasting reunification between the two sides of human identity. It seems reasonable to infer that at Doomsday the soul will go back to its body because, even though the body is not necessary to the soul's identity, it manifests the soul's longing for love. Even if the flesh is the locus of the subject's sinfulness, we fall in love when we see a beautiful body. We have seen that, according to Ficino, the body emits a luminous *splendor*.

A Final Close Reading of the Platonic Sonnet

✢

The seventh and final chapter of della Barba's book, titled "Happiness and Nature of the Shadows and on Fate," applies the conclusions of the previous sections to a close reading of the "Platonic Sonnet."[129] Before addressing the issue of what a "shadow" is and represents, the Italian physician stresses that the main topic of the poem is certainly death, but a form of death that differs from "natural death." Again, in della Barba's analysis, the body is more relevant than the soul.[130] In a "natural death" the soul abandons the body, which decomposes and disappears in the earth. The love experience is also a form of death, as we saw in the previous parts of the treatise. However, love equals death only in the sense that here it is the body that detaches itself from the soul.

Love is a deadly occurrence in the sense that the body, the center of the love experience, abandons its soul. We have seen that, according to Florentine Platonism, the lover lives a living death because he lives without his soul, which has been taken away from the beloved. The first quatrain of the "Platonic Sonnet" describes this divided condition by comparing it with a soul that has been severed from its body through a violent act:

> The shadows [ombre], who always stay close to their beloved bodies [amati corpi], constantly roam around the sepulchers after a cruel hand has separated them [from their bodies]. The populace often derides them because of their condition.

Della Barba underscores that *shadow* (ombra) is a term with several connotations. We have already discussed what Augustine and Apuleius say about these unfriendly and dangerous "shadows" in previous chapters of this book. Della Barba reminds us that, in the *City of God,* Augustine calls "larvae" the souls of evil human beings who, according to Apuleius, after their death

turn into demons.[131] A first meaning of the word *shadow* is certainly "soul of a dead person." But "shadow," writes della Barba, "means many things."[132]

Bodies Are Luminous, Resplendent Shadows

A Confusing Paradox: Shadow as Soul and Shadow as Body

In *De amore* Ficino explains that "bodies are the shadows and signs of souls and minds. But a shadow and sign correspond to the shape of that whose shadow and sign it is."[133] Bodies are "shadows and signs." They are first and foremost forms evoking an irreplaceable identity, one and only one human being. It would thus be erroneous to think that bodies are "obscurities," areas of darkness and absence of light. Shadows and bodies are in fact luminous signs. They possess a distinct "splendor."[134]

Della Barba explains the "splendor" of the shadow as follows. When a sun's ray hits a clean and light surface, it reverberates from that surface onto others. That reverberation is called "splendor." It transmits and multiplies the luminosity of the sun's ray. If the ray encounters an opaque surface, the ray's luminosity is diminished. This deprivation still produces some splendor, but a splendor that is at once luminosity and darkness, which is why this second splendor is called "shadow." Della Barba points out that in Italian, along with this central meaning, the word *shadow* also signifies "the similitude [and] image of a thing" (similitudine . . . imagine d'una cosa).[135] It is thus evident that, in the context of della Barba's discourse, "shadow" and "body" echo each other. Both "shadow" and "body" are signs and similes. Both are "luminous" concepts since both of them are signs of splendor.

The overlapping of two seemingly opposite concepts (shadow as soul; shadow as body) may be confusing for contemporary readers, but we have seen that Renaissance Neoplatonic culture highlights the spiritual connotation of the physical. The body is a luminous surface that echoes a divine luminosity. The body's splendor is a "sign" and a "simile" of divine enlightenment. The body is luminous, as the soul may become luminous if it appropriates the splendor (the sign) arising from the body.

Tomb Means Both the "Beloved's Body" and the "Lover's Body"

At the beginning of my analysis of the "Platonic Sonnet" I stressed that the second quatrain of the poem uses the ambiguous term "spoglia" (remains), which could mean both "corpse" and "shadow" or "ghost." The poem speaks of a spoglia that returns to the place where the subject was deprived of his soul

(spirito). This second quatrain envisions a sort of soulless body wandering aimlessly. This division between soul and body occurred because the beloved "stole" the lover's soul. The dramatic scene is, however, reversed in the first tercet, where we encounter some "happy shadows" (ombre felici) that at least are able to contemplate the "tomb" containing their beloved object. What is this "tomb"? Is the author referring to the beloved's body, which has snatched away the lover's soul? Della Barba explains this puzzling tercet as follows: "[The author] calls these souls happy because they look at the body in which they have placed their love, their highest good, and thus their happiness."[136] This not very usual comparison between the beloved woman's body and a tomb is reasonable, albeit not very flattering.

In fact, in this metaphor the author merges two distinct concepts. On the one hand, the tomb is the beloved woman because she holds the lover's soul. On the other hand, we must keep in mind the metaphor that opens the sonnet. The love experience, della Barba writes in the first stanza, recalls the shadows that stay close to the sepulchers containing their corpses. These shadows cannot help but remember the deadly violence done to their bodies. Della Barba therefore indirectly evokes two different connections: the lover's soul and the beloved's body; and the lover's soul and the lover's violated and abandoned body.

In both interpretations, the happiness described in this tercet results from a possible, temporary reunification. The lover's soul and (his or the beloved's) body are reunited in the hidden, private space of the sepulcher. As della Barba states, this happiness is a form of a contemplation.[137] For us to understand the nature of this happiness, two points are essential. First, this happiness comes after a division. It is the restoration of a unity. Second, this internal restoration derives from the contemplation of the body. The unity of the subject's identity comes from the soul amorously contemplating its or the beloved's body.[138]

Enlightenment Is a Gift of the Body

The Body Is a Splendor That Lies within the Soul

In the first tercet of the poem, the sepulcher of the "happy soul" is "fated" because it perfectly responds to divine "fate" (fato), which for the physician della Barba is essentially the order of nature, as Hermes Trismegistus's *Asceplius* and Cicero's *On Divination* confirm. Both Hermes Trismegistus and Cicero mention the supreme power of "fate" (fatum) or *heimarmene*, that is, the "orderly succession of causes wherein cause is linked to cause and each

cause produces an effect."[139] Fate, Cicero writes, is "the eternal cause of things past, of things present, and of things to come." Della Barba concludes that *fate* and *nature* are in fact synonyms.[140] Happiness can only derive from a full acceptance of what is natural. The Italian physician couldn't be more adamant about this.

But what are the connections among nature/fate, contemplation, love, and the relationship between soul and body? How can we bring together all the pieces of this puzzle? What do nature and contemplation share? The key to this riddle lies in a correct understanding of the first tercet of the "Platonic Sonnet." It is almost superfluous to mention that in Platonic philosophy, *body* and *tomb* are in fact synonyms. The body is the tomb of the soul. But in this poem this body-tomb is "fated" and thus "happy." The subject's happiness doesn't derive from an abstract contemplation of lofty ideas but rather from a contemplation of the body. The body is the key element for the subject's enlightenment and happiness. Furthermore, we have seen that the love event is a fracture. It shatters the bond between soul and body. The lover feels that he has been deprived of his soul. The paradoxical part of the subject's healing is that the retrieval of his shattered unity doesn't result from his bringing back the lost soul but rather from contemplating the body-tomb.

Enlightenment and happiness are gifts of the body. But how can the body enlighten? I have repeatedly stressed that the body is a *splendor,* a luminous presence. It is not by chance that the lover feels separated from himself when he perceives the luminosity of the beloved's body. The body is a splendor that lies within the soul. The body is the very kernel of the soul. Like a flame placed within a tomb, the splendor of the body enlightens the soul that is willing to contemplate it. This is the paradoxical and fascinating conclusion we can derive from the treatise on love written by the Italian medical doctor and philosopher.

The body is a *splendor* that rests in the soul as if the soul (and not the body) were a sepulcher. As Eugenio Canone reminds us, in *The Heroic Frenzies* (*Degli eroici furori*) Giordano Bruno states that "the body is in the soul" as the finite is within the infinite.[141] After being devastated by the love event, the lover goes back to himself, and within himself he is able to find the splendor of the body. In the act of contemplation, the body arises to the mind's eyes as a simile, as a body of metaphors. Like the good or bad spiritual beings that visit the living (larvae, Lares, Penates, familiar spirits), the body's splendor rests within the soul through its healing luminosity. Angels, spirits, are sudden flashes of light, sudden revelations of luminosity. But after reading della Barba's *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet,* we also understand that

these "metaphorical" bodies are not foreign to us. These bodies may in fact lie within the soul. These luminous bodies may speak from within us. This is the central message of this treatise on love. Contemplation, salvation, the gift of a perfect "friendship," as the author stresses at the beginning of his treatise, are forms of enlightenment arising from the core of the soul, which is the *splendor* of the body.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT DOES *HUMAN* MEAN? Beings against Nature in Ludovico Maria Sinistrari's *Demoniality*

With our modern sensibility we may address the topic of "spiritual presences" in early modern Europe with ironic disinterest (the familiar spirits are archeological and curious details of a defunct culture, and their relevance resides in their historical value), yet my entire book is dedicated to these nonexistent beings. I have tried to recuperate the spiritual, cultural, and philosophical elements of the dialogue and interaction between humans and spirits as they were detailed primarily during the Italian Renaissance. My readings have an intentional pre-modern flavor, as if to resist a modern rhetoric and mindset. It is also true, though, that to read the pre-modern in the light of the modern doesn't always work. The pre-modern, I am convinced, eludes our way of thinking about what is real and what is not real. A pre-modern mind literally looks at things in a different way. Darren Oldridge rightly underscores that "it is not only simplistic to view [pre-modern] people as hysterical, it also denies their humanity. To regard them as irrational is no less insulting—or mistaken—than to view African tribespeople as 'savages.'" [1]

The basic intentions of this work of mine should be clear by now. During the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witch craze, Trevor-Roper reminds us, "there is . . . one ingredient which has since disappeared: the Devil. Today, every psychopath has his or her private obsession. The supposed *incubi* and *succubi* vary from patient to patient." [2] Although modernity has clarified the distinction between the human and the divine by eliminating every intermediary spiritual presence (Who prays to his or her guardian angel nowadays?

Who, apart from members of the certainly growing evangelical circles and "old-fashioned" Catholics, believes in the real, nonmetaphorical existence of devils?), in early modern Europe even the scandalous Machiavelli believed that the "intelligences of the air" cannot help but participate in our history because of their innate "compassion." With the word *compassion* Machiavelli indicates that the spirits do not exist away from us but rather next to us, with us. Compassion is what connects human and divine.

The history of the spiritual race, as Cigogna's monumental *Theater* has shown, merges with ours. In *Trattato dell'angelo custode*, one of the numerous seventeenth-century treatises on the guardian angel, the Jesuit Francesco Albertini underscores that "we have come to know the angels through the benefits they have granted us. Their benefits have helped and escorted us to know them, because in the Holy Scriptures we encounter references to the holy angels only when it is necessary to consider some benefits they have given us."[3] It is true that we know the angels thanks to their gifts to us, but it is also true that their gifts to us grant the angels a biography. The angels' biography is made of their gifts and compassion to us. The angels' life history depends on their interfering with our lives. At the end of time, the Jesuit Albertini writes in a subsequent chapter of his treatise, our guardian angels "will gather the ashes of our bodies," and their closeness, their interaction with us, will continue in the New Jerusalem.[4]

Yet we have realized that by *interaction* we should also intend a literal, emotional, and physical mingling. In Menghi's *Compendium*, compassion for a human being can be a form of love. The love treatise *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet* by the physician Pompeo della Barba has fathomed the complex and ambiguous relationship between lover and beloved, between "shadows" and their beloved bodies. Reversing a typical idea of Renaissance treatises on love, della Barba does not consider the body to be inferior and base but instead believes in the redeeming, luminous power of the body, whose *splendor* lies at the very core of the lover's soul. The spirits of the dead visit the sepulchers of their beloved bodies because they long for the luminosity arising from the flesh. The body is at once flesh and the most luminous light. In a like manner, spiritual beings, angels, come to us as light and splendor. Might we conclude that the light of the angel, like the splendor of the body, arises from within us? Dare we say that the spiritual beings come to us from within ourselves, as if their visible bodies lay dormant within us?

In chapter 1 of this volume, a study of Giovan Francesco Pico's *Strix*, we learned that the evil spirits' bodies are palimpsests of cultural quotations (for instance, see the analysis of the devil named Ludovicus). The spirits choose

bodies that we can recognize, that we can read and decode. The spirits' visible bodies speak our cultural language. Cigogna's extensive *Theater* undoubtedly confirms this view. But Pico also holds that those of us who give ourselves to the devils metamorphose into hybrids whose origins can be traced back to classical culture. Thus we come to the paradoxical conclusion that the spiritual beings somehow live both within and without us. Sometimes they follow as faithful lovers. Sometimes they present themselves as instances of blinding light. Sometimes they address us from within ourselves. If their revelations always urge us toward some kind of transformation, this transformation can be both spiritual and physical.

It should be evident by now that Renaissance culture's peculiar insistence on spiritual beings harbors more than one meaning. However, what matters is not that in the Italian Renaissance the spiritual beings existed but rather that they were close to us, in us, around us. What matters is that the spirits affected both our soul and our body.

Introduction to the Franciscan Ludovico Maria Sinistrari

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Demoniality, the daring and provocative treatise by the seventeenth-century Franciscan friar Ludovico Maria Sinistrari (1622–1701), brings the interactions between humans and spirits to their ultimate consequences. As I mentioned in the introduction, the manuscript of this shocking text was discovered in 1872 in London. Isidore Liseux published his Latin-French edition in 1875. A second edition came out a year later.[5] As Liseux correctly points out in the introduction to his edition, some of the topics of *Demoniality* are also present in Sinistrari's *De delictis et poenis* (On crimes and punishments), an "extraordinarily complete [treatise] dealing with all imaginable crimes, sins, and offences; and in most cases it discusses the punishments due to the crime."[6] *De delictis* was first published in 1700 but later placed on the Index and republished in a corrected version in 1753. However, the most puzzling and controversial statements present in *Demoniality* are absent from *De delictis*. The section of the *De delictis* dealing with the sin of sodomy, an important aspect of Sinistrari's theories on the possible interactions between humans and fallen spirits, was translated into English and given the title *Peccatum Mutum* and into a French-Latin edition titled *De Sodomia Tractatus*.[7]

Sinistrari was born in 1622 in Ameno, a town in the diocese of Novara. He studied at the University of Pavia, and later, in 1647, he joined the Franciscan order. His legal expertise played a major role in his life: he taught law and held the position of Consultor to the Supreme Tribunal of the Catholic Inquisition,[8] an ironic twist in that the same institution later banned his imposing treatise *De delictis*. In 1688, the plenary chapter of Franciscans also "entrusted Sinistrari with the compilation of the statutes of the Order."[9] Sinistrari died in 1701.

A Definition of the Sin Called Demoniality

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Is Demoniality a Sin against Nature?

Demoniality opens with a linguistic definition. According to Sinistrari, the word *demoniality* (daemonialitas) first occurs in *Theologia fundamentalis* (Fundamental theology) by Joannis Caramuelis Lobkowiz (1606–82), who is the first moral theologian to distinguish between bestiality and demoniality, which are two different forms of lust (*luxuria*).[10] However, both Caramuelis's and Sinistrari's definitions of *luxuria* are modeled on that of Thomas Aquinas. In the section of the *Summa* on the different kinds of lust (luxuria), Thomas defines as bestiality all forms of sexual intercourse between two beings of different species but makes no reference to intimate encounters between humans and demons. According to Thomas, there are six forms of lust: simple fornication, adultery, incest, illicit defloration (stuprum), rape (raptus), and vice against nature.[11] The expression "vice against nature" in fact covers four distinct sinful practices: pollution (immunditia), bestiality, sodomy, and a fourth, unspecified kind concerned with all practices that involve an unnatural or bestial use of human genitalia.[12] Although he makes clear that vices against nature are extremely serious sins because in these practices "man transgresses what is naturally determined, as far as the venereal use is concerned," Thomas says nothing about sexual interaction between human beings and fallen spirits.[13]

Sinistrari points out that Sylvester Prierio's *Sylvestrinae Summae* doesn't add anything to this problematic theological point.[14] Prierio, whose *De strigimagis* is one of the most violent sixteenth-century treatises on witchcraft, slightly modifies Thomas's categories of lust by focusing in particular on the sins against nature and their lawful punishments.[15] For Prierio, the term *luxuria* comes from *luxus*, that is, "being dissolved in pleasures" (solutio in voluptates).[16] Prierio holds that the act of "dissolving oneself in lust"

is intrinsically unnatural. This is why he sees sodomy as the quintessential, prototypical form of lust. Prierio stresses that the punishment for sodomites must be severe, for "they bring about famine, earthquakes, and plagues."[17]

The sin of sodomy plays a crucial role in Caramuelis's *Theologia fundamentalis,* the source of Sinistrari's definition of *demoniality*. Lust, Caramuelis contends, is either "natural" or "against nature" (contranaturalis).[18] Four are the possible sins against nature: pollution, sodomy, bestiality, and demoniality.[19] Caramuelis underscores that sodomy is usually seen as the sin that synthesizes all forms of acts against nature, thus expressing both a literal (sex between two men) and metaphorical meaning (all practices that don't lead to reproduction). However, as far as demoniality is concerned, Caramuelis refuses to discuss this sin in detail, because he has heard a lot of stories whose authenticity is questionable.[20]

In the first edition of the *De delictis et poenis* (the one placed on the Index), Sinistrari, unlike Caramuelis, doesn't shy away from the issue of demoniality. At the beginning of the section titled "Crimes against Chastity," Sinistrari repeats that some sins against nature are those that don't lead to reproduction.[21] For Sinistrari, six are the sins against nature: (1) pollution; (2) an unspecified sin in which during a natural act of sexual intercourse the male partner spills his semen outside the vagina; (3) sex with a corpse; (4) sodomy; (5) bestiality; and (6) demoniality.[22] But there is a problem with this categorization. Although at the outset he had followed the traditional definition of sins against nature as acts that deny reproduction, in the actual discussion of these sins Sinistrari seems to contradict his opening statement. The real sin committed by the practice of one of these six is not that they don't lead to procreation but rather that at least some of them endanger the preservation of the human race.[23] Sinistrari contends that a woman confessed to having had a baby by coupling with a dog. Her baby had died after two months. Sinistrari also tells the story of a woman born of a mare. At times, Sinistrari recounts, this lady's laughter had something bestial about it.

For Sinistrari, a Sin against Nature Signifies an Unnatural Contamination

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Sinistrari's Concept of Female Sodomy

Sinistrari's analyses of sins against nature share a common denominator. All these sins are a form of contamination. By reading *De delictis,* we understand

that contamination is at the core of Sinistrari's writing. Sinistrari paradoxically depicts a created world ruled by a "natural" tendency toward altering, mingling, infecting the "natural" order of things. Take, for instance, pollution. For Sinistrari, pollution is not intrinsically unnatural, given that beasts do it as well. Humans and animals are not so distant from each other. We know that women and men can generate hybrids by mating with beasts and spiritual beings. Furthermore, Sinistrari states in the chapter on sodomy that women, and not only men, can commit this unspeakable sin.[24] Sinistrari is convinced that, from a physiological point of view, women can act as men and in some cases can turn into men. As the physician Bartholinus seems to confirm, some thinkers believe that women first discovered this sinful act. Sappho's poems are the first attestation of a case of female perversion. How can a woman act as a man or become a man? Sinistrari founds his physiological analysis of female sexuality on the physician Thomas Bartholinus's famous *Anatomia*. Borrowing heavily from the chapter "On the Clitoris" in Bartholinus's book, Sinistrari states that

> there is a particular part of a woman's body, which Anatomists call the *clitoris*. This part consists of the same tackles as a man's yard, namely, sinews, veins, arteries, flesh and so forth. When in a chafe, it also resembles the yard [habet itidem figuram penis quando turget]. . . . The clitoris is the organ of venereal pleasure in women . . . it is not exposed to view or brought out beyond the vase of pudicity in them all. . . . In Aethiopia and Egypt . . . all women have it out, and it hangs just like a yard. And as soon as babes are born, midwives are wont to burn their clitoris with a red-hot iron, lest it should grow too long and hinder a conjunction with a male. . . . But, in Europe, the clitoris breaks out only in some women, those, for instance, who from plenty of heat and seed have strong seminal spirits.[25]

In other words, women have the potential of functioning as men, in particular those women who, like men, have lots of "seminal spirits" and internal "heat." Let us keep in mind that, according to the physician Bartholinus, the clitoris like the penis has a little hole on its top.[26] In *Mutants*, Armand Marie Leroi reminds us that the physician Renaldus Columbus first discovered the clitoris in 1559. Calling it "the sweetness of Venus," the Italian anatomist describes the clitoris as follows: "Touch it even with a little finger, semen swifter than air flows this way and that and that on account of the pleasure even with them unwilling."[27] However, already in 1543 the

great anatomist Andreas Vesalius had offered a first "reasonable account of the correspondence between male and female genitals."[28] According to Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica* (On the structure of the human body), the uterus corresponds to the scrotum and the vagina is similar to the penis.

Sinistrari is convinced that in some lustful women "the impulsion of seminal spirits" is so intense that "the exceedingly thin membrane, which covers it, bursts and the clitoris rushes out."[29] This is why history reports a number of alleged sex changes from women to men. It is through a perverted use of the clitoris that women can commit the sin of sodomy both with other women and with effeminate men. It should be evident by now that, according to the law professor and theologian Sinistrari, the human race is open to infinite possible forms of contaminations, transformations, and metamorphoses. Indeed, the first literary quotation in *Demoniality* is from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. For Sinistrari, the human body possesses hidden, sinister, and baffling potentials that blur the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman.

Demoniality

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Demons Do Fall in Love with Humans

How to define an act of sexual intercourse between a human being and a corpse invaded by a fallen spirit?[30] This is the opening question of Sinistrari's *Demoniality*. If a devil enters a dead body in order to copulate with a human being, is it correct to call this act a form of bestiality, considering that the encounter occurs between two beings of the same species?[31] From the very first pages of his book, we understand that Sinistrari posits "extreme" questions that may seem vulgar or ridiculous only if we do not take the "extreme" positions of Renaissance demonology seriously. Certainly, there is something audacious and utterly weird in Sinistrari's writing. But it is also necessary to acknowledge that Sinistrari's legalistic approach limits itself to addressing issues that still awaited a complete answer.

It is true, Sinistrari continues, that many authorities contend that the Sabbath is nothing but a product of women's imagination. According to Sinistrari, important sources such as the famous passage from book 15.23 of Augustine's *The City of God* and Francesco Maria Guazzo's influential *Compendium maleficarum* (first edition, 1608) contradict this opinion and hold that women do have sexual intercourse with devils.[32] However, "a sexual intercourse between a devil and a man or a woman can take place in two different ways," depending

on whether the man or woman is a witch or not. For it is common knowledge that at times devils become interested in human beings who have nothing to do with witchcraft. The first kind of sexual encounter is preceded by a pact, as Guazzo summarizes in his *Compendium* (bk. 1.7), that entails the rejection of the Christian faith, a blasphemous baptism, some horrendous offerings, and a visible mark on the disciple's flesh.[33]

This kind of bond between the devils and human beings is not very interesting for Sinistrari, however. His attention goes to the second form of encounter, in which a man or a woman has not called for the devil. Echoing the story of the Mantuan young man followed by a familiar spirit from Menghi's *Compendium*, Sinistrari states that fallen spirits can fall in love with humans. The cause of a devil's attachment to a human being can be an intense love (deperdite amorem), as numerous sources report.[34] The spirit's sole goal is to become physically intimate with a man or a woman. Take, for instance, the case narrated in Caelius Rhodiginus's *Lectiones*. Menippus Lycius, a handsome and muscular man of twenty-five, agreed to marry a young woman who aggressively pursued him. At the wedding, however, a philosopher understood that this woman was in reality a succubus who fled the room in tears.[35]

According to Sinistrari, Incubi and Succubi Are Different from Demons

The spiritual beings called succubi or incubi are strikingly different from demons. According to Sinistrari, these beings, unlike the devils, do not respond to any form of exorcism.[36] Holy water, relics, or readings from the scriptures don't work against them. To reinforce his theory, Sinistrari reports an event that he witnessed when he was professor of theology at the convent of the Holy Cross in the city of Pavia. A pious woman named Geronima, whom the nuns of the convent knew and admired, once asked a baker to bake some bread she had prepared.[37] The man returned with her bread plus a strange-looking cake. At first the woman refused to accept the cake because she was sure it didn't belong to her; eventually, however, she took it because the baker insisted that that day he had baked only her bread. The lady ate the cake in front of her husband and children at dinner. At night, while in bed with her husband, she heard a subtle voice in her ear. Did you like the cake? this voice asked her. While the terrified woman reached for the crucifix, the mysterious voice reassured her that it (the voice) wouldn't hurt her because it was enamored of her beauty. What follows is a long and bizarre account of petty and annoying persecutions: for instance, food disappears and reappears from the

table when guests arrive for dinner; the woman's baby is found sitting on the roof; and the woman can't find some relics and her jewelry. Once the spirit even presents itself to the woman in the form of a handsome young man with a nicely trimmed blond beard, dark, intense eyes, and the clothes of a Spanish gentleman.[38]

From this eloquent story, Sinistrari concludes, we can infer that those who succumb to these spirits' desires do not sin against religion but only against chastity.[39] Yet many theologians believe that sexual intercourse between a woman and a demon can produce some kind of human-demonic offspring. These same authors, Sinistrari adds, are convinced that the Antichrist will be a member of this perverse race. At this point in his book, Sinistrari inserts a long, almost verbatim quotation from *De Antichristo* (On the Antichrist, bk. 2, chap. 8) by the sixteenth-century Spanish Dominican Thomas Malvenda. Mentioning a number of sources that Sinistrari appropriates and transcribes secondhand, Malvenda reminds the reader that human beings born of a union between a demon and a woman are generally very tall and very strong.[40] Recalling the usual theory that a devil steals semen from a man and introduces it into a woman, Malvenda holds that devils select the warmest and most abundant sperm, and that they (the devils) are able to give both men and women much more intense sexual pleasure, which results in a richer, warmer, stronger kind of semen.

Sinistrari has two main objections to Malvenda's opinion.[41] First, he contends that a demon is unable to preserve the original qualities of a man's semen. The "spirits" of male semen, which are essential to reproduction, evaporate as soon as they come out of the genitals. Second, as the German physician Michael Ettmüller explains in *Physiologia*, the quantity of semen is irrelevant to the process of generation.[42] It is the mixture of male and female "genital spirit" (spiritus genitalis) that determines the nature of the fetus. A small or an abundant quantity of male semen produces the very same effect.

Modern Science Discovers Previously Unknown Creatures and Lands

Who then fathered the giants mentioned in Genesis 6:4? Only two explanations are possible. We either posit the existence of men of monstrous dimensions, or we must hypothesize that some incubi generated those enormous beings through their own semen.[43] This introductory part of Sinistrari's *Demoniality* recalls what we read in Cigogna's *Theater*. Like Cigogna, Sinistrari mentions a number of sources, for instance, John Chrysostomus's *Homiliae*

in Genesis and Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*. However, Sinistrari's analysis is directly influenced by Guazzo's *Compendium maleficarum* (bk. 1, chap. 12). It is in Guazzo's work that Sinistrari finds the idea that magicians and famous men (Nero, Alexander the Great, Aeneas, but also Luther) probably came from demon–human intercourse.[44] Let us remember that Tertullian was convinced that the "brood of demons" born from this unnatural intercourse was even "more corrupt."[45]

Like most demonologists, however, Guazzo believed that the devil was able to preserve the "genital spirit" of the sperm removed from a man and then manipulate or taint it according to his evil purposes. Sinistrari, on the contrary, supported by contemporary medicine, denies that the qualities of male sperm can be saved if transported from one place to another. He thus infers that incubi must have some kind of physicality.

Sinistrari, however, also underscores that the term *angel* indicates a function and not a specific being. We have seen that, speaking of the spirits' possible physicality, Cigogna in his *Theater* insists on the same point by referring to Augustine's *City of God* (bk. 15, chap. 23). Sinistrari reminds us that the prophet Malachi calls "angel" the priest who proclaims the word of the Lord ("angelus Domini," 2:7) and John the Baptist ("angelum Domini," 3:1).[46] This means that *angel* doesn't necessarily indicate a being without a body, as Francisco Suarez contends in his *On the Nature of Angels*.[47] But Sinistrari's most passionate defense of the possible existence of incubi comes after this theological summary. Modern science has led us to believe in the existence of things, peoples, and lands we previously ignored. We shouldn't deny the existence of incubi a priori:

> We must acknowledge that we haven't yet fathomed the existence and nature of natural things that are in the world. Thus, we shouldn't deny the existence of something only because nothing has been said or written about it. It is a given that in the past we discovered new lands that our ancestors ignored. In a like manner, [we have found] new animals, herbs, plants, fruits, seeds that we had not seen anywhere before. And if we finally succeeded in exploring the Austral Land [Terra Australis], as many voyagers have vainly tried so far, how many new things would appear to us![48]

Our human body constantly reveals new and unexpected facets as well. Modern anatomists, Sinistrari continues, have recently discovered new aspects of the blood's circulation and the existence of the lymphatic vases. Our body itself is an unknown and mysterious land.

At Doomsday, the Elect's Body Will Be Similar to That of the Incubus

The Holy Scriptures and the Church traditions only emphasize what is essential for the salvation of the soul, that is, the three cardinal virtues, faith, hope, and charity. Nothing is said about beings who, not deriving from Adam, are independent both from men and the angelic spirits.[49] The existence of these possible beings, who live away from us and thus reveal themselves only rarely, exerts no influence on our salvation.[50] Both philosophy and theology are unable to deny the possible existence of these sensible creatures who, like human beings, have both a soul and a body. We are aware of the existence of purely spiritual beings (good and fallen angels), totally physical things (the world), and half-spiritual and half-physical beings (humans). A human's physicality is thick like the matter composing the world. Why can't we posit the existence of reasonable beings whose physicality is subtler than ours? Sinistrari brings his reasoning to a startling and almost blasphemous conclusion. We know that, after the Resurrection, the blessed souls will acquire "glorious" and "subtle" bodies. Sinistrari here refers to question 83 in the *Supplementum* of Thomas's *Summa*, "On the subtlety of the blessed souls' bodies." Echoing Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:44—"what is sown is a natural body [corpus animale], and what is raised is a spiritual body"—Thomas holds that subtlety will be the property of the "glorious body."[51] Shedding their "animal" body, the blessed will obtain (subtle and glorious) spiritual bodies.[52]

Why couldn't we believe that the divinity has already created reasonable and corporeal beings whose flesh is naturally subtle somehow, like the body transfigured through grace?[53] This is an important point of the ontology of these mysterious beings. According to Sinistrari, these beings would recall the luminosity of the resurrected bodies at Doomsday. Their bodies would announce the apocalypse and the eternity of salvation. These rarely seen creatures would remind us of the light of a saved body. The matter itself used for the creation of these hypothetical beings would differ from that of men's. If, as the book of Genesis confirms, human beings were created with mud, which is the basest mixture of earth and water, these other creatures would originate from the subtlest part of all elements, or from one of them. If humans arose from the earth, these other beings would derive from fire, water, or air.[54]

The following question addressed in *Demoniality* regards the moment of these beings' birth. We saw that Cigogna raises the same issue in his *Theater*. The answer is easy. Like angels and men, these creatures were born during the seven days of God's creation. The subsequent long list of questions touches

on crucial aspects of these beings' ontology. Do they descend from one being and are they divided into males and females?[55] Are they mortal? Do they live in communities? Sinistrari's answer is explicit and comprehensive:

> I answer: it is possible that they come from one individual, as all human beings descend from Adam. It is also possible that initially a certain number of them were created male and female. . . . We also conjecture that they are mortal . . . and that, like men, they have senses and passions; that their body needs food and develops. However, their food is not crude like the one needed by the human body, but rather a delicate and vaporous substance that arises from the all the spirits present in smells and odors. . . . [We also conjecture] that they are able to live in societies.[56]

As far as the form of their body is concerned, Sinistrari holds that it is hard to reach a conclusive definition. However, these creatures' body must have something in common with ours because, among all God's creations, the human body is the most perfect.[57] Sinistrari feels it is necessary to support this rather trite idea (men are the highest expression of God's creativity), but to do so he paradoxically uses a passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "He gave to man an uplifted face and bade him stand erect / and turn his eyes to heaven."[58] If these creatures' bodies recall the future lightness and luminosity of the human body saved after the apocalypse, their souls would make them closer to the angels. Since they are made of a more refined matter, they probably live much longer than humans and thus are also more knowledgeable. This is why, as Augustine writes in *On the Demons' Divination*, the demons seem to be able to foresee the future.[59] In fact, the devils' apparent insights about future events only derive from their sharp intelligence and longevity.

Unlike demons and angels, however, these creatures have bodies that can be injured, maimed, and murdered, even if they are much lighter than ours.[60] Speaking of their death, Sinistrari feels compelled to raise additional questions concerning their possible salvation or damnation. Are these creatures marked by original sin? If they are, they are probably not excluded from divine forgiveness and salvation.[61] However, we don't know if they are familiar with the Holy Scriptures or if they practice any religious rituals. To hypothesize their salvation is a sensible and logical conclusion, although we have no evidence of their having any knowledge of the history of divine revelation.

The Ancients Knew of the Existence of Incubi

Another argument that has been made against the existence of incubi is that no ancient philosopher or biblical writer mentions them; Sinistrari, however, claims this statement is not true.[62] Along with Apuleius's *On the God of Socrates,* Sinistrari recalls Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris,* from which he borrows a detailed definition of these possible beings. After relating the intricate mythic stories on the Egyptian deities Isis and Osiris, Plutarch reports that, according to some thinkers, these narrations are concerned with neither gods nor humans but rather demons, beings who do not possess a "divine quality unmixed and uncontaminated, but with a share also in the nature of the soul and in the perceptive faculties of the body, and with a susceptibility to pleasure and pain and to whatsoever other experience is incident to these mutations."[63]

It is evident that this kind of creature is neither a Christian angel or devil, nor a human being. To prove their existence, Sinistrari first reminds the reader of the innumerable stories about incubi and succubi harassing and persecuting women and men. He also makes a brief reference to the stories he mentioned at the beginning of his book. It is unquestionable, he infers, that these beings have passions and thus must also have some sort of physical senses.[64] Sinistrari again supports his argument by citing *The City of God,* in which Augustine speaks of the numerous accounts of satyrs mating with women. However, Sinistrari fails to mention that Christian theology, as we find clearly stated in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, contends that angelic beings have no physicality whatsoever.[65] When the devil penetrates a woman, his aroused penis is cold because he feels nothing. The fallen spirit has sex with a woman only because he pursues her perdition, not because he actually desires her body. Sinistrari glosses over this fundamental point because it would undermine his entire hypothesis. Sinistrari's sole supports are thus the uncanny stories of spirits falling in love with humans, as Girolamo Menghi has already recounted in his *Compendium*.

If we focus on these puzzling accounts, however, we cannot help but conclude that if this special kind of spirits does exist, he or she must have a body. The most compelling evidence of this spirit's physicality is the fact that, as Guazzo reports in his *Compendium,* certain herbs have the power of sending these beings away.[66] But an even stronger reference is in the scriptures. In the book of Tobit, the angel Raphael explains that if the boy Tobias sets a particle of a fish's heart and liver on fire, its smoke will keep all kinds of demons at bay.[67] Thanks to this sort of fumigation, Sarah was freed of the

demon that tormented her. If the demons cannot tolerate a certain smell or smoke, doesn't that mean they have some sort of physical presence?

Saint Anthony's Meeting with the Incubus

Sinistrari's Interpretation Differs from That of Giovan Francesco Pico

After insisting on the incubi's real physicality (each of them is made of the most refined particles of one of the four elements—air, water, fire, or earth), Sinistrari quotes Jerome's *Life of Saint Paul the Hermit*, in which he finds the most direct and unquestionable reference to an actual encounter between a human being and an incubus. As the reader probably remembers from the introduction and chapter 1, Anthony, while crossing the desert on his way to Saint Paul's cavern, meets a satyr, a creature with cloven hooves and two sharp horns on his head.[68] Before Sinistrari recounted it, the humanist Pico had already dwelled on this "unreal, otherworldly" story in two of his most important books.[69] As I explained in chapter 1, Pico, in the famous *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium* (Analysis of the vanity of the gentiles' creed), paradoxically discusses this account from Jerome's book in an attempt to come up with a definition of humanity.[70] What does it mean to be a human being? Is it possible to understand what is inherently human by comparing Anthony to a nonhuman creature? In my reading of *Strix*, I clarified that Pico posits the existence of demonic hybrids, humans who have metamorphosed into monsters, the so-called striges, after having given themselves to Satan.

Sinistrari's interpretation of the passage from Jerome's hagiography is radically different from Pico's interpretation. Whereas Pico stresses the satyr's vaguely demonic appearance, Sinistrari insists on the dialogue between the hermit and the satyr. Noticing that the holy man is terrified by his unusual appearance, the satyr offers him some dates. "I am mortal," are the first words pronounced by this creature.[71] In other words, by confessing his mortality, the satyr says, "I am like you. You have nothing to fear." Death is what the two have in common.

The satyr reminds Anthony that human beings usually refer to his people as incubi, satyrs, or fauns. He has been sent as ambassador to Anthony to beg him to pray to God for his people's salvation. Incubi know that the Word became incarnate to save the world from sin. The satyrs or incubi are not excluded from the Word's project of redemption. According to Sinistrari, it would be a great mistake to see this satyr as a monster, that is, an error of nature. His appearance may seem monstrous but his being is not a "mistake." In her original *The Monster in the Machine*, Zakiya Hanafi reminds us that,

according to Aristotle, "like a grammarian who occasionally makes a mistake in writing . . . nature . . . sometimes fails in its purpose."[72] However, the satyr in Jerome's story is a natural being whose forms look monstrous to us.

Sinistrari's Interpretation of Augustine's *City of God*

In his commentary on this moving story, Sinistrari underscores two essential similarities between men and incubi. First, incubi are reasonable beings. Second, like men, they have a body and are subject to death. But Sinistrari pushes his reasoning even further. He reminds us that Augustine, among many other Church fathers, believed in the aerial consistency of the demons' body.[73] The idea that the devils can take up a visible body by compressing air is a commonplace of Christian theology. What is unusual in Sinistrari is that he seems to assert that both good and bad angels possess a body made of air, or better yet, that this aerial matter is the flesh of every angelic being. For us to better understand Sinistrari's questionable way of quoting his referential texts (primarily the Church Fathers), it suffices to look at the famous chapter 23 from *The City of God*. This chapter follows Augustine's discussion of the "fall of the sons of God" (de lapsu filiorum Dei), who fell in love with women and mated with them. The offspring of this mysterious sexual intercourse were the giants.[74]

In chapter 23 of the *City of God*, Augustine states: "I dare not make any definite statement on the question whether some spirits [aliqui spiritus] endowed with bodies consisting of the element air . . . are also able to experience such lust and so have intercourse in such a way as they can with women who feel the sensation of it."[75] Augustine is speaking about the incubi (a word that for him is a synonym for *demon*), who try to have sex with women. In this quotation from Augustine Sinistrari substitutes the word "angels" (angeli) for "spirits." Although the term "angels" (angelos) appears both in the title and in the first paragraph of this chapter, Augustine later associates the concept of spirit–human sexual intercourse only with the fallen spirits and not with every angelic being.[76]

What is the meaning of Sinistrari's misquoting? We have seen that he is obsessed with the concept of contamination. In his *De poenis* he goes so far as to theorize a form of potential sexual transformation that can lead women to perform as men. But he also believes that between demons and humans exists a third category of sensible beings (those he calls incubi) who have both human and spiritual characteristics. However, Sinistrari also relates the episode from Jerome's *Life of Saint Paul the Hermit* in which Anthony comes face to

face with an incubus. It is here that Sinistrari alludes to an intrinsic similarity between men and incubi. "I am mortal," the incubus reveals to Anthony.

We have seen that, in a previous passage of *Demoniality*, Sinistrari contends that at Doomsday the saved souls will have some kind of ethereal body. Could it be that the divinity has already created beings with such a body? This is the sense of a crucial quotation from Augustine's *Commentaries on the Psalms*. In his reading of Psalm 85, Augustine seems to believe that the blessed souls will have bodies similar to those of the angels.[77] The only problem with Sinistrari's hypothesis concerns the visibility of these beings. If their bodies recall the spiritual bodies that will resurrect at the end of time, why does the incubus present himself to Saint Anthony as a monster, a being that has not transcended his animal nature? Doesn't Paul specifically say that the blessed will shed their animal physicality? Why does the incubus appear as a man with distinct bestial traits that remind Saint Anthony of a demon (horns, cloven hooves)? What kind of resurrection does this odd being announce? To find the answer this essential question, the reader must wait until the end of this chapter.

Transformation and Contamination Rule over the Created World

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A point that is absolutely clear and evident is that, for Sinistrari, the creation is ruled by contamination and transformation. As women can turn into men, so can human beings become spiritual creatures. Let me explain this point better. Borrowing from contemporary medicine, Sinistrari has "proved" that sodomy is a sin not limited to men because women possess an organ called a clitoris that lies hidden in the body but that can become visible and be used as a male member. Sinistrari makes clear that this organ comes out (reveals its hidden presence) in women who are intrinsically very masculine, that is, women who share men's high bodily heat. In other words, there are women who are both women and men.

What is opposed (man versus woman; human beings versus spiritual beings) in Sinistrari tends to merge and become one and only one ontology. At the end of time, men will bring to the fore their intrinsically angelic, spiritual nature. For the time being, this blending of two ontologies (human and spiritual) is present only in incubi, who are human-spiritual creatures. Contradicting an absolutely basic assumption of Christian angelology, Sinistrari envisions incubi as reminders of human salvation. As I said in a previous part

of this chapter, the incubi's bodies have the lightness and luminosity of human redemption. For at the end of time, according to the Franciscan Sinistrari, our dead bodies will acquire the consistency of the incubus's body. Incubi are visible signs of our own transformation. At the end of time, we will turn into incubi.

In *Metamorphoses and Identity,* Caroline Walker Bynum sees an essential difference between hybrid and metamorphosis:

> The contrast is that metamorphosis is process and hybrid is not. . . . For a hybrid is not just frozen metamorphosis; it is certainly not the end point or the interruption of metamorphosis. A hybrid is a double being, an entity of parts, two and more. It is an inherently visual form. . . . Metamorphosis goes from one entity that is one thing to an entity that is another. It is essentially narrative. . . . [However, each] can be understood both to destabilize and to reveal the world . . . [hybrids and metamorphoses] are revelations.[78]

Incubi paradoxically "reveal" or show the transformation that human beings are undergoing now and that will become manifest at the end of time. In other words, incubi mean our human journey of metamorphosis. As we shall see in a moment, according to Sinistrari's analysis the word *hybrid* is more appropriate for the offspring of the incubi and women, that is, the so-called giants of Genesis 6:4, because Sinistrari believes that, like mules, these creatures are sterile.

What about the Children of Women and Incubi?

Before we address these infertile beings, the giants, we must investigate the nature of their male parent, the incubus. The in-between nature of incubi (they are demonic beings who are heavier than devils but lighter than humans) presents a number of theological problems. Unlike devils, incubi participate in the process of human redemption. Why? It seems that, in Sinistrari's view, the incubi's heavier bodies are the key to their salvation. Incubi have bodies that are somehow similar to ours. Incubi are "contaminated" beings in that, although their nature is evil, their mortal body allows them to share men's journey toward penance, purification, and eternal life. In other words, like us, incubi's destiny is not written once and forever. Unlike devils, incubi share men's perception of life as a fleeting and uncertain experience.

In Jerome's story, the incubus's appearance confirms his contaminated nature. Incubi resemble both men and devils. The satyr conversing with Saint Anthony does not hide his demonic side by assuming an unthreatening

human form (unlike the familiar spirit in Menghi's story about the young man of Mantua). In his dialogue with the holy man, the incubus chooses a metaphorical body that recalls two opposite and contradictory stories, the permanent present of the devils' eternal damnation and the human process toward penance and future salvation.[79] Although an incubus's body is made of the lightest particles of one of the four elements, the incubus speaking to the hermit presents himself as a friend (he offers him dates and tells him that he is mortal) and shows his being as irremediably "contaminated." Incubi flee human commerce because they know that their own impureness would be a source of contrast and incomprehension. Incubi live as outcasts, in deserted areas, to avoid persecution.

Sinistrari continues his bold analysis by reminding us that Psalms 78:25 states that, while the Jews were crossing the desert, they ate the "bread of the angels" (panem angelorum), manna, which is usually interpreted as a spiritual metaphor. Why can't we read this "bread" as a literal reference to some sort of food that nourished both the angels and the Jewish people?[80] It is a fact that the angels don't suffer from any sort of malady or disease. It is also a fact that, when they fed on this "bread," the Jews felt no fatigue and sickness. It seems superfluous at this point to reiterate that Sinistrari's theologically shaky discourse (Is this "bread of the angels" the incubi's current food? Are these "angels" incubi?) aims to evoke a sense of sharing and community between demonic beings and men. In the desert, men and "angels" or incubi shared the same food. They ate together.

Sinistrari is aware that many will find his "doctrine" ridiculous.[81] He reminds the reader of what the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers used to say about Saint Paul: "He seems to be announcing new demons" (novorum daemoniorum videtur annunciator).[82] Sinistrari is indeed announcing the existence of new "demons," as the philosophers said of Paul. In fact, Sinistrari's unflinching belief in the actual existence of these in-between creatures brings Renaissance hypotheses on demonic interactions with humans to their most reasonable conclusions. How to explain that some apparently evil beings don't respond to exorcism? How to make sense of some strange beings who fall in love with us and suffer from love exactly like us? Late fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century treatises on demonology abound with seemingly incoherent stories recounting inexplicable meetings between demons and humans.

The next question concerns the offspring resulting from the possible sexual intercourse between incubi and humans. We have seen that Sinistrari agrees with most demonologists that devils cannot preserve male semen's original qualities. Sinistrari has come to the conclusion that the giants mentioned

in Genesis are the offspring of some incubi who slept with women.[83] If an incubus mates with a man or a woman, the baby will be a sterile creature because, like a mule, it will be made of two distinct kinds of beings.[84]

The Offspring of Women and Incubi Live among Us

It is thus more than probable that these hybrids, these mulelike beings, who look like humans but are in fact children of incubi, live among us now. Of course, to avoid persecution by us, these beings live a discreet and reserved existence. Their lives are shrouded in mystery. But why originally were the incubi's numerous children of imposing proportions and now seem to have disappeared? Before I reveal Sinistrari's astute answer to this important question, it is relevant to notice that, in his discussion of the progeny of women and incubi, the Franciscan Sinistrari glosses over the thorny debate about the giants' nature, a debate that had occupied Christian theology for centuries. Nor does Sinistrari mention that most theologians believed that, because of the giants, God had decided to destroy his creation with a deluge. As Walter Stephens stresses in *Giants in Those Days*, theologians couldn't help but connect the reference to the birth of the giants with the subsequent passage (Gen. 6:5–7) "in which God repents of having created mankind, whose evil thoughts and deeds have polluted the earth . . . and thus decides to destroy the world in a flood."[85] It is impossible not to think that in Genesis the giants somehow signify an unforgivable depravity.

The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (born about 20 BC) offers the most original and poetic interpretation of the biblical giants. In the short *On the Giants*, Philo insists that we should not "suppose that what is here said is a myth."[86] God is not a mythmaker. Expressing an opinion that we have already encountered in Cigogna's *Theater*, Philo reminds the reader that, because the universe is filled with life, the air is certainly "filled with living beings, though indeed they are invisible to us." According to Philo, the air is the realm of the living souls. Philo believes that "some of the souls have descended into bodies."[87] Entering the body as if they were coming down a stream, some "have sometimes been caught in the swirl of its rushing torrent and swallowed up thereby, at other times have been able to stem the current, have risen to the surface and then soared upwards back to the place from whence they came."[88] Interpreting the Platonic view of the soul, which I discussed in my introduction on the familiar spirit described in the exorcist Menghi's *Compendium of the Art of Exorcisms*, Philo contends that "souls and demons and angels are but different names for the same one underlying object."[89]

It seems unnecessary to remind readers that the ontological, physical similarities, correspondences, and exchange between spirits and humans have been a central topic of this book. Philo reiterates that "it is no myth at all of giants that he [God] sets before us; rather he wishes to show you that some men are earth-born, some heaven-born, and some God-born."[90] The giants' unnatural dimensions signify those human beings "who take the pleasure of the body for their quarry, who make it the practice to indulge in them," whereas the heaven-born men are those who pursue the arts and knowledge, and the God-born ones are priests and prophets. In other words, for Philo the giants are visible metaphors of the dangers of lust and all excessive physical pleasures. The giants are similes of "the sons of earth [who] have turned the steps of the mind out of the path reason and transmuted in into the lifeless and inert nature of the flesh."[91] For Philo, the giants symbolize the soul's desertion of the path of knowledge. The giants are deserters. This is why, Philo writes at the conclusion of his short text, "to Nimrod Moses ascribes Babylon as the beginning of its kingdom. Now the name Babylon means alteration, a thought akin to desertion both in name and fact."[92] In the *City of God*, Augustine speaks of the giants' desertion as well. Not the children of some fallen spirits, these enormous creatures were living metaphors for the enormity of the sin they signified. They were deserters of the Holy Spirit (desertores spiritus), and "in deserting they were deserted by it" (et deserendo deserti).[93]

The Air Has Changed and Has Become Unsuitable for These Creatures

Only Weaker Incubi Succeeded in Surviving

Sinistrari confirms the idea of the giants as removed, solitary creatures who cannot be part of human society. In Stephens's words, "*Genesis* itself seem[s] to assign the giants an origin apart from the rest of humanity. That origin was sinful by definition, that is, the breaking of a sexual taboo."[94] However, not only does Sinistrari strip the giants' exile of every moral connotation, but he holds us, humans, responsible for the giants' exile. The incubi's offspring, who used to be of gigantic proportions, now avoid us because they fear us. Sinistrari offers a deeply personal interpretation of the seeming disappearance of the giants. He contends that the answer lies in the fact that the air has changed. The air that men, incubi, and their progeny breathed at the beginning of time is not the air we breathe now. Something happened after the deluge.[95] Remember, Sinistrari writes, that there are four kinds of incubi

according to the four elements composing the world. It is scientifically proved that the element fire is more powerful than air, and that air is stronger than water and earth.[96] We must thus infer that, given their amazing dimensions, the giants were children of igneous incubi. However, after the deluge, "the air surrounding our globe" has become thicker as a result of the intense humidity exuded from the persistent rains. Therefore, nowadays the incubi of fire cannot reside among us. The thick air we breathe is unsuitable for them. Weaker are the incubi who live among us now. They probably belong to the element water, which is much feebler than fire. This is why their children are also much smaller and difficult to detect.

Is it a crime for a human being to mate with an incubus? This is a thorny question. Keep in mind that incubi are a special type of spiritual beings, for they are neither devils nor men. But they do have a body that is lighter and nobler than ours. Remember, the body of an incubus is similar to the body we humans will acquire at the end of time. Thus, a man who couples with an incubus does not vilify his human nature. Quite the contrary, he dignifies it, because an incubus is superior to him.[97] If bestiality is a grave sin because a human being has sexual intercourse with an inferior creature, in a man–incubus encounter it is the incubus who commits the sin of bestiality, not the man. For men are inferior to incubi.

The Importance of These Mysterious Creatures

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In our reading of Sinistrari's puzzling, daring, theologically incorrect book, we have found echoes of all the themes discussed in previous parts of this book. Incubi are our "familiar spirits." In Sinistrari's concept of incubus, we encounter the fundamental topic of a living hybrid, a cluster of visible contradictions, a being who at once evokes the fallen spirits' eternal story of damnation and our ongoing process of penance and purification. As I said in commenting on Bynum's definition of *hybrid* and *metamorphosis*, incubi are both hybrids and living signs of transformation. Incubi are spirits who have resided among us from the beginning of human history, the infinite beings following and supporting human beings in their vicissitudes. Please remember what we read in Cigogna's *Theater* about the Lares and Penates, but also the Dioscuri, the mysterious presences who lead ships through the most furious tempests. Furthermore, incubi also echo the spirits in love as described in della Barba's love treatise. We saw that della Barba insists on the splendor of the beloved's body. For the lover, the beloved has a luminous, lighter, almost ethereal flesh.

If the lover's salvation resides in the beloved, let us remember that incubi have the body we *will* have if we attain our final salvation. The body of an incubus is the sign of our salvation.

But the connections, echoes, references are not over. In della Barba's book on love, we encountered the spirit of a deceased lover who cannot help but return to the places that witnessed his love. If we connect della Barba's remarks to Sinistrari's definition of *incubus*, we must conclude that a possible encounter with this hybrid, this "contaminated" creature, harbors a profound message of peace and salvation. If incubi manifest themselves as spirits in love, our response to the love coming from this "impure," "unclear," "contaminated" being coincides with our own salvation. Paradoxically, our redemption lies in our "yes" to these hybrids, these freaks who live with us from the beginning of time. It is our duty to seek out these mysterious creatures. It is our duty to respond to their love. They are our most familiar spirits.

A CONCLUSION
Bodies of Salvation

In *Rime Platoniche* (Platonic verses), a little-known text published in Venice in 1585, Celso Cittadini offers an original *canzoniere* in which each poem (sonnets, madrigals, and canzoni) is accompanied by his detailed and often lengthy interpretations in prose.[1] This volume is part of an interesting and still not fully explored genre of late sixteenth-century Renaissance culture.[2] Famous authors such as Torquato Tasso, Girolamo Goselini, and Giordano Bruno put together similar texts made of poetry plus insightful or long-winded self-commentaries.[3] In the Renaissance, as we saw in Pompeo della Barba's *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet*, it was not uncommon to construct an entire book around the exegesis of one or a limited number of poems. All of these books shared at least two basic elements. First, their interpretations were deeply influenced by the Platonic vision of love according to Ficino's rewriting of the *Symposium*. Because in many cases the poems were easily comprehensible, it makes sense to ask why, at the end of the sixteenth century, poets felt they had to explain what was often self-explanatory.

When we read della Barba's *Interpretation*, we understood that in the Renaissance to interpret also meant to expand on the theme of a certain verse or stanza. Through the explanation of a text, the poet showed his knowledge and personal appropriation of Florentine Platonism, the main philosophical current in sixteenth-century Italy. It is also important to consider the literary and linguistic texture of these texts. European Renaissance love poetry unmistakably echoes the experience and language of Petrarch's *canzoniere*. Indeed, several of Petrarch's poems were read and interpreted in the light of Florentine Platonism, as if Petrarch had been a precursor of Ficino. However, starting from the second half of the sixteenth century, in Italy the Petrarchan model showed clear signs of exhaustion. To add an "interpretation" to a love sonnet also meant to revitalize the poetic text by injecting additional meaning into a sterile and repetitive product.

Cittadini's *Platonic Verses* follows this pattern. Pages and pages of prose follow his interesting and at times beautiful poems, even when they need no explanation. I focus on only one short madrigal from Cittadini's *Verses*, to help introduce some final remarks on the themes we have examined in this book. The madrigal, titled "Madrigale primo" (First madrigal), reads as follows:

> Dal Sole almo sereno
> De' be' vostri occhi tal mi spande Amore
> Divin lume soave ognor sul core,
> Ch'ogni noia ne sgombra, e il rende pieno
> D'alta dolcezza, che per dritta via
> Di grado in grado l'alma a Dio m'invia,
> Che le porge quel cibo, ed ella il prende,
> Ch'altrui pascendo a pien beato rende.[4]

This is my translation in prose:

> From the serene and vivifying Sun
> of your beautiful eyes Love constantly sheds a divine light on my heart
> and removes every anxiety and fills it [my heart]
> with a profound sweetness that through a right path
> gradually leads my soul to God
> who grants my soul that food (and my soul takes it)
> that, by feeding someone else, makes the soul fully blessed.

The meaning of this short composition is straightforward. The love inspired by his beloved's beauty leads the poet from worldly concerns to the sweetness of a divine contemplation. However, commenting on the word "Love" (Amore), in the explanatory prose following the poem, Cittadini addresses the "truly honest and divine gaze" that his beloved woman grants him.[5] Love is the gaze of his beloved. Explaining this crucial point, Cittadini states:

> I say that my lady is Love . . . because [Love] has transfigured into her. . . . To understand this point better, it is necessary to know that, in his *Ethiopian Story*, Heliodorus contends that, when the gods come to us or depart from us, they rarely or never take up a form (that is, a figure) of another animal. In fact, in most cases they transfigured into men, because, by resembling us, it is easier for them to reveal to us that they are gods, even though dishonest and impure men are unable to see it.[6]

As far as I know, no other Renaissance treatise on love mentions Heliodorus of Emesa's fourth-century Greek novel *Ethiopian Story*, which was first trans-

lated into French in 1547.[7] In it Heliodorus recounts the tormented love story of Theagenes and the beautiful Chariclea. Let me outline only the beginning of this intricate novel. The queen of Ethiopia abandons her daughter at the moment of her birth because of the color of her skin. The baby is white whereas both her parents are black. The queen fears her husband will accuse her of adultery. At the age of seven, the girl is given to Charicleus, a Greek priest of Apollo at the temple of Delphi, who names her Chariclea. Years later, during the Delphic games, Chariclea meets the young Theagenes and the two fall in love at first glance. The Greek Kalasiris offers to help them and to pretend to kidnap the girl. In book 3 of *Platonic Verses*, Cittadini quotes from a long monologue spoken by Kalasiris in which he explains how the gods visit humans. Kalasiris recounts that Apollo and Artemis once visited him to warn him about the future of the two young lovers. How can he be sure that what he saw wasn't a dream but an actual visitation? Kalasiris justified his conviction as follows:

> Keeping silent for a moment, Kalasiris contemplated some profound mysteries. Then he said: "When the gods and the demons . . . come to us and abandon us, it is rare that they take up the forms of an animal. Almost always, they appear to us as men, in order to hit our imagination better, thanks to this resemblance. They may remain unknown to impure men, but they can't escape a wise person. One can recognize them by their eyes, whose gaze is always still and the eyelids motionless, but first of all [one can recognize them] by their gait. In fact, when they walk, they keep their feet united, without moving them one after the other."[8]

The insistence on the demons' and gods' feet is not unfamiliar. We saw that, in Giovan Francesco Pico's *Strix*, the anonymous strix confirms the not-human nature of her lover Ludovicus, whose biography somehow echoes a passage from Caesar's *Gallic War*, by explaining that his feet are turned backward and look like those of a goose. We saw that both aspects are visual metaphors with distinct cultural connotations. In particular, we saw that the gooselike appearance can be decoded by reading Pliny's *Natural History*. Pliny reveals that geese keep an eye on humans, can stir libidinous feelings in us, and symbolize a strong longing for wisdom. Ludovicus's feet are turned backward because he comes from the past. His feet signify that the meaning of his existence was determined by a past and immutable event, his expulsion from divine grace.

Cittadini's explanation of the word "love" in his madrigal underscores the revelatory nature of the love event. "Love" is the gaze of his beloved that

appears in that same way that the gods and demons revealed themselves to the ancients. However, Cittadini seems to allude to another essential element of love as revelation. The lover experiences love as an internal contemplation of the beloved's still, immutable portrait, which gazes at him, the lover, from within. In other words, the beloved gazes at the lover in a paradoxical manner. The beloved is both outside and inside of the lover. When the lover perceives the beloved's gaze, he understands that her gaze arises from within him. This gaze is still and firm because it is a contemplative image, like the gods and the demons of antiquity, whose eyes were still and moved as if they were not moving. The demons and gods walked like icons in motion. Indeed, their still gaze recalls the gaze of a Byzantine icon. But these divine and demonic icons approached their human viewers as if the icons had never moved, because they had always been within their human interlocutors.

Chapters 3 and 4 of this book have shed some light on this paradoxical event. Della Barba's *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet* underscores that the splendor of the beloved's body, his or her luminous body, lies at the core of the lover's soul. The center of the lover's soul holds the image of the beloved's luminous body. Reversing a commonplace of Platonic and Christian theology, the physician and philosopher della Barba paradoxically sees the soul as the prison of the body and not vice versa. The body is a luminous surface from which emanates a human and divine light. But we have also seen that the Franciscan Sinistrari's *Demoniality* hypothesizes that the incubi, beings heavier than angels but lighter than humans, live among us but stay away from us out of fear, and that they have the body we will acquire at the end of time. For Sinistrari, the incubi have the body of our future salvation. Let us keep in mind that, in the *Ethiopic Story*, the character Kalasiris contends that the gods and demons shun impure human beings and reveal themselves only to those of us who are receptive to divine communications.

A crucial passage from the Acts of the Apostles (17:18) is mentioned in Sinistrari's *Demoniality*. Unable to see the divine nature of Saint Paul's message, the Athenian philosophers hold that the apostle "seems to be announcing new demons" (novorum daemoniorum videtur annunciator). The pagan philosophers were certainly right. Christianity did not erase the spirits from the face of earth. The Word's revelation transformed them. When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was arrested for blasphemy, he had to defend himself before the Supreme Council (or Sanhedrin). Those who had accused him "found they could not stand up against him because of his wisdom. . . . The members of the Sanhedrin all looked intently at Stephen, and his face appeared to them like the face of an angel" (viderunt faciem eius tamquam fa-

ciem angeli).[9] We could say that, before being executed, Stephen proclaimed the truthfulness of Christ's message of redemption by revealing his angelic nature. It was thanks to his vehement discourse in defense of the Word's message that the members of the Supreme Council saw that Stephen appeared like an angel. Stephen was a man who acted as an angel. In Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, we witness a "humanization" of the angelic beings.

Throughout this book but in particular in chapter 2 about Cigogna's encyclopedic *Theater,* I have insisted that, according to the Church Fathers and Renaissance theorists, the incarnate Word's revelation has unveiled the true nature of the innumerable spirits that visited human beings in antiquity. However, all the treatises examined in *The Company of Demons* paradoxically have shown that the spirits have not disappeared. Pico's *Strix,* Cigogna's *Theater,* della Barba's love treatise, and Sinistrari's *Demoniality* reiterate that the spirits are still relevant to humans, even after the Word's incarnation, death, and resurrection. As the Franciscan Sinistrari holds, the incubi are among us. They hide because they fear us, even though their bodies have the luminosity of our salvation, as the beloved's luminous body lies at the center of the lover's soul according to the Platonic physician della Barba. The spirits hold the key to our salvation. As Sinistrari says, the spirits have never left. They are here and now, and they are still messengers of luminous revelations. They have become outcasts and unwelcome beings.[10] They are now beings against nature. They hide because we, as the Athenian philosophers, are unable to see them. Even though in them lies our redemption.

NOTES

PREFACE ǂ Bodies of Metaphors

1. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Livio* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), bk. 1, chap. 56, p. 121.
2. Ibid., 122. On this passage, see Nicola Badaloni, *Natura e società in Machiavelli* (Rome: Istituto Gramsci, 1969), 679; Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 164–66. A possible source of Machiavelli's statement is Cicero, *On Divination,* bk. 1, chap. 30, p. 64, in which Cicero discusses the divinatory power of dying men according to Posidonius. After mentioning that the soul is "clairvoyant of itself because of its kinship with the gods," Cicero adds that "the air is full of immortal souls, already clearly stamped, as it were, with the marks of truth." I quote from Cicero, *De senectute. De amicitia. De divinatione,* trans. William Armistead Falconer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 295.
3. In his introductory study *Machiavelli* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Maurizio Viroli states that "Machiavelli's cosmos is densely populated. Heaven, Fortune, and God each has a role, though it is not always well defined" (19). Viroli contends that Machiavelli "regarded human beings' freedom of action as being severely constrained by the influence that heavens and other natural or occult forces have upon them" (18). Viroli's questionable view is based on *The Golden Ass* and the *First Decennial,* two poems in which Machiavelli refers to traditional rhetorical devices. *The Golden Ass* and the *First Decennial* are literary works and should not be read as philosophical manifestoes.
4. Machiavelli, *Discorsi,* 122; Livy, *History,* 5.32.
5. Francesco Guicciardini, *Ricordi* (Milan: Mursia, 1994), chap. 211, p. 132. On Guicciardini's Neoplatonic background, see Raffaella Castagnola, ed., *Guicciardini e le scienze occulte: L'oroscopo di Francesco Guicciardini, lettere di alchimia, astrologia e cabala a Luigi Guicciardini* (Florence: Olschki, 1990). Let us remember that Marsilio Ficino, the great Neoplatonic philosopher, was Guicciardini's godfather. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.
6. The contemporary Spanish philosopher Maria Zambrano defines these sudden forms of spiritual expression as "pre-truth" (pre-verdad). Maria Zambrano, *El hombre y lo divino* (Madrid: Siruela, 1991), 41. Zambrano underscores that

"a culture depends on the quality of its gods, on the configuration that the divine has acquired for men, on the declared and secret terms of their relationship" (29).

7. Louis Marin, "L' ange du virtuel," in *Lectures traversières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992), 278.
8. Joseph Stern, *Metaphor in Context* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 16.
9. Ibid., 290. Emphasis in the text.
10. In Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), Schmidt speaks of "the current passion for angels and their whispers of consolation—a notable revitalizing of Swedenborgian mysticism.""For all the vigor of these contemporary pieties," Schmidt holds, "most of them still entail a sense of loss, the nostalgic feeling of never quite overcoming the disaggregations of modernity" (246). I refer to Swedenborg's spirituality in the introductory chapter.
11. Edward J. Ingebretsen, *At Stake: Monsters and the Rhetoric of Fear in Public Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), xiii and xv.

INTRODUCTION ǂ Bodies of Desire

1. Cf. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 409.
2. Girolamo Menghi was born in Viadana, Italy, in 1529 and died in 1609. Menghi was one of the most influential demonologists of early modern Europe. He performed exorcisms in northern Italy for more than forty years. On Menghi's historical role, see Giovanni Romeo, *Inquisitori, esorcisti e streghe nell'Italia della Controriforma* (Florence: Sansoni, 1990), 109–44; Ottavio Franceschini, "Un 'mediatore' ecclesiastico: Girolamo Menghi (1529–1609)," in Girolamo Menghi, *Compendio dell'arte essorcistica*, facsimile edition of 1576 (Città di Castello: Tibergraph, 1987), iii–xix. On Menghi's theories of exorcism, see Armando Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric: A Study of Renaissance Demonology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 96–136.
3. Cf. John Dee, *The Private Diary of John Dee*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (London: John Bowyer Nichols, 1842), 57 and 59.
4. Girolamo Menghi, *Compendio dell'arte essorcistica* (Venice: Bertano, 1605), bk. 1, chap. 2, p. 24. In *The Trinity* (2.13), Augustine writes that angelic beings turn and change their own bodies, "which they dominate and are not dominated by." In a later passage (3.4), Augustine reiterates the very same words and adds that angels are able to modify their own bodies "into whatever looks and shapes they [choose] to suit their activities." I quote from this translation: Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 107 and 129. However, Menghi makes an unspecified reference to *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*. In book 3.9–10 of this treatise, Augustine explains that because they are "aerial beings" (aeria animalia), demons are not subject to physical death. Augustine tries to explain why in Genesis (1:20–23) the animals of the air sprang from the waters.

Augustine holds that in a demonic aerial body, the active, creative elements (fire and air) prevail over the two receptive elements, water and earth. Thanks to fire, water evaporates and becomes air, the demons' physicality. For Augustine, the evil spirits reside in the lower area of the skies. They can cause storms, hail, and snow. See Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, *PL* 34 (Paris: Du Maine, 1887), 284–85.

5. Menghi, *Compendio*, bk. 1, chap. 11, p. 151.

6. Ibid., bk. 2, chap. 21, p. 507. Francisco Suarez, the seventeenth-century Spanish theologian, reminds us that the Church Fathers knew that the ancients had a close relationship with demons. In book 7 of *De malis angelis*, Suarez offers an exhaustive, albeit succinct, history of pagan demonology. I use the following edition: Francisco Suarez, *De malis angelis*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Paris: Vivès, 1856), bk. 7, chap. 1, pp. 790–96. Suarez reminds us that in his *Divinae Institutiones* (bk. 2, chap. 15) Lactantius mentions Socrates' private involvement with an evil spirit (791). However, Suarez also mentions that, as Ficino writes in his commentary of Plato's *Symposium* (pt. 6, chap. 3), pagan philosophers often defined the good angels as "demons" (791–92).

7. Jacques Cazotte, *Le diable amoureux* (Paris: Librio, 1999), 14.

8. Menghi believes that this kind of binding occurs thanks to a secret pact between the magician and a superior evil spirit. Because both the good and the fallen angels exist within strict hierarchies according to their powers and personal biography, a spirit may force an inferior spirit to abide by a man's injunctions. In other words, a magician gives himself to a superior devil, who, in exchange for the magician's soul, would give him power over an inferior devil (Menghi, *Compendio*, bk. 1, chap. 5, p. 79).

9. Ibid., bk. 2, chap. 21, p. 507.

10. Andrea Vittorelli, *Dei ministerii ed operazioni angeliche*, in *Gli angeli custodi: Storia e figure dell' "amico vero,"* ed. Silvia Ciliberti and Giacomo Jori (Turin: Einaudi, 2004), bk. 2, chap. 5, pp. 105–6. This recent anthology of seventeenth-century texts on the figure of the guardian angel offers a number of precious insights on this subject. On Socrates' angel, see also Andrea da Pozzo, *Sermoni degli Angeli nostri Custodi* (1st ed., 1692), in Ciliberti and Jori, *Gli angeli custodi*, 284 and 389 (second and twelfth sermons).

11. Menghi, *Compendio*, bk. 2, chap. 21, p. 510.

12. Ibid., 510–11.

13. Ibid., 511–12.

14. Ibid., 512.

15. Girolamo Menghi, *Flagellum daemonum*, in *Thesaurus exorcismorum*, ed. Valerio Polidori and Girolamo Menghi (Coloniae: Lazari Zetneri, 1608), 336–37.

16. Marco Tosatti, *Inchiesta sul demonio* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 2003), 34–35 ("La lotta quotidiana di don Amorth").

17. Cf. Michel de Certeau, *Il parlare angelico*, trans. Daniela De Agostini (Florence: Olschki, 1989), 203. De Certeau stresses the double meaning of *appearance* in

every angelic visitation: appearance as manifestation (to appear) and appearance as something visible but unsubstantial (semblance). Cf. Massimo Cacciari, *L'angelo necessario* (Milan: Adelphi, 1994), 81–84. Cacciari defines an angelic appearance as "the name from which the thing withdraws" (81).

18. Cf. Luc Ferry, *Mad Made God: The Meaning of Life*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002): "What is there left for Satan to do at the end of this century, on the threshold of the 'year 2000,' carrying the lovely promises that were those of the Enlightenment? . . . Hasn't the devil disappeared from our beliefs to the point where even most Christians see in him only a metaphorical image? . . . Modern believers ask God only to deliver them from 'evil.' This is the first metamorphosis of the devil" (48–49). Cf. Schmidt, *Hearing Things*: "The Enlightenment changed the senses. . . . [The result was] the quieting of all those heavenly and demonic voices by which 'superstition' had for so long impeded the advancement of knowledge" (3, 5). "The problem," Schmidt summarizes, "is a spiritual impairment" (28).

19. I quote from this late edition: Paolo Grillando, *Tractatus duo: De sortilegiis D. Pauli Grillandi* (Frankfurt, 1592), question 7, p. 96. Following the mainstream view of the unnatural consistency of these aerial bodies, Grillando stresses that they do not have the "power of reproduction" (virtutem generativam; 97). The Franciscan Sinistrari will question this position. I examine Sinistrari's position in chapter 4 of this book.

20. In Dyan Elliot, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), Elliot reminds us that Thomas Aquinas's *Summa* determined the outcome of the medieval debate on the angels' and devils' spiritual matter. Elliot summarizes this point as follows: "From his rigorously Aristotelian perspective, matter was solely an attribute of bodies, so the question of spiritual matter was quickly dispatched" (*Fallen Bodies*, 134 and 247). Thomas addresses the issue of the angelic body in question 50, art. 2 ("Utrum angelus sit compositus ex materia et forma"). It is impossible, Thomas concludes in his response, for an intellectual substance to have any form of matter.

21. Sylvester Prierio, *De strigimagarum daemonumque mirandis* (Rome, 1575), 158. Prierio's treatise was first published in Rome in 1521. Cf. Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, 34–35.

22. Martin del Rio, *Disquisitionum magicarum* (Venice: De Franciscis, 1606), bk. 2, axiom 1, p. 148.

23. I refer to this Greek-Italian edition: Michele Psello, *Sull'attività dei demoni*, trans. Umberto Albini (Genoa: ECIG, 1985), 483–85, 58–59.

24. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1, question 51, art. 2.

25. If a human being is the union of body and soul, what is the connection between an angelic being and the visible body he temporarily assumes? Francisco Suarez analyzes this important point in book 4 of *De angelis*. By "unio realis," Suarez

writes, we must intend a physical blending of two distinct elements and not the mere spiritual fusion of two lovers (bk. 4, chap. 6, p. 448). "Unio realis" indicates an "intrinsic dependence" (ex intrinseca dependentia), which is absent from the connection between an angel and his metaphorical physicality. The angel's relationship to his visible body is grounded in "presence" (praesentia) and not in a "necessary physical union" (449). Presence is the key theological point that enables an angelic spirit to appear "in a visible form" (in forma visibili) without establishing a "formal union" (formali unione) with his visible presence (452). According to Suarez, it is crucial to distinguish between the external and the internal "where" (ubi) of the spirits (bk. 4, chap. 7). As Christ is present in the host but the host is not the Word's intrinsic "ubi," so do the angels become visible and present to us without distancing themselves from their real "ubi" (453).

26. Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 1.
27. Ibid., 12.
28. Cf. Walter Stephens, "Sexy Devils: How They Got Bodies," chap. 3 in *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief,* 58–86 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
29. In *De strigimagis,* Prierio underscores that the devil's language itself has a metaphorical nature. The devil speaks "per similitudinem" (159). If the devil's body must look like a familiar form, so must his words sound like an understandable idiom. Cf. Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric,* 35–37.
30. I quote from the following modern reprint of the edition published in Turin in 1657: Emanuele Tesauro, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* (Savigliano, Cuneo: Editrice Artistica Piemontese, 2000), 66.
31. Ibid., 72: "la folle gentilità chiamava *fato* e *destino* alcuni avvenimenti che venivano dagli spiriti o cagionati o per divin dettato antiveduti . . . e da essi non pianamente ma *simbolicamente* accennati a' mortali" (emphasis in the text).
32. Ibid., chap. 7, p. 306. This chapter of Tesauro's work is more than two hundred pages long.
33. Ibid., 307–8.
34. Ibid., 308.
35. Augustine, *The Trinity,* 3.27, 144. Cf. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis,* trans. John Hammond Taylor (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), vol. 2, bk. 12.30: "Whether by some sort of union or intermingling they have the facility and power to make their visions ours also, or in some way know how to fashion a vision in our spirit, this is a difficult matter to understand and still more difficult to explain" (221).
36. Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum,* trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 2.68, 189: "the Penates or household gods, a name derived either from *penus,* which means a store of human food of any kind, or from the fact

that they reside *penitus,* in the recesses of the house." *Lar* means "hearth." As a synecdoche, *Lar* could also mean "home," as we find in Ammianus Marcellinus: "So then he entered Rome, home [larem] of empire and of every virtue" (*Ammianus Marcellinus,* trans. John C. Rolfe [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963], vol. 1, bk. 16, pp. 10, 13, 249).

37. I quote this modern edition: Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini de i dei de gli antichi,* ed. Manlio Pastore Stocchi, Ginetta Auzzas, Paola Rigo, and Federica Martignano (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1996), 394. Another famous Renaissance text on pagan mythology is Natale Conti's *Mythologiae,* which also dedicates a detailed chapter to the Penates and Lares. I refer to a modern edition of a sixteenth-century French edition: Natale Conti, *Mythologie: Paris 1627* (New York: Garland, 1976), 1:277–79, 281–82.

38. Cartari, *Le imagini de i dei,* 395. Cartari mentions Ovid as one of the sources of this interpretation. The reference is in *Fasti,* Ovid's poetic interpretation of the Roman year: "The Kalends of May witnessed the foundation of an altar to the Guardian Lares, together with small images of the gods. . . . The reason for the epithet [guardians] applied to them is that they guard all things by their eyes. They also stand for us . . . and bring us aid. But a dog, carved out of the same stone, used to stand before their feet. What was the reason for its standing with the Lar? Both guard the house: both are faithful to their master." Ovid, *Fasti,* trans. James George Frazer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), bk. 5, vv. 129–30 and 133–39, pp. 269 and 271, respectively.

39. Johann Wier, *De praestigiis daemonum* (Basel: Ex Officina Oporiniana, 1568), bk. 1, chap. 20, pp. 109–10. I quote from this translation based on the 1583 edition: Johann Wier, *De praestigiis daemonum,* trans. John Shea (Binghamton: State University of New York, 1991), 72. Cf. Michaela Valente, *Johann Wier* (Florence: Olschki, 2003), 127. As far as the presence of *De praestigiis daemonum* in Italy is concerned, see Michaela Valente, "Prime testimonianze della circolazione del *De Praestigiis Daemonum* di Johann Wier in Italia," *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 6, no. 2 (2002): 561–68.

40. Cartari, *Le imagini de i dei,* 395. Cf. Sextus Pompeius Festus, "Lanae" and "Pilae et effigies," in *De verborum significatu,* ed. Wallace M. Lindsay (Lipsia: Teubneri, 1913), 108 and 273, respectively.

41. Tertullian, *Apologeticum,* trans. T. R. Glover (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), chap. 10, pp. 57–59. Cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius,* 21.9–10. In the first book of *Divinae institutiones* (chap. 11, pp. 7–9), Lactantius insists on the transient nature of the pagan gods. If Saturn was replaced by Jove and was thus subject to time and oblivion, it is reasonable to believe that Jove himself may relinquish his power to a new divinity. Moreover, if the dominion of the Greek gods is "changeable" (mutabile), it can only mean that it is not truly divine. For an analysis of Tertullian's demonology, see Jeffrey B. Russell, *Satan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 88–103.

42. Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, chap. 12, p. 67.

43. On the identification between Penates and Lares, see Conti, *Mythologie*, bk. 4, chap. 5, pp. 281–82. On the identification between Lares and the souls of the dead, see also Arnobius, *Adversus Gentes*, *PL* 5 (Paris: Sirou, 1844), bk. 3, chap. 41, p. 999.

44. Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, chap. 13, p. 71: "Gods of the house, whom you call *lares*, you deal with them according to your household rights—pledging them, selling them, transforming them at times." Referring to these gods' ludicrous biographies, Augustine in *The City of God* states: "[Do] they not give evidence in support of Euhemerus who wrote, not as a garrulous story-teller, but as a careful historian, that all such gods had once been men, and subject to death?" I quote from the Loeb edition: Augustine, *The City of God*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988–95), bk. 6, chap. 7, p. 325. Euhemerus had theorized the gods' original human and thus mortal nature about 300 BC. Cf. Augustine, *City of God*, bk. 4, chap. 27.

    Christians found additional ammunition against the pagan divinities in the fact that some human beings had transformed into gods. When Rome made a god of its founder Romulus, Augustine writes in *The City of God* (bk. 22, chap. 6), it forced its citizens to worship a human being who had been dead for centuries. Augustine, however, recognizes that Cicero, "the most eloquent of all men," passionately believed in the cult of these deified men (*City of God*, bk. 22, chap. 6, p. 197). Augustine mentions Cicero's *Republic*, 2.10.18–19. Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum*, bk. 3.21.53, p. 337: "we . . . ought to refute the theory that these gods, who are deified human beings, and who are the objects of our most devout and universal veneration, exist not in reality but in imagination." In *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero stresses that death is nothing but a form of 'transformation" (commutationem) or "shifting" (migrationem) of existence, which often leads deceased individuals to "heaven" (caelum). I quote from Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J. E. King (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), bk. 1, 12.27–28, pp. 32–33.

45. Cicero, *Timaeus*, ed. Francesco Pini (Milan: Mondadori, 1965), 38, 51. Cicero reiterates the idea that this "progeny of the gods" delivers divine messages to human beings. Similar connection between demon and *lar* in Apuleius's *De deo Socratis*, chap. 17. Apuleius defines Socrates' demon as "Lar familiaris" (*Il demone di Socrate*, 54).

46. Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates*, in *Moralia*, vol. 7, trans. Phillip H. De Lacy and Benedict Einarson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 590a, 461. For an interesting discussion of the Socratic demon, see the first part of Arnold Metzger, *Dámonie und Transzendenz* (Stuttgart: Neske, 1964), 11–55. The presence of the private demon is the essential catalyst in the process of self-awareness (Seinsgewissheit); Knowledge (Kennen) is a recognition (Erkennen) enabled by the demonic presence (12, 18–19, 47, respectively).

47. Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates*, 590b, 461, and 590f, 467.

48. Ibid., 591e, 471. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 90a, where the guardian spirit corresponds to the highest part of the soul, our immortal reason. In *Enneads*, Plotinus states: "this guardian spirit is not entirely outside but only in the sense that he is not bound to us, and is not active in us but is ours, to speak in terms of the soul, but not ours if we are considered as men of a particular kind who have a life which is subject to him." The spirit, Plotinus continues, "sits above us." Plotinus, *Ennead III*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 3.4.5, 155.
49. What are the differences between gods, demons, and human souls? This is one of the main themes of another of Plutarch's dialogues, *The Obsolescence of the Oracles*. In a key passage, the character Ammonius mentions Hesiod's *Works and Days* to support the hypothesis that demons "are aught else than souls that make their rounds, 'in mist apparelled,' as Hesiod says" (Plutarch, *The Obsolescence of the Oracles*, in *Moralia*, vol. 5, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999], 431c, 463).
50. Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates*, 592c, 475. Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead III*, 3.4.3, 149: "if a man is able to follow the spirit which is above him, he comes to be himself above, living that spirit's life"; Plato, *Phaedo*, 107d–108b.
51. Apuleius, *Il demone di Socrate*, ed. Bianca Maria Cagli (Venice: Marsilio, 1992), chap. 15.152, p. 52. Attacking Apuleius's *De deo Socratis*, in book 9 of *The City of God*, Augustine writes: "Apuleius indeed also says that the souls of men are demons and that, on ceasing to be men, they become *lares*, if they have deserved this reward for their good conduct, and *lemures* or *larvae* if they have been bad, while they are called *di manes* if it is uncertain whether they have behaved well or ill. What an abysmal pit of profligacy is opened up before men's feet by those who hold this belief" (bk. 9, chap. 11, p. 191). Augustine continues his harangue against Neoplatonism in chapters 12 ("On the Three Opposites by Which the Platonists Distinguish between the Nature of Demons and of Men") and 13 ("How the Demons, if They Share Neither Blessedness with the Gods Nor Misery with Men, Can Be Midway between the Two and Have Nothing in Common with Either").
52. Plato, *Symposium*, 202e.
53. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.4.3. The complete sentence reads as follows: "Its [the soul's] memory of what is in the intelligible world still holds it back from falling, but its memory of the things here below carries it down here; its memory of what is in heaven keeps it there, and in general it is and becomes what it remembers" (Plotinus, *Ennead IV*, trans. A. H. Armstrong [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995], 143–45).
54. Cf. Ficino's interpretation of Plotinus's concept of "familiar demon" (daemonum familiarem), in Marsilio Ficino, *In Plotinum*, in *Opera omnia* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1959), vol. 2.2, p. 1541. Ficino believes that "Plotinus transcended the magicians' spells. [Plotinus] saw his demon as divine" because his familiar demon

always spurred him to look upward toward the divine. See also Ficino's introduction to "Enneadis tertiae quartum," *In Plotinum*, 1707–9.

55. In chapter 3 of this book, I analyze a fascinating Renaissance treatise on love titled *Interpretation of a Platonic Sonnet* by Pompeo della Barba, which describes a soul's destiny after its physical death and its search for the places where it first fell in love. The Platonic view of the beloved as teacher and of the lover as student is of great relevance in this context.
56. The intervention of a guardian spirit may also be a warning, a form of prophetic message. However, this element is not specifically detectable in Menghi's account. Menghi doesn't tell us what eventually happened to the young Mantuan. If the intimate connection between a demon and a human being echoes a past experience, it may also contain a future connotation. In the aforementioned *Obsolescence of the Oracles* Plutarch writes: "It is . . . not at all unreasonable or even marvellous that souls meeting souls should create in them impressions of the future, exactly as we do not convey all our information to one another through the spoken word, but by writing also, or merely by a touch or a glance, we give much information about what has come to pass and intimation of what is to come" (431c, 463). In a later passage, Plutarch reiterates that memory is "the faculty which is the complement of prophecy" (432a, 467).
57. Apuleius, *Il demone di Socrate*, 15.153, 52.
58. On the disappearance of the angels, see de Certeau, *Il parlare angelico*, 209–11.
59. I analyze Prierio's *De strigimagis* in chapter 1 of *Satan's Rhetoric*: "The treatise's very first sentence (bk. 1, chap. 1) is a dramatic quotation from Psalm 13 (v. 4): 'Devorant plebem meam sicut escam panis' (they devour my people as if they were eating bread). Prierio is convinced that this verse is more than a historical reference to 'those who blaspheme God and are unjust against God's people.' According to Prierio, if we interpret this verse allegorically ("in sensu, quem allegoricum dicunt," 1), it becomes a direct accusation against the devil and his followers, primarily the witches. What the devil 'devours' is 'the fruits of my people, their cattle, and both their bodies and their souls'" (Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, 24).
60. Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, chap. 22, p. 119.
61. In *Arcana Coelestia* (1747–53), Emanuel Swedenborg recounts that many spirits intended to suffocate him. He writes: "I have on countless occasions been allowed to sense the breathing or respiration of spirits and also of angels, and by this means to sense that they were breathing in me, and that my breathing was nevertheless real and distinct from theirs." I quote from this English selection: Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Universal Human and Soul-Body Interaction*, trans. George F. Dole (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), chap. 38, pp. 91, 92. On Swedenborg's "spiritual sight" and his relentless conversation with angelic beings, see Schmidt, *Hearing Things*, 202–21.
62. Alan Charles and Edward Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 239.

63. Cf. Tertullian, *De idolatria*, ed. J. H. Waszink and J. C. M. Winden (New York: Brill, 1987), 12.5, 47: "[Let us] avoid even from afar every breath of it [idolatry] as if it were a pestilence . . . in the whole array of human superstition, regardless of whether it serves gods or the dead or the king." Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 6.15–22.
64. When we are not sure if the spirit is a lar or a larva, Apuleius writes, we can call him "manem." I use the Cagli Latin-Italian: Apuleius, *Il demone di Socrate*, chap. 15, pp. 50–52.
65. I find this basic information on Sinistrari's biography in Montague Summers's introduction to Friar Ludovico Maria Sinistrari, *Peccatum Mutum: The Secret Sin* (Paris: Ballet de Muses, 1958), 5–17.
66. This part of *De delictis et poenis* on sodomy was printed as an independent booklet both in English (*Peccatum Mutum: The Secret Sin*) and previously in French as *De sodomia*. Both texts are considered in the chapter on Sinistrari's demonology.
67. Cf. Eusebius Hieronymus, *Vita S. Pauli primi eremitae*, in *Opera omnia*, *PL* 23 (Paris: Garnier 1883), 17–30. In particular, on the dialogue between Anthony and the pious satyr, see 23–24. For a literary analysis of this narrative from a structural point of view, see Alison Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987). Elliot stresses that "with the Peace of Constantine in 313 A.D., the days of literal martyrdom largely came to an end. The successors to the martyrs were the desert fathers. . . . Their stories differ from the *passions* [the accounts of the martyrs' violent deaths] in genre and in narrative structure. The *vita* of the confessor saint stands in the same relationship to the *passio* as romance does to epic" (42). Elliot applies Propp's approach to Russian fairy tales to the lives of the saints. She identifies a set of recurrent motifs, among them "journey," in which "the hero [has] unusual guides" (59). For a direct analysis of the biography, see 66–67.

    For the image of the penitent Jerome, see Eugene F. Rice Jr., *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 75–83. For a brief analysis of some figurative interpretations of this episode, see José Alberto Seabra Carvalho and Maria João Vilhena de Carvalho, *A espada e o deserto* (Lisbon: Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 2002), 34–35.
68. Giovan Francesco Pico, *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium* [Analysis of the vanity of the gentiles' creed] (Mirandulae: Ioannes Maciochius Bundenius, 1520), bk 1, p. 22; idem, *De rerum praenotione libri novem* (Argentieri: Knoblochus, 1507), chap. 9, not numbered (n.n.).

CHAPTER 1 ǂ To Read the Body of a Monster

1. Leandro Alberti's first Italian translation came out a year later with a preface directed to the author's wife. Turino Turini's second translation was published in 1555. The Latin term *strix* originally referred to a screech owl and subsequently

came to signify a woman who turns into a sinister bird. Although I have consulted both Italian versions, my quotations in English are based on the original Latin text because all too often the Italian translations depart from the referential page.

2. Cf. Gian Carlo Garfagnini, "Il Savonarola di Gianfrancesco Pico," in Giovan Francesco Pico, *Vita di Hieronimo Savonarola,* ed. Raffaela Castagnola (Florence: Del Galluzzo, 1998), xiii.
3. Cf. Peter Burke, "Witchcraft and Magic in Renaissance Italy: Gianfrancesco Pico and His *Strix,*" in *The Damned Art,* ed. Sydney Anglo (London: Routledge, 1977), 32–33. For a brief introduction to Giovan Francesco Pico's view of magic, see D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 146–51.
4. As Edward Peters reminds us in Charles and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe* (239–40), a few other texts on demonology are in dialogue form: Nider's *Formicarius,* Daneau's *De veneficiis* (1563), and Ulrich Molitor's *De lamiis* (1489). Walter Stephens confirms that Pico "was not the first to structure a witchcraft treatise as a dialogue" (Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002], 92). Along with Nider, Stephens mentions Martin Lefranc's *Le champion des dames* (1440) and Ulrich Müller's *De laniis* (1498).
5. Stephens, *Demon Lovers,* 93. On *Strix,* see 87–98, 232–38, 278–81.
6. Ibid., 94.
7. The biographical information on Giovan Francesco Pico derives from the introductory chapter of Charles B. Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) and His Critique of Aristotle* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967), 11–31. Schmitt's essential volume concludes with a detailed bibliographic appendix on Pico's works (183–229).
8. Ibid., 12–13.
9. On Pico's trip to Germany, see Paola Zambelli, *Ambigua natura* (Venice: Marsilio, 1996), 180–81.
10. Cf. Ida Li Vigni, introduction to Giovan Francesco Pico, *La strega over gli inganni de' demoni,* trans. Turino Turini (Genoa: ECIG, 1988), 16–18.
11. I refer to the following edition: Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola, *Compendio delle cose mirabili della Beata Caterina da Racconigi* (Turin: Chieri, 1858). In Schmitt's words, "[the *Compendium*] apparently originally written in Latin, is better known in the Italian translation. . . . The work was completed in 1532, but additions were made after Pico's death by the Dominican Pietro Martire Morelli (in 1552)" (Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico,* 196). The expanded version was published in 1681. To preserve Pico's original text, Morelli uses the device of underling his own additions (*Compendio,* 15).
12. The historian Gabriella Zarri has coined the expression "living saint." See her seminal article, Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early

Sixteenth Century," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 219–303. In particular, on Caterina Racconigi's biography, see 228–29. Caterina was born in 1486 to a modest artisan family and became a Dominican tertiary in 1513. She was exiled to Caramagna in 1523, where she died in 1547.

13. Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive: Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990), 97.
14. Pico, "Proemio," in *Compendio,* 11, quote at 12.
15. Pico, *Compendio,* bk. 1, chap. 1, p. 20.
16. The Holy Ghost will reveal himself to the mystic again as rays (ibid., 22), as a luminous cloud (22), and as seven blazing tongues (23).
17. Ibid., chap. 4, p. 25.
18. Ibid., chaps. 7–11, pp. 30–39 (on the removal of her heart); chap. 14, pp. 43–44 (stigmata).
19. Pico, "Proemio del secondo libro," in *Compendio,* 54.
20. Cf. Peter Dinzelbacher, *Heilige oder Hexen: Schicksale auffälliger Frauen in Mittelalter und Frühneuzeit* (Zurich: Artemis und Winkler, 1995), 260–61.
21. Pico, "Proemio del secondo libro," 55.
22. I discuss the story of Pythagoras's arrow in a later part of this chapter.
23. Pico, *Compendio,* bk. 2, chap. 12, p. 91. Cf. Zarri, "Living Saints," 245–46. See also Dinzelbacher, *Heilige oder Hexen,* 240.
24. Cf. Gabriella Zarri, "Le sante vive," in *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo Germanico in Trento* 6 (1980): 429.
25. Zarri, *Sante vive,* 116–17; Pico, *Compendio,* 52.
26. Pico, *Compendio,* bk. 3, chap. 6, p. 114.
27. Ibid., bk. 7, chap. 1, p. 228.
28. Ibid., chap. 10, p. 259.
29. Ibid., bk. 7, chap. 3, pp. 230–31.
30. Ibid., bk. 6, chap. 5, p. 212.
31. Pico, "Proemio," in *Compendio,* bk. 8, p. 250.
32. Pico, *De rerum praenotione,* bk. 1, chaps. 1 and 3, n.n.: "praenotionis nomen ad quodcumque cognitionis genus referatur."
33. Ibid., bk. 4, chap. 9, n.n.
34. Cf. Albano Biondi, "Giovan Francesco Pico e la repressione della stregoneria: Qualche novità sui processi mirandolesi del 1522–23," in *Mirandola e le terre del basso corso del Secchia* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1984), 331–49. Biondi uses this important essay with slight changes as an introduction to his edition of Alberti's translation of *Strix*. See also Albano Biondi, "Streghe e eretici nei domini estensi all'epoca dell'Ariosto," in *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane* (Bari: De Donato, 1977), 165–99.
35. Leandro Alberti, "Alla molto illustre signora dalla Mirandola," in Giovan Francesco Pico, *Libro detto Strega,* trans. Leandro Alberti (Venice: Marsilio, 1989), 51.

36. For a detailed analysis of the Mirandola trial, see Albano Biondi, introduction to *Libro detto Strega*, 9–41.
37. Alberti, "Alla molto illustre signora dalla Mirandola," 52.
38. Ibid., 52–53. I have slightly modified Ed Peters's translation in Charles and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe*, 241.
39. Cf. Raffaela Castagnola, introduction to Pico, *Vita di Hieronimo Savonarola*, xxiii. Pico's text had a vast diffusion in its manuscript form along with a number of censored versions in vernacular. Its first edition came out in Paris in 1674. On this subject, see Elisabetta Schisto, "Introduzione," in Gianfrancesco Pico, *Vita Hieronymi Savonarolae* (Florence: Olschki, 1999), 13–29.
40. As Schmitt reminds us (*Gianfrancesco Pico*, 15), Pico dedicates his *De morte Christi* to Savonarola, addressing him as "pater religiosissime." In 1497 Pico also wrote *Invectiva in prophetiam fratris Hieronymi Savonarolae*, a defense of the friar. In 1498 Pico openly questioned his excommunication in *Opusculum de sententia excommunicationis iniusta pro Hieronymi Savonarolae innocentia*.
41. Pico, *Vita Hieronymi Savonarolae*, 152–53. Cf. *Vita di Hieronimo Savonarola*, chap. 18, pp. 54–55.
42. In chapter 19 of the Italian version (Pico, *Vita di Hieronimo Savonarola*, 57), the anonymous translator states that the debate about Savonarola's alleged prophetic gifts is something for men versed in theology and does not translate well into the vernacular ("sono cose sottili et da huomini dotti et instrutti in teologia . . . sì perché male si possono in lingua toscana acconciare").
43. Ibid., chap. 30, p. 190.
44. Ibid., 191.
45. Ibid., 192.
46. Zambelli, *Ambigua natura*, 179. Cf. Charles B. Schmitt, ed., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 680.
47. Giovan Francesco is the author of the *De reformandis moribus Oratio* (Speech on moral reformation), which he directed to Pope Leo X and the assembled Lateran Council. The *Oratio* was first published in 1520 and many times thereafter, particularly in Germany, where it was used against the Catholic Church. Although in the *Oratio* he never mentions the name of Savonarola, Pico borrows from the Dominican friar the idea that the reformation of the Church entails a return to its incorrupt origins. Cf. Giovan Francesco Pico, *De reformandis moribus Oratio* (Hagenau: Thomae Aushelmi, 1520). Pico strongly advocates the use of "severe laws" (severis legibus) to restore morality, which now "lies in ruins" (collapsi iacent). The Catholic hierarchy itself is responsible for this moral decadence. The Catholic Church must bring the Christian people back to "the holy principles of the first fathers" (sanctissima antiquorum decreta Patrum), for the signs of God's wrath are unquestionable and call for severe measures (severitate disciplinae). How can the pope tolerate the innumerable monstrosities (monstra) devastating the Catholic world? Churches are in the hands of sodomites and pimps. Since

our existence is plunged in the shadows of ignorance (ignorationis tenebris), we should turn to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, which will revive the laws of pristine virtue (norma priscae virtutis). The reformation of the Church is thus based on a "restored" reading of the scriptures along with a "healthful furor" (saluberrimum furorem) against those who have corrupted the Church. For a historical analysis of Pico's *Oratio,* see Cesare Vasoli, "Gianfrancesco Pico e l'*Oratio de reformandis moribus*," in *Giovanni e Gianfrancesco Pico: L'opera e la fortuna di due studenti ferraresi,* ed. Patrizia Castelli (Florence: Olschki, 1998), 229–60.

48. Gian Carlo Garfagnini, "La *Vita Savonarolae* di Gianfrancesco Pico," in Castelli, *Giovanni e Gianfrancesco Pico,* 291–303, esp. p. 297.
49. Giovan Francesco Pico [Johann Francisci Pici Mirandulani Domini Concordiaeque Comitis], *Strix sive de ludificatione daemonum* (Breslae: Martinus Weinrichius, 1601), 67–68. Cf. Charles and Peters, *Witchcraft in Europe,* 241–42.
50. Pico, *Strix,* 68.
51. Cf. Stephens, *Demon Lovers,* 280–81.
52. In Seneca's *Hercules furens,* Theseus recounts his descent to the netherworld. Around the Cocytus, a horrible and stagnant swamp, "resounds the mournful omen of the unpropitious strix" (omenque triste resonat infaustae strigis). I cite from the following edition: Seneca, *Teatro,* vol. 1, ed. Giovanni Vansino (Milan: Mondadori, 1993), v. 688, p. 176. Attacking a procuress (lena) who has taken his beloved away from him, the poet Tibullus, in an elegy, wishes this treacherous woman to scour the sepulchers in search of bones abandoned by wolves while the strix sings her violent song (Tibullo, *Elegie,* ed. Luciano Lenaz [Milan: Rizzoli, 1989], 1.5.52, 148).
53. Lucan, *The Civil War,* trans. J. D. Duff (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), bk. 6, v. 689, p. 354.
54. Ibid., vv. 620–22, p. 349.
55. Ibid., vv. 720 and 781, pp. 357 and 361, respectively. Cf. Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World,* trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 194: "Lucan describes a rite that puts our world in relation to the one down below, through two mediators; the first is the witch . . . and the second is the soul of the dead man." Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 89–90.
56. Pliny, *Natural History,* ed. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), vol. 3, bk. 11.232, p. 579: "It is an acknowledged fact that even in old days the screech-owl was one of the creatures under a curse, but what particular bird is meant I believe to be uncertain."
57. In *De strigimagarum daemonumque mirandis,* Prierio writes that the name *strix* refers to a night bird whose screams produce harsh sounds (3). A witch's second most common name, *lamia,* indicates a "bestia monstruosa" with horselike feet, who "tears to pieces her own children." Prierio also examines the term *lamia* as equivalent to *lania* (female butcher). The two Latin definitions (witch as strix and

as lamia/lania) merge the two major aspects of a witch's self, that is, her being as a "bird" (a nonhuman speaker) emitting harsh sounds that tear apart her listeners. In *De strigis* (ca. 1505), the Dominican Bernardo Rategno da Como believes that *strix* comes from *Styx* (Stige), which means "hell or infernal swamp, because these people are diabolical and infernal," or "it can come from the Greek *stigetos*, which corresponds to the Latin 'unhappiness.'" Cf. Johannes Franck, "Geschichte des Wortes Hexe," in Joseph Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter* (Bonn: Carl Georgi, 1901), 614–70; S. Abbiati, A. Agnoletto, and M. Lazzati, *La stregoneria* (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), 200–201; Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, 25–26.

58. Eusebius Hieronymus, *Vita S. Pauli primi eremitae*, 17–30.
59. Pico, *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium*, bk. 1, pp. 22–23.
60. Giovan Francesco makes a similar reference to the satyr in Jerome's narration in *De rerum praenotione*, chap. 9, n.n.
61. Pico, *Strix*, 69. Ovid, *Fasti*, bk. 6, vv. 135–38, p. 329. In *Metamorphoses* (bk. 7), Ovid writes that Medea prepares a potion for the "worn-out body" of Aeson (v. 252) with the "wings of the uncanny screech owl with the flesh as well" ("strigis infamis," v. 269).
62. Ovid, *Fasti*, bk. 6, vv. 131–34, 141, pp. 327–29.
63. Of course, it is also possible to hypothesize some sort of doppelgänger, a good elderly lady and a demonic being who takes on the good lady's form to harm children. See, for instance, a story presented in *De nugis curialum* (The courtiers' trifles), a compendium of supernatural events, by Walter Map (ca. 1140–ca.1209), a court cleric active at the Plantagenet court of Henry II. I found the following story from Map's book (pt. 2, chap. 14) in Andrew Joynes, ed., *Medieval Ghost Stories* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2001), 67–68. The story is about a "certain knight" whose babies were killed as soon as they were born. One night, a stranger "arrived, weary from a long journey." The knight's fourth baby had just been born, and he had placed "fires and lights all around and kept careful watch on the child." However, the stranger was the only one who stayed awake after midnight. He saw "an old lady bending over the cradle and seizing the child as if to cut its throat." This woman resembled "the noblest and most respectable woman in the city." In fact, she was a demon that had been molded in her likeness "so as to cast the disgrace of wicked deeds upon her noble soul."
64. Ovid, *Fasti*, bk. 6, v. 101, p. 325.
65. Ibid., vv. 101–2, p. 325. Ovid merges the words *Caro, carnis* (flesh) with *Cardea* (goddess of hinges).
66. Ibid., vv. 115–16, p. 327.
67. Ibid., vv. 129–30, p. 327.
68. Pico, *Strix*, 69.
69. Ovid, *Fasti*, bk. 6, v. 145, p. 329.
70. Ibid., vv. 155–57 and vv. 165–66, pp. 329–31.

71. Pico, *Strix,* 70.
72. Cf. Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *Malleus maleficarum,* trans. Montague Summers (New York: Dover, 1971), pt. 2, question 1, chap. 13 ("How Witch Midwives commit most Horrid Crimes when they either Kill Children or Offer them to Devils in most Accursed Wise"), 140–44. Pico mentions the *Malleus* at the beginning of the second chapter of *Strix,* when he speaks about the witches' alleged flight to the Sabbath (98–99).
73. Pico, *Strix,* 70–71.
74. Ibid., 73.
75. As Robert Lamberton explains in *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), Neoplatonic readers such as Porphyry or Proclus "transform[ed] the [Homeric] poems into revelations concerning the nature of the universe and the fate of the souls" (21–22).
76. In a later paragraph (78), Phronimus reminds Apistius that, according to Saint Justin martyr, Homer had competed with Orpheus in the creation of new mythic stories. Pico refers to the Pseudo-Justin's *Exhortation to the Greeks*. Cf. Justinus, *Cohortatio ad Graecos,* in *Opera,* vol. 1, ed. J. C. T. Otto (Jena: Mauke, 1842), chap. 17, p. 57.
77. In the *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer,* the pseudo-Plutarch reiterates that Homer is the primary source of every form of philosophical and scientific knowledge. Cf. [Plutarch], *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer,* ed. J. J. Keaney and Robert Lamberton (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996). As Keaney and Lamberton explain, "the author of the *Essay* . . . celebrate[s] Homer . . . by demonstrating that Homer is the source of all philosophy" (10). The pseudo-Plutarch concludes his work as follows: "Some use his poetry for divination, just like the oracles of gods" (311).
78. Pico, *Strix,* 73–74. Homer, *Odyssey,* trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1997), bk. 11, vv. 27–29, p. 250.
79. Homer, *Odyssey,* bk. 11, vv. 16–18 and 39, p. 250.
80. Ibid., v. 42, p. 250.
81. Ibid., vv. 261–62 and 265–66, pp. 256–57.
82. Ibid., vv. 79–80, p. 251.
83. Ibid., vv. 106–7, p. 252.
84. Pico, *Strix,* 74.
85. Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* vol. 2, bk. 11, v. 277, p. 141.
86. Ibid., vv. 268–72, p. 139. Lucifer is the Latin name of Phosphorus (or Heosphorus, Eosphorus), the morning star.
87. Ibid., vv. 301–25, pp. 140–42.
88. Ibid., vv. 342–45, p. 145.
89. Pico, *Strix,* 76. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid,* vol. 2, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), bk. 7, vv. 764–69; Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* vol. 2, bk. 15, vv. 533–34.

90. Giovan Francesco Pico faithfully reproduces a long passage from Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors,* 1.261–62: "Stesichorus [says] . . . that it was because he had raised up some of the men who had fallen at Thebes,— Polyanthus of Cyrenê . . . that it was because he had cured the daughters of Proteus who had become mad owing to the wrath of Hera,— Panyasis, that it was owing to his raising up the dead body of Tyndareôs,— Staphylus . . . that it was because he had healed Hippolytus when he was fleeing from Troezen— . . . Telesarchus . . . that it was because he set himself to raise up Orion" (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors,* vol. 4, trans. R. G. Bury [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949], 147–49). This quotation is the first indirect reference to Sextus Empiricus in *Strix*.
91. Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* vol. 2, bk. 15, vv. 625–26, p. 409.
92. Ibid., vv. 669–70, p. 413.
93. Ibid., vv. 683–84, p. 413.
94. Pico, *Strix,* 78. Cf. Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life,* ed. John Dillon and Jackson Hershbell (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), chap. 19, p. 115.
95. Augustine, *City of God,* vol. 4, bk. 15, chap. 23, p. 549.
96. Pico, *Strix,* 81.
97. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses,* vol. 1, trans. J. Arthur Hanson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), bk. 3.21, p. 165.
98. Pico, *Strix,* 80–81.
99. On this subject, see Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric,* chap. 1.
100. Pico, *Strix,* 82.
101. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses,* bk. 3.23, p. 169.
102. Virgil, *Eclogues,* trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), eclogue 6, vv. 48 and 50–51. Pico, *Strix,* 83; cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* bk. 15, vv. 326–27.
103. Pico, *Strix,* 85.
104. Palaephatus, *De non credendis fabulosis narrationibus,* trans. Philippus Phasinianus, in Hygini, *Fabularum liber* (Paris: Ioannem Parant Via Iacobaea, 1578), 110v. Palaephatus revisits some famous myths, such as those of the centaurs, Actaeon, Orion, the sphinx, Orpheus, and Hydra, and tries to bring back their original meanings. How could we possibly believe that Actaeon was devoured by his own dogs? (112r). Actaeon signifies a man who, obsessed with hunting, neglects his social duties and is thus "devoured" by his debts (112v).
105. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae,* question 54, art. 5, p. 515.
106. Pico, *Strix,* 85.
107. Ibid., 84; Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana,* trans. F. C. Conybeare (New York: Macmillan, 1912), bk. 4, chap. 25, p. 403.
108. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana,* bk. 4, chap. 25, p. 406.
109. Pico, *Strix,* 86.
110. Ibid., 87.

111. Giovan Francesco's position on poetry evokes a Counter-Reformation sensibility. See, for instance, Lorenzo Gambara, *Tractatio de perfectae poësos ratione* (Rome: Zanetti, 1576). Like Pico, Gambara believes that all the myths contained in ancient poetry come from Satan. If the mind dwells on this kind of depraved literature, it becomes "distracted completely from heavenly things to the constant pursuit of vanities" (11–12). I quote from Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 1:306. Gambara (1506–96) was the author of several devotional texts, among them P*recationes ad Deum* (1572) and *Rerum sacrarum liber* (1577).
112. Giovan Francesco Pico, *On the Imagination,* trans. Harry Caplan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), chap. 1, pp. 25–27. Cf. Aristotle, *On the Soul,* bk. 3, 429a3–4 (in *The Complete Works,* vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995]): "As sight is the most highly developed sense, the name *fantasía* (imagination) has been formed from *fáos* (light) because it is not possible to see without light" (682).
113. Pico, *On the Imagination,* chap. 3, p. 31.
114. Ibid., chap. 4, p. 37. Pico also stresses that imagination "proceeds from the palace of the heart and ascends to the citadel of the head, where it establishes its seat and residence."
115. Aristotle, *On the Soul,* bk. 3, 431a15–18: "To the thinking soul images serve as they were contents of perception (and when it asserts or denies them to be good or bad it avoids or pursues them). That is why the soul never thinks without an image" (685). Following a well-known tenet of Renaissance demonology, Pico reminds us that both good and bad angels can affect our imagination (*On the Imagination,* chap. 8, p. 55).
116. In book 2 of *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium,* Giovan Francesco analyzes *phantasia* in the light of Sextus Empiricus's *Against the Logicians*. What is the connection between the external object, our sensorial impression of it, and its memory? We say, Pico argues, that our "imagination" is somehow similar to the external object. Our physical conditions modify the way we remember a specific event or object (69r). Pico mentions Sextus Empiricus's skeptical view of imagination and memory (68v). Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians:* "the presentation [phantasía] is an effect of the object presented, and the object presented, and the object presented is the cause of the presentation and is capable of impressing the sensitive faculty, and the effect is different from the cause which produces it" (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians,* trans. R. G. Bury [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935], bk. 1, pp. 203–5).
117. Pico, *On the Imagination,* chap. 7, p. 45.
118. Ibid., chap. 8, p. 55.
119. Ibid., chap. 12, p. 93.
120. Pico, *Strix,* 87.

121. Ibid., 94; Pico, *Libro detto Strega*, 96. Turini, the second translator, uses a more respectful "Ohimé!" (Pico, *La strega*, 81).
122. Pico, *Strix*, 95.
123. Ibid., 97.
124. Paolo Grillando writes that witches believe that their Diana and Herodias are real divinities ("credunt illas Dianam et Herodiadem esse veras deas, et in eis multum divinitatis et numinis esse"; Grillando, *Tractatus duo*, question 7, p. 129).
125. Among many others, Phronimus mentions Cyrene, mother of the shepherd Aristaeus. According to Virgil, she is a river nymph. Cf. Virgil, *Georgics*, bk. 4, vv. 321–22. Virgil gives a detailed list of the nymphs living with Cyrene (vv. 333–44).
126. I refer to this Italian translation: canon *Episcopi*, in Abbiati, Agnoletto, and Lazzati, *La stregoneria*, 23–24. The canon *Episcopi* is considered the oldest text mentioning the "game of Diana." The canon is difficult to date. When it became part of the *Decretum magistri Gratiani*, the canon acquired great influence. Cf. Abbiati, Agnoletto, and Lazzati, *La stregoneria*, 21–23. As Albano Biondi stresses in his accurate edition of Leandro Alberti's translation of *Strix* (Pico, *Libro detto Strega*, 209), the canon does not believe in the reality of night flights to the Sabbath. Biondi reminds us that in the Dominican Bernardo of Como's *De strigiis* (early sixteenth century) we find an analysis of the canon *Episcopi*. Bernardo holds that modern striges are different from the depraved women mentioned in the canon. According to Bernardo, the phenomenon of modern witchcraft is less than two centuries old. I find a complete translation of *De strigiis* in *La stregoneria*, 200–14.
127. Pico, *Strix*, 101.
128. Caesar, *Gallic War*, trans H. J. Edwards (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), bk. 7.37, p. 433.
129. In Franco Cardini, *Gostanza la strega di San Miniato* (Bari: Laterza, 2001), the author introduces the trial of Gostanza, an old woman of the Italian village Bagno di Casciana (1594). The woman confesses that a devil by the name of Polletto (little chicken or rooster) used to take her to the Sabbath (*Gostanza*, 149–50). Roosters were Asclepius's sacred animals. The image of the rooster is also linked to the biblical episode of Peter rejecting Christ (*Gostanza*, viii).
130. Caesar, *Gallic War*, bk. 7.38.
131. Ibid., bk. 7.40, p. 439.
132. Ibid., bk. 7.42, p. 441.
133. Pico, *Strix*, 102.
134. Herodotus, *Histories*, bk.2, chap. 37.
135. Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 3, bk. 10.26, p. 325.
136. Pico, *Strix*, 110. Cf. Biondi, introduction to *Libro detto Strega*, 22–24. Turini translates the priest's name as "Bornio" (*La strega*, 101).

137. The Inquisitor Dicastes also mentions "someone else" (alius), whose demonic lover presented herself as Fiorina (Pico, *Strix*, 113). From Alberti's translation we learn that Pico refers to a certain "Pivetto" (*Libro detto Strega*, 128). In his version, Turini is faithful to Pico's Latin ("un altro"; *La strega*, 105). Cf. Biondi, introduction to *Libro detto Strega*, 17–22. Biondi explains that Marco Piva (Pivetto) found himself at the center of a legal dispute because, although he was not a citizen of Mirandola, he was arrested and tortured by the Inquisitor Armellini, who worked and resided in Mirandola. Piva was executed in 1523.
138. Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, 98. However, Stephens points out that the name Armellina echoes the surname of the Inquisitor Armellini.
139. Pico, *Strix*, 119. Origen, *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, *PG* 16, pt. 3 (Paris: D'Amboise, 1860), bk. 4.260–61, p. 3228. Also bk. 1.12–13, p. 3026.
140. Pico, *Strix*, 116–17.
141. Ibid., 125.
142. Leandro Alberti's translation expands the concept of irony: "irony, that is, simulation and falsity" ("ironia, overo simulatione e fittione"; *Libro detto Strega*, 145). Turini chooses a literal version (*La strega*, 119).
143. Pico, *Strix*, 126.
144. Jean Gerson, *On Mystical Theology: First Treatise*, 9.8, in *Early Works*, trans. Brian Patrick McGuire (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 275.
145. Gerson, *On Mystical Theology: First Treatise*, 14.4, p. 280.
146. Pico, *Strix*, 127.
147. Ibid., 127–28.
148. Ibid., 131, 132. At times Pico uses *quaestiuncula* instead of *quaestio*.
149. Ibid., 132.
150. Genesis 37:12–36 and 37–43.
151. Pico, *Strix*, 130; "sunt incertae, adeo duplicis famae, saepeque multiplicis." Alberti translates "duplicis famae" as "written in two ways," "scritte in duo modi" (*Libro detto Strega*, 153), whereas Turini uses "double," "doppie" (*La strega*, 124).
152. Ibid., 133.
153. Ibid., 131; "tamen Apistio id non faceret satis, qui non multum hausisse literarum videtur, quae *politiores* sunt" (emphasis mine).
154. Cf. Giovan Francesco Pico, *De studio divinae et humanae philosophiae*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Basel: Henric Petrina, 1573), bk. 1, chap. 6, p. 18.
155. Pico, *Strix*, 131: "orationem continuam, apte, distincte, ornateque compositam."
156. Pico, *De studio*, bk. 1, chap. 8, pp. 25–27.
157. Ibid., 26.
158. Deuteronomy 21:10–13.
159. Giovan Francesco clarifies his stance on eloquence in his famous epistolary exchange with Pietro Bembo on the problem of literary imitation (1512). In the two short epistolary treatises now commonly called *De imitatione*, it is clear that Bembo and Pico do not understand one another because their concept of

imitation serves two very different purposes. Cf. Giorgio Santangelo, ed., *Le epistole "De imitatione" di Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola e di Pietro Bembo* (Florence: Olschki, 1954). In his defense of Ciceronian rhetoric, Bembo expresses himself in vaguely Neoplatonic terms and stresses that in the act of writing the author transforms himself into his text (42). The pursuit of clarity and beauty thus reflects an inner search for the beautiful (59–60). In imitating Cicero and the other great Latin authors, contemporary writers strive to achieve an inner greatness. For Giovan Francesco, the obsessive attention toward classical style is a form of idolatry. Pico holds that true imitation exclusively aims to lead the intellect toward God (37). Since human passions are infinite, it is incorrect to focus on a selected number of models (34).

160. Pico, *De studio,* bk. 2, chap. 1, p. 28. As I have already pointed out, Jean Gerson is a constant presence in Giovan Francesco Pico's works. On Gerson's insistence on the power of the scriptures, see for instance his *On Mystical Theology: Second Treatise,* 8.9, in *Early Works:* "you will find nothing in all of scripture that is unsuited in this mode of reflection for use in the prayer with which God is pleased. . . . Everything that is read in scripture, or everything that is understood there, does it not resound with one of these things: either our wretchedness, or the evil of our adversaries, or the majesty of God in power, wisdom, and goodness?" (312).

161. Pico, *De studio,* bk. 2, chap. 2, p. 30. I find Giovanni Pico's letter to Ermolao Barbaro (1453–1493) in Eugenio Garin, ed., *Prosatori latini del quattrocento* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1952), 805–23. Giovanni Pico says that a philosopher/contemplator must have the "muses" in his soul and not on his lips (814). Pico also writes that true philosophy offers itself naked, that is, stripped of every embellishment (816).

162. In the important epistle to his nephew Giovan Francesco, Giovanni Pico speaks of the "luminous darkness of contemplation" (lucidissima contemplationis tenebra), which a Christian philosopher can only attain through a constant dialogue with the scriptures (Garin, *Prosatori latini del quattrocento,* 830).

163. Pico, *De studio,* bk. 2, chap. 7, p. 38.

164. Giovan Francesco also mentions *Heptaplus,* his uncle's important "cabalistic" interpretation of Genesis (ibid., 39).

165. Giovan Francesco Pico, *De morte Christi et propria cogitanda,* in *Opera omnia,* 2:42.

166. Ibid., bk. 1, chap. 6, p. 51.

167. Ibid., bk. 2, chap. 7, p. 79. Pico reiterates that the Catholic Church, teacher of Truth (Magistra veritatis), is our sole support. Pico dedicates a specific poem to the theme of death. In the first verses of *Excitatio a somno moribundae vitae,* he reminds the reader that he lives at the banks of the river Lethe and that his life is a treacherous sleep.

168. Pico, *Strix,* 140. Alberti's translation omits the reference to the "heroic" times and alludes to the "Trojan and Greek barons" (*Libro detto Strega,* 168). More accurate

is Turini's version, which renders Apistius's reply in Latin as "Quidni?" with an enthusiastic "Sì, certo!" "Yes, of course!" (*La strega*, 136).

169. Pico, *Strix*, 139. "To Aphrodite," in *The Homeric Hymns*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), vv. 82 and 110, pp. 411 and 413, respectively.
170. Ibid., v. 167, p. 417.
171. Pico, *Strix*, 142. As usual, Alberti's translation makes Pico's Latin more explicit: "tentavano l'huomini del maledetto vitio della sodomia" ("they tempted men with the damned vice of sodomy"; *Libro detto Strega*, 171).
172. Pico, *Strix*, 143.
173. For a detailed and interesting analysis of Giovan Francesco Pico's view of sodomy, see Tamar Herzig, "The Demons' Reaction to Sodomy: Witchcraft and Homosexuality in Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola's *Strix*," in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 1 (2003): 53–72. Herzig underscores that "Pico's discussion of sodomizing demons is based on mythical tales that he uses as ancient precedents" (54).
174. Pico, *Strix*, 138. Only Alberti identifies this strix as Don Benedetto (*Libro detto Strega*, 164).
175. Pico, *Strix*, 134. Leviticus 20:27; Exodus 22:17. Cf. Deuteronomy 18:9–12.
176. Pico, *Strix*, 147. Cf. "In Venerem Hymnus," v. 9 ("apparens et occulta"), in *Orphei hymni*, trans. Renato Perdiero, in *Musaei vetustissimi poetae opusculum* (Paris: Wecheli, 1538), 98.
177. Giovan Francesco Pico, *De Venere et Cupidinis expellendis* [The expulsion of Venus and Cupid] (Rome: Mazochius, 1513), vv. 1–8, n. n. "Idalian" refers to the mountain city in Cyprus sacred to Venus. Dione, Venus's mother, is also used to indicate Venus herself (e.g., Ovid, *Fasti*, bk. 2.61).
178. Pico, *De Venere*, vv. 20 and 22, n. n.
179. Ibid., vv. 23–28, n. n.
180. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, bk. 1, v. 453, p. 35.
181. Ibid., vv. 545–52, p. 41.
182. Pico, *De Venere*, vv. 33 and 36.
183. Ibid., vv. 44–48.
184. Ibid., v. 80.
185. Ibid., vv. 103–5: "celeri refugit post terga volatu."
186. Ibid., v. 305.
187. Ibid., vv. 306–8.
188. Ibid., v. 318.
189. Pico, *Strix*, 159.

CHAPTER 2 ⸸ To Recall the Spirits' Past

1. Girolamo Cardano, *The Book of My Life*, trans. Jean Stoner (New York: Dutton, 1930), 242. Cf. Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, 198–99.

2. Cigogna's book was published in the same year in both Vicenza and Brescia. Strozzi Cigogna was born in Vicenza in 1568 and graduated from the University of Padua in 1590. His literary career began with a traditional collection of poems, which was followed by *Delia*, an uninteresting pastoral play (1593). Cigogna died in Venice in 1613. I have consulted the following Italian edition: Strozzi Cigogna, *Il palagio de gl'incanti et delle gran meraviglie de gli spiriti et di tutta la natura loro* (Vicenza, 1605).

   For a good analysis of the *Palagio*, see Pier Cesare Ioli Zorattini, "*Il Palagio de gl'incanti* di Strozzi Cicogna, gentiluomo e teologo vicentino del Cinquecento," *Studi Veneziani* 11 (1969): 365–98. Zorattini's accurate essay is particularly insightful when he points out Cigogna's reading of Martin del Rio's treatise on demonology.
3. This architectural reference in fact disappears from the Latin translation altogether.
4. Cigogna, "Sommario," in *Palagio*, n.n.
5. Bk. 4, chap. 1, of *Magiae omnifariae* is about the "demonic pact" that binds humans to devils (438–55).
6. Tomaso Garzoni mentions his forthcoming book by the title "Palazzo de gl'incanti" at the end of *La sinagoga degli ignoranti* (The ignorant people's synagogue), which came out in 1589. I refer to thi s modern edition: Tomaso Garzoni, *La sinagoga degli ignoranti*, in *Opere*, ed. Paolo Cherchi (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), 519–22. As Cherchi explains, Tomaso Garzoni died four days before the publication of the second edition of *La sinagoga* (June 12, 1589) and never completed the "Palazzo de gl'incanti." Bartolomeo Garzoni, Tomaso's brother, finished the manuscript and published it with the new title, *Seraglio de gli stupori del mondo*. Bartolomeo unjustly accused Cigogna of plagiarism.
7. Garzoni speaks of the spiritual beings in several passages of the *Seraglio*. However, his most interesting remarks about the spirits' physicality are in the "apartment of oracles" ("room three," whether the oracles come from the heavens, the demons, or the exhalations of the earth) and in the "apartment of dreams" ("room three," on the origins of dreams). I have consulted this edition: Tomaso Garzoni, *Seraglio de gli stupori del mondo, diviso in dieci appartamenti secondo i vari e ammirabili oggetti* (Venice: Ambrosio and Bartolomeo Dei, 1613).
8. Cf. Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory*, trans. Jeremy Parzen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 191: "In the age of the printing press—more so than during the age of writing—the text is perceived as a set of places, as something that is positioned in space. The human faculties that generate the text (that is the mind, memory) are perceived in an analogous fashion." In her seminal analysis of the relationship between memory and invention (inventio), Bolzoni later mentions Garzoni's *Seraglio* (but not Cigogna's *Theater*) to prove "how widespread is the tendency to perceive the text in architectural terms" (212).
9. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), sec. 2, member 1, subsec. 2, p. 180.

10. Ibid., 182.
11. Ibid., 183.
12. Ibid., 186–96.
13. Ibid., 185.
14. *Index librorum prohibitorum (1600–1966)*, ed. J. M. De Bujanda (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2002), 222. Cf. Zorattini, "*Il Palagio de gl'incanti* di Strozzi Cicogna," 366.
15. Strozzi Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, trans. Gaspar Ens (Cologne: Conradi Butgenij, 1606), 1.1, 1.
16. Ibid., 1–2. Book 2 of *De natura deorum* reports the Stoic view of the creation. Cigogna quotes from bk. 2.2.4: "when we gaze upward to the sky and contemplate the heavenly bodies, what can be so obvious and so manifest as that there must exist some power possessing transcendent intelligence by whom these things are ruled?" (Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 125).

    On the important presence of Stoicism in the Renaissance, see Eugenio Garin, *Il ritorno degli antichi* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1983), esp. chap. 6; Pierre-François Moreau, "Les trois étapes du stoïcisme moderne," in *Le stoïcisme au XVIe et au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999), 11–27.
17. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 13.
18. In book 12of the *Confessions*, which is a dense analysis of the creation according to Genesis, Augustine speaks of this metaphorical connection: "where is that Heaven of Heavens, O Lord, which we hear of in the words of the Psalmist: 'The heaven of heavens is the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men.' Where art thou, O heaven, which we see not? . . . In comparison of that Heaven of Heavens, even the heaven of this our earth is but earth: yea, both these great bodies may not absurdly be called earth, in comparison of that I know not what manner of heaven, which is the Lord's, and not given to the sons of men." I quote from Augustine, *Confessions*, vol. 2, trans. William Watts (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), bk. 12, cap. 2, pp. 289–91.
19. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.2, 293. The original Italian doesn't distinguish between "sign" and "mark" (segno). Cf. Cigogna, *Palagio*, 202.
20. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.1.4, 44.
21. Ibid., 1.1.3, 35. Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum*, bk. 1, chap. 1, p. 3.
22. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.1.3, 36. Cigogna refers to Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1, question 56.
23. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.1.3, 43.
24. Augustine, *Trinity*, bk. 3.27, p. 144. Cf. also bk. 4.31, p. 176.
25. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.1, 138.
26. Ibid., 139. Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum*, bk. 1.1, p. 3: "the inquiry into the nature of the gods . . . is . . . highly interesting in relation to the theory of the soul."
27. In the opening chapter of *De inventoribus rerum* (1499), the first encyclopedic description of discoveries and inventions, the Italian humanist Polydore Vergil

writes that men first developed the notion of the gods thanks to the spirits. I refer to this recent Latin-English edition: Polydore Vergil, *On Discovery*, ed. Brian P. Copenhaver (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). The first sentence of Vergil's treatise reads as follows: "Long ago when there were demons in the earth—aerial or infernal spirits whom the sacred writers call the princes of the world—they practiced divination with idols" (1.1, 27). Men, Vergil says, slowly moved from idols to the concept of "invisible spirits," which led them to accept as true "the notion that there were many gods, and the idea enjoyed such great success that the celestial population came almost to outnumber the mortal" (1.2, 29).

28. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.1, 138. The reference to the Sadducees is unusual. Renaissance treatises on spiritual beings generally oppose Christian theology to pagan creeds without specific references to heretical ideas present within the Scriptures. In the New Testament, the Sadducees are depicted as adversaries of Jesus who test him with theological questions (Mark 12:18–27; Matt. 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40). In the Acts of the Apostles, they work against the early Christians (4:1; 5:17). According to Josephus's *Antiquities* (2.8.165) and the Gospel according to Mark (12:18), the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Furthermore, in the Acts (28:3) Cigogna finds the following key statement: "the Sadducees say there is neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit." I have consulted the following studies: Jean Le Moyne, *Les sadducéens* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1972), 121–35 and 141–53 on the Church Fathers' interpretations; Otto Schwankl, *Die Sadduzäerfrage (Mk 12, 18–27 parr)* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1987), chaps. 15 and 16.
29. In his commentary on Plotinus, Ficino reminds us that demons are often called "gods" or better yet "infimi dii" (*In Plotinum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2.2, 1708).
30. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.1, 140. In *The Lives of the Philosophers* ("Zeno," 7.156–57), Diogenes Laertius writes that the Stoics believed in the materiality of the soul and in its survival after the body's death. For an analysis of Stoic theology, see Myrto Dragona-Monachou, *The Stoic Arguments for the Existence and the Providence of the Gods* (Athens: S. Saripolos' Library, 1976), esp. 23–36, 222–24.
31. However, Epicurus's faith in the real existence of the gods is questioned in a key passage of the first part of Cicero's *De natura deorum* (bk. 1.44, p. 119).
32. Ibid., bk. 1.18, p. 49.
33. Ibid., bk. 1.19, p. 51. How to justify Cigogna's assertion that the Epicureans did not believe in the existence of superior beings? As R. W. Sharples summarizes, "for many ancient critics Epicurus' recognition of the existence of gods at all was simply evidence that he did not have the courage of his convictions. To such critics there was no real difference between belief in gods who did not care for our world, on the one hand, and out-and-out atheism, on the other" (Sharples, *Stoics, Epicureans and Skeptics* [New York: Routledge, 1996], 56–57).

Sextus Empiricus, another possible source of Cigogna's *Theater,* dedicates a thorough analysis of the ancients' contradictory opinions on the gods in *Against the Physicists*. In particular, on Epicurus: "according to some, Epicurus in his popular exposition allows the existence of God, but in expounding the real nature of things he does not allow it" (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936], 1.58–59, 35).

34. Cicero, *De natura deorum,* bk. 2.2, 1p. 27. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, "Zeno," in *Lives of the Philosophers,* 7.139.

35. Cicero, *De natura deorum,* bk. 2.66, 283. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, "Zeno," in *Lives of the Philosophers,* 7.151.

36. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae,* 1.2.1, 142. Cf. Epictetus, *Discourses,* 2.20.9–10. Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists,* 1.131, 71: "Why then do the Stoics assert that men have a certain just relation and connection with one another and with the Gods? . . . If justice is conceived because of a certain fellowship between men and men and between men and Gods, if Gods do not exist, it must follow that justice also is non-existent. But justice is existent; we must declare, therefore, that Gods also exist."

37. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae,* 1.2.2, 145.

38. Ibid., 146. In *Platonic Theology* (3.9), Proclus posits three monads (being, life, and intellect), which are connected to three modes of being (intelligible, intelligible-intellective, and intellective) and to the triad (permanence, procession, and conversion). Proclus summarizes his philosophical view at the beginning of book 4. Cf. the following French-Greek edition: Proclus, *Theologie platonicienne* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1981), bk. 4.1.6–13, pp. 6–7.

For a clear and introductory synthesis of Renaissance pneumatology with a particular emphasis on its religious connotations, see H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 90–192.

39. Cf. Plato, *Cratylus,* 397d–e. In "The Obsolescence of the Oracles," Plutarch writes that "Hesiod was the first to set forth clearly and distinctly four classes of rational beings: gods, demigods [daímonas], heroes, in this order, and, last of all, men" (415b, 379). Cf. Ficino, *Iamblichus de mysteriis,* in *Opera omnia,* vol. 2.2, p. 1874. On the differences between demons, heroes, and souls, see 1879. I have also consulted this French-Greek edition: Iamblicus, *Les mystères d'Egypte* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1966), 2.1–2, 77–79. For Porphyry's concept of demons, see Augustine, *City of God,* bk. 10.11, pp. 297–307. Augustine summarizes the letter Porphyry wrote to the Egyptian Anebon about the different kinds of demons.

40. In *Cratylus* 398d, Socrates connects *hero* to *eros,* because every hero was born from divine–human intercourse. In a previous paragraph, Cigogna defines the Platonic *nous* as the only "son of God" and adds that no other creature exists between God and the *anima mundi* (Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*).

41. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.2, 150.
42. Ibid., 1.2.3, 160–61. Girolamo Cardano, *De rerum subtilitate* (Basel, 1557), 656. Cardano mentions the same episode in bk. 15, chap. 93, of *De rerum varietate* (Avignon: Matthaeum Vincentium, 1558), 808–9.
43. Cf. Plutarch, "Obsolescence of the Oracles," 418e, 399. Plutarch mentions Hesiod's belief in the demons' mortality in a previous passage (415d).
44. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.3, 162–63. Plutarch, "Obsolescence of the Oracles," 419b, 401.
45. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.3, 164.
46. Ibid., 1.2.4, 164–65.
47. Ibid., 167.
48. Cigogna finds this story in Cicero's *On Divination*: Cicero, *De divinatione* (Falconer ed.), 1.53, 281–83. In the original Italian, Cigogna defines the spirit as "a young man with a noble and nice face" (un giovane di faccia nobile e gratiosa; *Palagio*, 112).
49. Cigogna changes Cicero's interpretation about the third part of the spirit's message. Whereas Cicero believes that Eudemus's soul returned home, Cigogna states that Eudemus's soul went to his "real residence" (vera habitatione), namely, heaven.
50. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.4, 169; Cicero, *De divinatione*, 1.56.
51. Aristotle, *On Memory*, in Barnes, *Complete Works*, 449b24–25, 1:714. On medicine and memory in the Middle Ages, see Paolo Rossi, *Clavis universalis: Arti della memoria e logica combinatoria da Lullo a Leibniz* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1960), 32–35. On the physicality of memory in the Renaissance, see Bolzoni, *Gallery of Memory*, chap. 4, esp. 130–39. On memory and demonology, see Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, 137–39.
52. Aristotle, *On Memory*, 450a.32–450b1, 715.
53. Genesis 19:1. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.4, 180.
54. Cf. Augustine, *Trinity*, 2.22: "Lot would not have worshiped with his face to the ground if he had not recognized them as angels of God. So why does he offer them board and lodging as though they were in need of such human treatment?" (112).
55. Genesis 18:1. But the Bible states that "Yahweh appeared to him." Augustine discusses this biblical episode in *Trinity*, 2.19–22. Was one of the three men the Word? But "how could he appear to Abraham as one man before he done this [born of the virgin]?" (112). The main problem is that the three men appear as equal, but "Abraham only addresses one man as Lord while he sees three" (*Trinity*, 2.21).

    In the same chapter, Cigogna also mentions the tenth plague, Yahweh's killing of all the firstborn in Egypt (Exod. 12:29). For Cigogna, an angel caused these deaths. We may justify this incongruity by saying that here Cigogna is stressing that angels are the enactment of God's will. Angels work as intermediaries between God and His actions. In "Apartment of Dreams," in *Seraglio*, Garzoni discusses the same biblical episodes (362).
56. Tobit 5:4.

57. Tobit 12:18.
58. Luke 24:4. In John 20:11–12, two angels in white appear to Mary of Magdala only.
59. Matthew 8:28–34.
60. In *De malis angelis*, Francisco Suarez believes that "sadness" (tristitia) may afflict a devil. However, we must interpret a demonic sadness as the intellectual awareness of a loss (bk. 7, chap. 5, p. 977).
61. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.6, 188.
62. Ibid., 189.
63. Augustine, *In psalmum 103*, *PL* 37 (Paris: Thibaud, 1865), sermon 1.15, p. 1348.
64. Cigogna mentions Aristotle's *Physics*, bk. 4. My quotation is from *Physics*, 208a29–30.
65. Aristotle, *Physics*, 211a13–14.
66. Ibid., 212a20–21.
67. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.6, 193; John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1955), chap. 17.2, p. 69.
68. Cf. Joannis Duns Scoti, *Quaestiones in librum secundum sententiarum*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 11 (Paris: Vivès, 1893), dist. 2, question 6.11, p. 342.
69. Ibid., question 6.13, p. 343. Cf. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1, question 52, art. 2.
70. Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, chap. 13.4, p. 58. Duns Scotus rejects Damascene's connection between the angels' being and their operations (*Qaestiones*, dist. 2, question 6.1, p. 329); he stresses that the bishop of Paris had condemned this idea. Etienne Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot* (Paris: Vrin, 1952), explains that Duns Scotus refers to the articles condemned by Etienne Tempier in 1227 (408).
71. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.7, 200; Augustine, *De spiritu et anima*, *PL* 40 (Paris: Garnier, 1887), chap. 18, pp. 793–94.
72. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.7, 204.
73. Ibid., 197.
74. Ibid., 196. Cf. J. Chrysostomus, *Homiliae in Genesin*, *PG* 53 (Paris: D'Amboise, 1859), "In cap. 5 et 6 Gen. homil. 22," 187–88. John Chrysostomus also stresses that in the Bible the expression "filius Dei" is never applied to angels. According to Chrysostomus, the Bible, by underscoring the importance of sight in the encounter between "God's sons" and women, wants us to understand that the sin of these male beings was an "unbridled lust" (effrenata concupiscentia; 189).
75. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1.73, 35; Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.7, 205.
76. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.8, 206.
77. Hieronimus, *Commentarius in epistolam ad Titum*, *PL* 26 (Paris: Garnier, 1884), cap. 1, p. 594. Cf. Ambrosius, *Hexameron*, *PL* 14 (Paris: Garnier, 1882), bk. 1, p. 142. Commenting on "In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram," Ambrose writes that, whereas the world "began to be" (coepit esse), the Word had been in eternity. But the angels too existed before the world.

78. Cassian, "De initio principatuum, seu potestatum," chap. 7 in *Vigintiquatuor collationes*, *PL* 49 (Paris: Thibaud, 1874), collatio 8, p. 732.
79. Augustine, *City of God*, bk. 11, chap. 9, p. 457.
80. Ibid., 461, 461–63.
81. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.8, 208.
82. Ibid., 1.2.9, 216.
83. Cf. Ezekiel 28. Although *Magiae* makes very rare and vague allusions to the Koran, in this chapter Cigogna may remember that, according to the Arab sacred text, God placed man as his deputy on earth: "And We [God] said to the angels: 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam,' they all prostrated themselves except Satan, who in his pride refused and became an unbeliever." I quote from "The Cow," in *The Koran*, trans. N. J. Dawood (New York: Penguin, 1999), 2.32, 13. This interpretation of Satan's pride is a recurrent theme in the Koran. For instance, in "The Heights" (7.11), Satan complains as follows: "'I am nobler than he,' he [Satan] replied. 'You created me from fire, but You created him from clay'" (109).
84. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.9, 217.
85. Thomas (*Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1, question 93, art. 1) explains that "likeness is essential to image, and that an image adds something to likeness. . . . An image is so called because it is produced as an imitation of something else." I quote from this translation: Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1:885–86. What is the difference between "image" and "likeness"? Likeness may be seen "as prior to image, inasmuch as it is something more common than image . . . and it may be considered as subsequent to image, inasmuch as it signifies a certain perfection of the image" (question 93, art. 9, p. 900). Thomas is unsure, though, about the relationship between "likeness" and the human body. Whereas our soul is "without a doubt" in the image of God, "the soul's inferior parts, or even . . . the body" is in God's likeness. However, as I said, "likeness" also could be considered as the something that expresses the perfection of a given image (901).
86. In *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine dwells on the meaning of Adam's body before and after his fall. In particular, Augustine states: "Adam's body before he sinned could be said to be mortal in one respect and immortal in another: mortal because he was able to die, immortal because he was able not to die" (bk. 6, chap. 25). I quote from the Taylor translation (204) Augustine holds that "Adam's body, a natural and therefore mortal body, which by justification would become spiritual and therefore truly immortal, in reality by sin was made not mortal (because it was that already) but rather a dead thing" (205).
87. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.2.9, 218.
88. Ibid., 221–22.
89. Ibid., 1.2.10, 223.
90. Ibid., 1.2.12, 240.

91. I find the acts of this council in Joannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck, 1960), v. 12, pp. 384l–x. Cigogna's quotation is on pp. 384q–r.

92. Ibid., pp. 384m and q. For the angel Uriel, see 2 Esdras 4:1–2. In 1 Enoch 19, Uriel speaks about the angels who mated with women, as is reported in 1 Enoch 6. The text reads as follows: "And Uriel said to me: 'Here shall stand in many different appearances the spirits of the angels that have united themselves with women. They have defiled the people and will lead them into error so that they will offer sacrifices to the demons as unto gods, until the great day of judgment in which they shall be judged till they are finished.'" I quote from this translation: James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament: Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:23. 1 Enoch 20 mentions Michael and Raguel as two of the seven archangels: "Raguel, one of the holy angels who take vengeance for the world and for the luminaries. Michael, one of the holy angels, for [he is] obedient in his benevolence over the people and the nations" (Charlesworth, *Old Testament*, 23–24).

93. Jeffrey B. Russell, "Saint Boniface and the Eccentrics," *Church History* 33 (September 1964): 237. Russell states that the two heretics never met and "their teachings have nothing in common" (240). Adelbert "held positions close to those of Reform Dissidents" and his mental sanity was questionable, whereas Clement was a libertine who was "a false priest and bishop and consecrated other false priests. . . . [He] rejected celibacy" and rejected the authority of the Church.

94. Ibid., 237–38, 238.

95. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.1, 275: "ad signa ostenta et miracula patranda." Cf. the Italian version: *Palagio de gl'incanti*, bk. 3, chap. 1, p. 190: "sono ordinati a questo fine, accioché per essi siano fatti meravigliosi segni."

96. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.2, 293.

97. Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, in *Opera*, vol. 2, ed. Franciscus Oehler (Lipsia: Weigel, 1854), chap. 6, p. 437: "Nullus unquam angelus ideo descendit, ut crucifigeretur, ut mortem experiretur, ut a morte resuscitaretur." On Tertullian and Marcionism, see Raniero Cantalamessa, *La cristologia di Tertulliano* (Freiburg: Edizioni Universitarie, 1962), esp. 122–25, 141–50.

98. Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, chap. 6, p. 438.

99. Tertullian offers a Stoic interpretation of Christ's flesh. According to his *De carne Christi*, Jesus's divine nature could not derive from a human seed but only from a divine one, the Holy Spirit. With the human race Jesus shared the flesh, not the seed, which came from God: "non competebat ex semine humano dei filium nasci . . . vacabat enim semen viri apud habentem dei semen" (chap. 18, pp. 454–55).

100. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.2, 294.

101. Bonaventure, *Expositiones in librum I et II Sententiarum*, in *Opera*, vol. 4 (Lyons: Borde, 1668), bk. 2, dist. 8, pts. 1 and 2, pp. 97–98 and 101–15. Cf. Caroline

Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 102–3 and 242–43.

102. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.2, 295.

103. Ibid., 1.3.3, 296.

104. Ibid., 297. Cf. the Italian version: "certi Fauni e animali silvestri chiamati dal volgo Incubi sono stati molesti e tediosi alle donne" (idem, *Palagio*, 206). Cigogna openly refers to Augustine's well-known passage from *The City of God* (bk. 15, chap. 23, p. 549). However, Augustine doesn't link the fauns to some "animals of the woods," that is, he doesn't grant them a real body. Augustine discusses the nature of Silvans and Pans in the context of the Genesis account of the birth of the giants. Cigogna's ambiguous rendition thus suggests that these demons may indeed have some real bodies.

105. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.2, 300. Cf. Hector Boece, *Scotorum Historiae* (Paris: Du Puys, 1574), bk. 8, 148v.

106. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.3, 309–10. Boece, *Scotorum Historiae*, chap. 8, 149v.

107. Cigogna also gives a free interpretation of a mysterious tale from the historian Phlegon of Tralles. Polycritus, king of the Aetolians, married a girl from Locris. After sleeping with her for three nights, Polycritus dies. The widow gives birth to a baby who had both male and female genitalia. Some wanted the mother and the baby to be burned. The ghost of Polycritus appears and demands his son. Polycritus devours his son—all but the baby's head. The head manifests prophetic powers. I find this story in Felix Jacoby, ed., *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 2b:1171–72. According to Cigogna, an incubus had appeared as Polycritus. Instead of making the incubus die as the historian says (ton bion exélipen), Cigogna makes him disappear (*Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.3, 302).

108. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 328–29.

109. Ibid., 331. Joshua 10.12–14 doesn't mention any angelic presence.

110. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 335. As far as the information concerning Pico's death and the appearance of the comet is concerned, Gigogna refers to Paolo Giovio's *Historiae temporis sui*. Giovio mentions that a comet was visible for fifteen days in September 1532, before the emperor moved toward Italy. In his notes to his translation of Giovio's book, Lodovico Domenichi alludes to a second comet that appeared in July of the same year and was visible for forty days: Paolo Giovio, *La seconda parte dell'Istorie*, trans. Lodovico Domenichi (Venice, 1555), bk. 30, p. 259.

111. In Giovio's historical text I was unable to find the reference to this appearance in 1514. According to the great historian Francesco Guicciardini, three suns appeared in Puglia before the French army invaded Italy in 1494. Throughout the peninsula, innumerable monstrous beings were born. I have consulted this modern edition: Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia* (Milan: Garzanti, 1988), vol. 1, bk. 1, chap. 9, p. 81.

In the introduction, I mentioned Emanuele Tesauro's *Aristotelian Telescope* (*Cannocchiale aristotelico*), the most important analysis of metaphorical expression of early modern culture. Tesauro dedicates an entire chapter to the "natural metaphors," the "figurative concepts" displayed in natural phenomena such as comets or lightning (73–78).

112. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 334.

113. Cardano, *De rerum varietate*, bk. 14, chap. 69, p. 936. We find no reference to spirits of the fire in Cardano.

114. Antoine Mizauld, *Le mirouer du temps* (Paris: Chadière, 1547), confirms that comets always signify war and calamities (91r). On the apocalyptic interpretation of comets, see Sara Schechner Genuth, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 27–50. In the introduction, Schechner Genuth also offers a survey of classical views of comets. According to Aristotle's *Meteorologica* (1.7.344b, 2.8. esp. 368a–b), "comets were signs. . . . [They] must be fiery meteors because they heralded severe winds, drought, tidal waves, storms" (*Comets*, 20).

115. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 332. Cf. idem, *Palagio*, 228. Psello, *Sull'attività dei demoni*, 285–93, 42–43. The difference between the first and the second category lies in that, although both live in the atmosphere, the aerial demons live in a region of the air closer to the earth. Ficino comments on Psellus's six demonic species in *Ex Michaele Psello de demonibus*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2.2, pp. 1940–42.

116. Psello, *Sull'attività dei demoni*, 285–86, 42–43.

117. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 335–36; Cardano, *De rerum varietate*, bk. 14, chap. 69, p. 934.

118. Cardano, *De rerum varietate*, p. 935.

119. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 338; idem, *Palagio*, 231.

120. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 338; Antoine Mizauld, *Cometographia* (Paris: Wechelus, 1549), 31. I have already explained that Cigogna often distorts his sources to make them fit his discussion. Mizauld, from whom Cigogna takes several quotations, never states that the spirits create comets. Mizauld believes that comets are vapors, exhalations resulting from the contrast of different temperatures. In the *De spectris*, Lewes Lavater holds that, although these nocturnal fires have natural causes, they can also be demonic deceptions. I have consulted this English translation: Lewes Lavater, *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Night, 1572*, ed. J. Dover Wilson and May Yardley (Oxford: University Press, 1929), 51.

121. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 338–39. The source is again Mizauld, *Cometographia*, 30–31. Following Mizauld, Cigogna holds that, when only one flame appears, this is a negative sign. This single fire was often called Helen.

122. Cf. Cartari, *Le imagini de i dei de gli antichi*, 165. We have already read from Cartari's influential book in the introduction. On the story of the two flames that appeared on top of the Dioscuri while the Argonauts proceeded through

a fierce tempest, see Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca historica*, trans. C. H. Oldfather (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), vol. 2, bk. 4.43, p. 477: "there came on a great storm and the chieftains had given up hope of being saved, when Orpheus, they say, who was the only one on shipboard who had ever been initiated in the mysteries of the deities of Samothrace, offered to these deities the prayers for their salvation. And immediately the wind died down and two stars fell over the heads of the Dioscuri, and the whole company was amazed at the marvel which had taken place."

123. On Castor and Pollux, see Conti, *Mythologie*, vol. 2, bk. 8, chap. 10, pp. 871–79.
124. "To the Dioscuri," in *Homeric Hymns*, vv. 1–2 and 6–8, p. 33.
125. Horace, *The Odes and Epodes*, trans. C. E. Bennett (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), odes bk. 1.3, v. 2, pp. 12–13.
126. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 339; Martin del Rio, *Disquisitionum magicarum* (Mainz: Albinum, 1603), vol. 2, bk. 4, chap. 2, question 7, sec. 1, 173. Del Rio explains that the interpretation depended upon the fire's reaction to the pitch powder. For instance, if the flame split into three tongues, the future would be particularly positive. If it died out immediately, a serious danger was in store. For a succinct introduction to del Rio's view of magic, see Walker *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 178–85. On his defense of those Catholic rites that might be labeled as magical practices, see 180–81.
127. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.5, 340. Cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 6, bk. 9.243, p. 129: "The kingdom then came to his [Jotham's] son Achaz, who in acting most impiously toward God . . . set up altars in Jerusalem and sacrificed on them to idols, to which he even offered his own son as a whole burnt-offering according to the Canaanite custom."
128. Del Rio (and subsequently Cigogna) quotes a relatively long passage from Dion Cassius's *Historiae*, in which he read of a mysterious fire next to the river "Ava" in the Corinthian colony of Apollonia. This fire does not burn the plants that grow upon it. Magicians throw handfuls of incense on this fire after having posed a specific question. If the fire moves away from the incense, the response is negative. If it attracts the incense, the outcome will be positive. I have consulted this Renaissance Italian version: Dione Cassio, *De' fatti de' romani* (Venice: De' Ferrari, 1566), bk. 41, p. 213.
129. For the participation of the Dioscuri in the expedition of the Argonauts, see also Theocritus's *Idyll* 22 ("The Dioscuri") and Hyginus's *Fabulae*. I have consulted this recent Italian translation: Igino, *Miti* (Milan: Adelphi, 2000), sec. 14, pp. 13–18.
130. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.6, 341.
131. Ibid., 342; Job 1:18–19.
132. Exodus 9:25–26.
133. Revelation 7:1–2.
134. Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca historica*, vol. 2, bk. 3.4–5, pp. 241–43.

135. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae,* 1.3.6, 349.
136. I have consulted this modern reprint of a Renaissance edition: Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus: Romae 1555* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1972), bk. 3, chap. 10, pp. 10–11. In his modest survey of demonic manifestations by the title *Parallela cosmographica de sede et apparitionibus daemonum* (Milan, 1624), Cardinal Federico Borromeo, a major figure of the Italian Counter-Reformation, mentions the same episode from Olaus Magnus. I refer to the following Italian translation: Federico Borromeo, *Manifestazioni demoniache* (Milan: Terziaria, 2001), 78. Borromeo is here analyzing the devils residing in the water. It is a fact, Borromeo says, that evil spirits are more numerous in the air and in the earth than in the water. But more spirits inhabit the water than the fire (77). Why do devils choose to reside in desolate places (cemeteries, caves) rather than in cities? It is because these places are more similar to the regions of hell (62).
137. Olaus doesn't explicitly mention any spirit. Olaus believes that Oddo was a magician who used obscure words against his enemies (*Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus,* bk. 3, chap. 18, p. 122).
138. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae,* 1.3.6, 356.
139. Cigogna takes this story from Alexander ab Alexandro, *Genialium dierum* (Lyon: Ex Officina Hackiana, 1673), bk. 4, chap. 19. The definition "goatlike" (caprinis similia) is not in Alexander, who describes the demon's feet as "nonhuman" and "deformed" (pedes non humana, sed tetra et deformi specie). Of course, Cigogna's description highlights the demonic nature of this peasant. This story is also present in Lavater, *Of Ghostes and Spirites,* pt. 1, chap. 15, p. 68. Cigogna and Lavater share a number of other references. Like Cigogna, Lavater also mentions Olas Magnus, Cardano, and Plutarch.
140. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae,* 1.3.7, 361.
141. The magical practices connected with these spirits (among others, "Axinomantia," Coschinomantia," and "Clidomantia") directly come from del Rio's *Disquisitionum magicarum* (4.2.6.4).
142. Augustine, *City of God,* bk. 9, chap. 11, p. 189. In *On the God of Socrates* (chap. 15), Apuleius distinguishes between *larvae* (souls of those who had been bad) and *lemures* (a generic term for all souls of the dead).
143. Horace, *Epistles,* in *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica,* trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 2.2.187–89, 439.
144. Servius, *In Vergilii Carmina Commentarii,* vol. 1, ed. Georgius Thilus (Hildesheim: Olms, 1961), 3.607, 443.
145. Cigogna makes only a vague reference to Servius at the beginning of his analysis of this species of spirit (*Magiae omnifariae,* 1.3.7, 362). Cigogna may have in mind an important passage from Servius's commentary on Virgil, where he states that when we come to life, we obtain two "geniuses." One exhorts us toward the good, the other seduces us to commit evil. When we die, one leads us to a better

condition, whereas the evil "genius" leads us back to the body (Servius, *In Vergilii Carmina Commentarii*, vol. 2, 6.743, 105).

In *Phaedo* (81b–d), Plato describes the destiny of a soul that, after leaving the body, is still impure because of its attachment to earthly matters. This soul is dragged back into the world and visits tombs and graveyards. These souls still maintain some visibility, which is why they can be seen.

146. Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), bk. 4, vv. 30–44, p. 278. For a concise and interesting discussion, see José Gil, *Monstros* (Lisbon: Quetzal, 1994), 115–16.
147. In bk. 16, chap. 93, of *De rerum varietate*, Girolamo Cardano mentions a similar theory (p. 645). Why do people often see figures resembling their departed in the cemetery where they were buried? It is because the body emits an "effigiem" (copy, image). The chapter of this popular text is titled "Demons and the Dead" (624–62).
148. Augustine, *City of God*, bk. 9, chap. 11, p. 191.
149. Virgil, *Aeneid*, bk. 5, vv. 77–78 and 81, p. 477.
150. See Jean-Claude Schmitt's important study on this subject: Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). On the concept of ghost as larva, 25–27.
151. Virgil, *Aeneid*, bk. 5, vv. 84–85 and 90–93, pp. 477–79.
152. Ibid., v. 95.
153. However, in *On the God of Socrates*, Apuleius believes that in a certain way (quodam significatu) the soul can be defined as "daemon." When the demon is good, that is, it leads a virtuous life, it is called "genius" (*Il demone di Socrate*, chap. 15, p. 50).
154. Virgil, *Aeneid*, bk. 6, v. 390.
155. Ibid., vv. 309–10, p. 555.
156. Ibid., vv. 329–30, p. 555.
157. Ibid., vv. 365–66, p. 559.
158. Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, *PL* 40 (Paris: Garnier, 1887), 591–610. Cf. Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 20–22.
159. Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, chap. 11, p. 601. Augustine mentions the encounter between Aeneas and Palinurus in chap. 10, p. 601.
160. Ibid., chap. 13, p. 604.
161. In chapter 1 of this volume, on Pico's *Strix*, I mentioned the influential canon *Episcopi*, a short letter of instructions for the bishops on how to fight witchcraft. The canon stresses that Satan can take up the forms of people familiar to us (Abbiati, Agnoletto, and Lazzati, *La stregoneria*, 24).
162. In book 3 of the *Aeneid*, the Penates speak to Aeneas and instruct him about his journey. This famous episode opens as follows: "It was night and on earth sleep held the living world. The sacred images of the gods, the Phrygian Penates, whom I had borne with me from Troy out of the mist of the burning city, seemed

as I lay in slumber to stand before my eyes. . . . Then thus they spoke to me" (vv. 147–51 and 153); Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.8, 373.

163. Cf. Paul, Letter to the Colossians, 1.20. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.7, 364. Cigogna refers to a number of biblical episodes on false idols. For instance, Ezekiel 8, in which God shows the prophet the great abominations that the house of Israel is committing against his name. But Cigogna takes many of the names of false deities from 1 Kings 11:5 (Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Moloch); 1 Kings 16:31 (Baal); 2 Kings 17:30–31 ("The people from Babylon had made a [god] Succoth-Benoth, the people from Cuthah a Nergal, the people from Hamath an Ashima, the Avvites a Nibhaz and a Tartak; while the Sepharvites caused their children to pass through the fire of sacrifice to Adrammelech and Anammelech, gods of Sepharvaim"); 2 Kings 23:7 (Asherah).
164. Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), bk. 1.8, p. 101; Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.7, 369.
165. Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, bk. 1.8, p. 101.
166. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.8, 375.
167. See Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, chap. 1.
168. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.9, 392.
169. Ibid., 398. Tartagni (d. 1478) was so famous as to be remembered by his first name, Alessandro (Alexander). I quote from this later edition: Alexander ab Alexandro, *Genialium dierum*, vol. 1, bk. 2, chap. 9 ("De umbrarum figuris et falsis imaginibus"), pp. 325–26.
170. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.9, 403–4. Cardano, *De rerum varietate*, bk. 16, chap. 93, p. 635.
171. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.9, 405.
172. Ibid., 1.3.10, 410.
173. Ibid., 411.
174. Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, bk 2, chap. 3, p. 62.
175. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.10, 410.
176. Ibid., 414. Alexander ab Alexandro, *Genialium dierum*, bk. 2, chap. 9, p. 326. The name Gordianus is only in Alexander. Cigogna adds that the two men were heading to Reggio.
177. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.10, 421. For a detailed analysis of this story, see the first part of the introduction.
178. "Acceso d'amore" is the expression used in the Italian version (Cigogna, *Palagio*, 293).
179. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.11, 434–35. Cigogna finds this reference in Ioannes Meletius. I have consulted this edition: Ioannes Meletius, *De religione et sacrificiis veterum borussorum, epistola 10*, in Michael Neander, *Orbis terrae partium succinta explicatio* (Lipsia, 1589), n.n. Among many other examples (*Magiae omnifariae*, 435–36), Cigogna mentions an episode from the *City of God*, where

Augustine speaks of an ex-tribune, Hesperius, who had an estate in the region of Fussala. "Through the afflictions of his animals and slaves," Augustine writes, "he learned that his household was suffering from damage inflicted by evil spirits" (*City of God*, bk. 22, chap. 8, p. 225). One of Augustine's priests drove off these demons with his prayers. To cast the demons away, Hesperius also used some holy earth from Jerusalem, which he hung in his bedroom (227). However, Augustine never gives these demons a specific name.

180. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.3.11, 428. Lorenzo Anania, *De natura daemonum* (Venice: Aldum, 1589), bk. 4, p. 191. On the Antichrist, see also 188–89.
181. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.4.4, 485; idem, *Palagio*, 350.
182. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.4.4, 487.
183. The word *fantasme* is only in the *Palagio* (353) and not in the *Magiae* (488).
184. Cigogna, *Magiae omnifariae*, 1.4.4, 489.

CHAPTER 3 ǂ "The Shadows and Their Beloved Bodies"

1. Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, bk. 6, v. 941, p. 564.
2. For a discussion of this literary and philosophical genre, see Paolo Lorenzetti, *La bellezza e l'amore nei trattati del Cinquecento* (Rome: Studio Bibliografico A. Polla, 1917); Eugenio Garin, "Filosofia dell'amore: Sincretismo platonico-aristotelico," in *Storia della filosofia italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), 2:581–615; Jill Kraye, "Moral Philosophy," in Schmitt, *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 303–86, esp. 353–56; Mario Pozzi, *Lingua cultura, società: Saggi sulla letteratura italiana del Cinquecento* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1989), 57–100; Armando Maggi, "Introduzione," in Guido Casoni, *Della magia d'amore* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2003), 9–22. Cf. Cesare Vasoli, "'L'amorosa filosofia' di Francesco Patrizi e la dissoluzione del mito platonico dell'amore," in *Il dialogo filosofico nel '500 europeo* (Milan: Angeli, 1990), 185.
3. Sears Jayne offers a thorough historical examination of *De amore* in the introduction to his English translation: Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, ed. Sears Jayne (Woodstock, CT: Spring Publications, 1994), 1–32. I have also consulted this excellent French-Latin edition: Marsile Ficin, *Commentaire sur "Le Banquet" de Platon*, ed. Pierre Laurens (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2002). See also Sandra Niccoli's important introduction to Marsilio Ficino, *El libro dell'amore* (Florence: Olschki, 1987), 9–60. Niccoli offers a detailed philological analysis.
4. Cf. Francesco Cattani da Diacceto, *I tre libri d'amore* (Venice: Giolito, 1561), bk. 3, chap. 2, p. 105. Diacceto defines beauty as "splendore di bontà" (splendor of the good).
5. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, speech 1, chap. 2, p. 36. A fundamental essay on the essential role of Phaedrus in Ficino's Latin text is Michael Allen, "Cosmogony and Love: The Role of Phaedrus in Ficino's *Symposium* Commentary," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 10, no. 2 (1980): 131–53.

On the basic differences between the *Symposium* and Ficino's *De amore*, see Pierre Laurens, "Introduction," in Ficin, *Commentaire*, 37–42.

6. Marsilio Ficino, *De amore*, in *Opera omnia*, 1321.
7. Marsilio Ficino, *Sopra lo amore* (Florence: Neri Dortelata, 1544), 6. Still in 1544, a second translation of *De amore* came out: *Il comento di Marsilio Ficino sopra il Convito di Platone*, trans. Ercole Barbarasa (Rome: Priscianese, 1544). Barbarasa translates "indolem" as "aspetto" (2r).
8. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 58; idem, *De amore*, in *Opera omnia*, 2.9, 1328: "Pulchritudo autem splendor quidam est humanum ad se sapiens animum."
9. Ficino, *De amore*, in *Opera omnia*, 5.7, 1338. I quote from Jayne's translation: Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 95. See also Jayne's n. 31, p. 104. Emphasis in the translation.
10. Ficino, *De amore*, in *Opera omnia*, 1338: "suavi colorum speciem refulgentem." My translation. Cf. Ficino, *Sopra lo amore*, 110: "di suave spezie di colori rilucente." Cf. Jayne's translation: "shining in the attractive aspect of colors" (Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 96).
11. Ficino, *Sopra lo amore*, 111. "Splendido" is "nitente" in Ficino, *De amore*, in *Opera omnia*, 1339.
12. In *Enneads*, 1.6.8.6, Plotinus speaks of "bodily splendors." Section 1.6 of the *Enneads*, titled "On Beauty," is of central relevance for Ficino's analysis. Plotinus explains: "We must know that [bodily splendors] are images, traces, shadows" (*Ennead 1*, trans. A. H. Armstrong [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995], 257).
13. Ficino, *De amore*, in *Opera omnia*, 1336: "Pulchritudo est splendor divini vultus."
14. Geronimo Sorboli da Bagnacavallo, *Trattato d'amore* [Portrait of love] (Venice: Polo, 1592), explains that the angels' splendor derives from their understanding of God (30r). The angels are luminous beings because they are enlightened by the divinity. This intellectual splendor is the angels' actual beauty (30r–v). Human souls emanate a certain splendor, which springs from their participation in God's goodness through the mediation of the angels (31v). Sorboli writes that, when the soul apprehends the hidden "reasons and causes of things it is called resplendent as it happened to Moses" (32r). After conversing with God, Moses' resplendent face had two luminous rays similar to two horns. The splendor of Moses' soul manifested itself through his body. However, human bodies themselves possess a certain splendor. For Sorboli, the splendor of human bodies is a result of their participation in the splendor of nature, which is God's creation (33r).
15. Pompeo della Barba was born in the small town of Pescia (near Pistoia) in 1521. The *Espositione d'un sonetto platonico* is his first published book (1549). Della Barba then wrote *Discorsi filosofici sopra il platonico et divin sogno di Scipione* (Venice: Bonelli, 1553). He also composed "summaries" (somme) to a translation of Pico's *Heptaplus* (*Le sette espositioni*, trans. Antonio Buonagrazia [Florence: Torrentino, 1555]). Della Barba is also the author of the controversial *I due primi dialoghi, nell'uno de' quali si ragiona de' segreti della natura* [First two dialogues] (Venice: Giolito, 1558).

Thorndike reminds us that della Barba's *Due primi dialoghi* was listed in the Index of Paul IV (1559) but that he was unable to find it (*History of Magic*, 6:147–48). Della Barba's biography is not well documented. We know he died in 1565. Cf. the entry "Della Barba, Pompeo," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1988), 36:673–76.

16. Pompeo della Barba, *Spositione d'un sonetto platonico* (Florence: Torrentino, 1554), 4. As I stated in the introduction, della Barba's treatise was first published in Florence in 1549. Although I have had access to both editions, I quote from the 1554 version. In the 1549 edition, a laudatory sonnet precedes the dedicatory epistle. In his poem Lattanzio Eugenio da Montefano praises della Barba's literary enterprise and asks him to explain how "love separates us from ourselves" (*Espositione d'un sonetto platonico* [Florence: Torrentino, 1549], v. 13, p. 4). In the subsequent *Spositione,* della Barba inserts a different sonnet, which he himself has written in honor of Francesco Torello.
17. The topic of male friendship runs through the Renaissance genre of treatises on love. One explicit example is Cesare Trevisani, *L'impresa* [The impresa] (Genoa: Bellone, 1569), in which the discussion on the meaning of love springs from the desire the young author feels for the prince of the city of Piombino, Alexander of Aragon. Hearing about the brave deeds of the prince, the young Cesare suddenly felt "an intense longing" for Prince Alexander and set out to meet him in Genoa (22). However, when he got there the prince had already left for Spain. In a night of devastating loneliness, Cesare composed an emblem or *impresa* that depicted his desire for the prince. *L'impresa* is the exegesis of this love emblem. But the narrator of this interpretation is not Cesare but rather Luigi Malatesta, Cesare's closest friend. Cesare and Luigi feel a strong love for each other, and both love Prince Alexander. Cf. Armando Maggi, "On Kissing and Sighing: Renaissance Homoerotic Love from Ficino's *De amore* and *Sopra lo amore* to Cesare Trevisani's *L'impresa* (1569)," *Journal of Homosexuality* (forthcoming).
18. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 7.
19. Ibid., 9. In *Espositione,* della Barba offers only two minimal variants. Instead of "sepolcri" (line 2) and "volgo" (line 4), he writes "sepulcri" and "vulgo" (p. 8). In my transcription of the Italian text, I have opted for modern punctuation. I have removed the Latin *h* present in a few words (ognhora, hor). Finally, I have corrected the prepositions according to modern use (for instance, *dell'* instead of *del'*; line 13). I also introduce the graphic distinction of two quatrains and two tercets.
20. I already mentioned Lavater's famous *De spectris* in chapter 2. Suffice here to mention that he believes that the souls of the dead, contrary to what the Church Fathers say, may return to earth. In Matthew 17, we read that "Moyses and Elias appeared in the Mounte unto Chryst our Lorde" (Lavater, *Of Ghostes,* pt. 2, chap. 10, p. 145). The whole second part of *De spectris* is an intriguing discussion of the possible return of the souls and the "doctrine of the Papistes" concerning the existence of purgatory (*Of Ghostes,* 98–174).

21. Nancy Caciola, "Spirit-Seeking Bodies: Death, Possession and Communal Memory in the Middle Ages," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66–86, esp. 67.

    Stories of revenants who visit their beloved are infinite and present in every culture. In *Otia imperialia* (Imperial diversions), a collection of legends and marvels by the cleric and lawyer Gervase of Tilbury (ca. 1155–ca. 1234), we find a particularly touching and even amusing account. In part 3, chapter 3, we read the story of a young virgin who, one night of the year 1211, was visited by the ghost of her deceased cousin. The man calmed the frightened girl and "said gently to her: 'Cousin, do not be afraid. It is my deep and longstanding affection for you which has brought me back, by God's will." The ghost was allowed to answer questions others had for him, but only through his beloved cousin. He also showed her the demon who tortured him during his stay in purgatory. Days later, the prior of Tarascon came to visit the girl and happened to be there when the spirit arrived. When the prior asked the girl where the ghost was, she suggested that he move a little bit because the religious "had almost stepped on the dead man's foot." In this occasion, instead of a demon, the dead man showed an angel and said that, although he was still in purgatory, his sufferings were subsiding. I find this story in Joynes, *Medieval Ghost Stories*, 79–81.

22. Della Barba, *Discorsi filosofici*, 8v.

23. Ibid., 7v.

24. "Visione" (vision), "oracolo" (oracle), "insogno" (dream), and "fantasma" (phantasm) are the names of the other four kinds of supernatural manifestation. In particular, phantasms are the apparition of "weird and monstrous forms." I discuss dream theories in the Renaissance with a special focus on Cardano's *Synesiorum somniorum* in Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, 180–223.

25. Della Barba, *Discorsi filosofici*, 8r. Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 10.614b.

26. For a vast and exhaustive analysis of the "culture of secrets" in the Italian Renaissance, see William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), chaps. 4–6. Della Barba's treatise is not mentioned.

27. Della Barba, *Due primi dialoghi*, 9–10. The authors reminds us that in the *Parts of Animals* (1.5, 644b23–25) Aristotle speaks of the divine character of some substances.

28. Della Barba mentions Plato's seventh letter, in which he presents philosophy as a mystical form of secret initiation. Cf. Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), 1–16.

29. On the cemetery as the most favorable place of night apparitions from the Middle Ages to early modernity, see Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 182–84.

30. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 10.

31. Ibid., 11–12. Cf. Ficino, *De amore*, 6.6.

32. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 115.

33. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 12–13; Lucretius, *De rerum natura,* bk. 4, vv. 1094–96, p. 361. I have briefly mentioned Lucretius's "simulacrum" in chapter 2.
34. Lucretius, *De rerum natura,* bk. 4, v. 32, p. 279.
35. Ibid., , vv. 33–37, p. 279.
36. Cf. Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages,* 196–97: "At death, the body and the soul separated, remaining apart until the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment. The soul was 'spiritual' but 'passible,' capable of feeling: it was tortured in hell or in purgatory by a fire or a cold that the people of the Middle Ages—or some of them . . . —imagined so concrete that they called these conditions 'corporeal.' . . . In the Middle Ages the notion of 'spiritual' was intermediate and ambiguous. Just as 'spiritual vision' slipped in between 'intellectual vision' and 'corporeal vision' the spirit (*spiritus*) had its place . . . between the soul (*anima, mens,* pure reason) and the body (*corpus*). Neither the 'spirit' of a living person . . . nor the 'spirit' of a dead person was an immaterial 'pure spirit.'"
37. For Ficino, both the eyes and the spirit are mirrors. Cf. Ficino, *De amore,* 6.6.
38. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 14.
39. Cf. Aristotle, *De anima,* 3.15–20. But della Barba quotes from Ficino, *De amore,* 2.8.
40. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 16.
41. Ficino, C*ommentary on Plato's Symposium,* 55–56.
42. Ibid., 55.
43. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 16.
44. Ibid., 18.
45. Ibid., 19–20. Cf. *Symposium* 189d–190c; Ficino, *De amore,* 4.1.
46. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 21. Cf. Leo Hebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore* [Dialogues of love], ed. Santino Caramella (Bari: Laterza, 1929), bk. 3, pp. 289–92. Leone Ebreo's fundamental treatise first came out in 1535. Given its unquestionable complexity, partly the result of its blending of Christian Platonism and Jewish mysticism, Leo Hebreo's text was frequently mentioned in passing but rarely discussed in depth. Quoting from Leo Hebreo, della Barba states that Moses had already narrated the same story in Genesis, where he gives two different accounts of Adam's creation. For Leo Hebreo, these two distinct stories prove that the original human being contained a male and a female side (bk. 3, p. 294).
47. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 22.
48. Ibid., 22–23. Cf. Galen, *De praecognitione* [On prognosis], ed. Vivian Nutton (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1979), 5.21–6.1, 101. As Ivan Garofalo explains in the introduction to I. Garofalo, ed., *Erasistrati fragmenta* (Pisa: Giardini Editori, 1988), several ancient sources report this story (19). However, because he makes a reference to the young patient's pulse beats, Galen probably borrows from Plutarch's *Vita Demetrii* (38.2, 907a).
49. Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella, introduction to Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness,* ed. Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 48. Beecher and Ciavolella offer an

excellent review of the vast influence exerted by Plutarch's and, subsequently, Galen's story (50–51).

50. Galen, *De praecognitione*, 21.2, 101.
51. Ibid., 21.6, 103.
52. Ibid., 21.7–8, 103.
53. Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 8.
54. Ibid., 9. On the same page, Wack discusses the story of the woman in love with the dancer. Wack writes that this episode is of great value because "it was a thousand years before the medical community again pursued the question of women's lovesickness."
55. Ibid., 8.
56. Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, vol. 4, trans. Michael J. B. Allen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), bk. 13, chap. 1, p. 111.
57. Ibid., 115.
58. Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Michael J. B. Allen with John Warden (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), bk. 3, chap. 1, p. 229.
59. Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, vol. 4, bk. 13, chap. 1, p. 115.
60. Respectful of the traditional topoi of Renaissance dialogue, della Barba imagines that by chance a few of his friends gather to discuss some physiological problems that had been already tackled in a previous meeting attended by the famous philosopher Benedetto Varchi (della Barba, *Due primi dialoghi*, 7–8).
61. Ibid., 16.
62. Ibid., 24.
63. Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, bk. 1, 727a27–28, in *Complete Works*, 1:1129.
64. Ibid., 727b31–32, 1130.
65. Armand Marie Leroi, *Mutants: On Genetic Variety and the Human Body* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 32.
66. Ibid., 32–33.
67. Cf. della Barba, *Due primi dialoghi*, 31.
68. I refer to this Greek-French edition: Hippocrates, *De la génération*, ed. Robert Joly (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1970), 1.1. and 3.1, 44 and 46. Aristotle contends that "if the semen comes from all the parts of both parents alike, the result is *two* animals; for the offspring will have the parts of both" (*On the Generation of Animals*, bk. 1, 722b7–8, 1122). For Aristotle, both male semen and female menstrual blood are "residues" with two distinct functions. The pudendum is the place that the body "has set apart" for "the spermatic secretions" (*On the Generation of Animals*, bk. 1, 725b1 and 725b3, 1126). In Gianna Pomata, "Menstruating Men: Similarity and Difference of the Sexes in Early Modern Medicine," in *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, ed. Valeria Finucci and Kevin Brownlee (Durham, NC: Duke

University Press, 2001), Pomata discusses the far-reaching meaning of cases of "menstruating men" according to early modern medicine. She writes: "Historians have stressed that from antiquity to the late eighteenth century European medical learning was dominated by a model of sexual difference centered on the male paradigm. . . . But was it really so? . . . In these stories [of menstruating men] we see early modern doctors understand male bodily phenomena through the model provided by the female menstruating body. . . . These stories also emphasize the similarity between the sexes" (112–13). Della Barba's medical theories certainly confirm Pomata's statement on the ambiguous similarities between the two sexes according to early modern medicine. For a truly fascinating analysis of the different problems posed by "castrated" men and women also from a religious standpoint, see Valeria Finucci, "The Paradox of the Castrato," chapter 6 in *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance*, 225–80 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

69. Della Barba, *Due primi dialoghi*, 34.
70. Ibid., 42–43.
71. Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 4.1052–57, 359.
72. Ibid., 359, note a.
73. Della Barba, *Due primi dialoghi*, 51.
74. Ibid., 50–51. Cf. Meschini's concise biography of della Barba (*Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 36:675).
75. Dante, *Purgatorio*, ed. Natalino Sapegno (Florence: Nuova Italia, 1970), canto 25, vv. 94–99.
76. Ibid., v. 101. On the concept of "aerial body," see Marianne Shapiro, "Dante's Twofold Representation of the Soul," *Lectura Dantis* 18–19 (1996): 49–90. Cf. the entry "anima" in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 1:278–85.
77. Cf. della Barba, *Due primi dialoghi*, 59–60.
78. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 24.
79. Ibid., 25. Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi*, bk. 2, p. 67.
80. Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi*, bk. 1, pp. 13–21; Ficino, *De amore*, 1.4.
81. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 25: "una inclinatione data da natura a seguire il suo fine".
82. Ibid., 26; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi*, bk. 2, pp. 67–68.
83. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 28–29.
84. Again, della Barba finds a reference in Leo Hebreo (*Dialoghi*, bk. 1, pp. 27 and 50) in which he speaks of the importance of conjugal love. Flaminio Nobili, *Trattato dell'amore umano* (Lucca: Busdraghi, 1568), which exerted a considerate influence on Torquato Tasso's writings on love, is close to della Barba's vision of "delectable love." Nobili thinks that "human love" can never be exclusively spiritual. The highest expression of human love is the blending of "intellect" and "sense" (20v–21r), for "diletto" (delight, pleasure) is a central component of human identity.
85. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 41. For an interesting analysis of the five senses in Ficino, see the introductory part of Enrico Musacchio, "The Role

of the Senses in Mario Equicola's Philosophy of Love," in *Eros and Anteros*, ed. Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Toronto: Dovehouse Editions, 1992), 87–101, esp. 87–90.

86. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 30; Apuleius, *De Platone et eius dogmate*, ed. Fabrizio Serra (Pisa: Giardini, 1991), 2.14, 207.
87. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 30–31.
88. Ibid., 33.
89. On the four causes, see Aristotle, *Physics*, 194b16–195b30; idem, *Metaphysics*, 1013a24–1014a25.
90. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 34.
91. Galen, *Quod animi mores corporis temperaturas sequantur* [That the faculties of the soul follow the temperatures of the body], in *Galeni pergameni omnia*, ed. Konrad Gesner (Basel: ex III Officina Frobenianae editione, 1562), chaps. 2 and 4, pp. 637 and 639. Cf. Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 4.1058–60.
92. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 36–37.
93. Ibid., 39.
94. Ibid., 40.
95. Cicero, *On the Republic*, trans. Clinton Walker Keyes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), bk. 6.14, p. 267.
96. In his translation of Cicero's text, della Barba is faithful to the original. He translates "vinculis" as "legami" (ties) and "carcere" as "prigione" (prison). Cf. della Barba, *Discorsi filosofici*, 17v.
97. Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi*, bk. 2, p. 80.
98. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 41.
99. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, in *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Vallecchi, 1942), 2.2, 228. Della Barba mentions Pico's text on p. 42. Let us remember that della Barba wrote summaries (epiloghi) of each section of the *Heptaplus* at the end of the translation titled *Le sette sposizioni del S. Giovanni Pico de la Mirandola intitolate Heptaplo*. In particular, see "Epilogo de la seconda sposizione," 154–55.
100. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 2.1.6–8.
101. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 46; Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.8.5.
102. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 53.
103. Porphyry, *The Life of Plotinus*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), chap. 11, p. 37. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 1.9.
104. Plato, *Phaedo*, in *Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 81d, p. 64. For Socrates' opinion on suicide, see *Phaedo*, 61d, p. 44.
105. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 57; Plato, *Phaedo*, 81b, 64.
106. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 54.
107. Ibid., 59; Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.386.
108. Della Barba, *Spositione*, 60; Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.7.15.

109. On Apuleius's *The God of Socrates,* see the introduction to this volume. Cf. Caciola, "Spirit-Seeking Bodies," 69–70.
110. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 63; Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones,* in *Opera omnia,* ed. Ludolph Bünemann (Lipsia: Waltheri, 1739), bk. 2, chap. 14, pp. 262–63.
111. Psello, *Sull'attività dei demoni,* 226–28, 36–37. Cf. Matthew 25:41.
112. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 64. Cf. Psello, *Sull'attività dei demoni,* 248–54, 38–39.
113. On the devil as natural philosopher, see the insightful pages in Stuart Clark, "Witchcraft and Magic in Early Modern Culture," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials,* ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 160–66.
114. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 65; Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium,* 6.3, 110–11.
115. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus,* 10.15–20, 33.
116. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 68.
117. Ibid., 68–69. Homer, *The Iliad,* trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), bk. 23, vv. 65–67, p. 452.
118. Homer, *The Iliad,* vv. 69–75, p. 452.
119. Ibid., vv. 97–98, p. 452.
120. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 75.
121. Ibid., 74; Plato, *Phaedo,* 85b.
122. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 75: "vestita di quella passione e di quello affetto."
123. Ibid., 82; Lucretius, *De rerum natura,* 3.455–56, 223. In this passage, Lucretius refers to "anima," the seat of sensation. But he also posits an "animus," the mind. Both "animus" and "anima" are mortal.
124. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 76–83.
125. Ibid., 84–85. In *History of Animals* (bk. 7, chap. 3, sec. 583b3–9), Aristotle doesn't speak of "rational soul." He only refers to the "first movement" of the fetus in the mother's womb.
126. Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages,* 180.
127. Ibid., 263. Cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis,* 2.16.4.
128. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 85–86.
129. Ibid., 86.
130. In *Due primi dialoghi,* della Barba asks himself how it is possible to believe that the human body and soul exert no external influence, if inferior things such as herbs and stones can kill or save a life (98). Of course, men's souls and bodies influence the creation through their spirits. We have seen that Ficino defines the spirit as a very thin vapor arising from the thinnest part of the blood. Through its imagination, the soul can infect its spirits with a strong negativity and thus produce harmful effects on the world. Two clear examples of these invisible influences are plagues and love (100). Both phenomena can be deadly.
131. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 87. Cf. *City of God,* bk. 9, chap. 11. However, della Barba claims that this issue is discussed in book 4 of the *City of God.*
132. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 88.

133. Ficino, *De amore,* 2.3; idem, *Commentary,* 48.
134. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 89.
135. Ibid., 91.
136. Ibid., 98.
137. Ibid., 96.
138. In the final part of his commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio,* della Barba insists that human beings have a "divine substance" (sustanza divina), as Scipio the Elder reveals to his nephew in his dream (*Discorsi filosofici,* 60r). Cf. Cicero, *On the Republic,* 6.24. A human being, della Barba says, expanding on Cicero's text, has something divine, because in his or her soul "shine[s] all the perfect qualities that are in God, i.e., to have life, to feel, to converse, to remember" (*Discorsi filosofici,* 60v).
139. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 105. Cicero, *De divinatione,* bk. 1, chap. 55.125–26, p. 361. Cf. Ficino, *Asclepius,* in *Opera omnia,* chap. 14, p. 1870.
140. Della Barba, *Spositione,* 99.
141. See Eugenio Canone, *Il dorso e il grembo dell'eterno* (Pisa: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Inernazionali, 2003) 7–8. Cf. Giordano Bruno, *Degli eroici furori,* in *Dialoghi filosofici italiani* (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pt. 1, dialogue 3, p. 813.

CHAPTER 4 ǂ What Does *Human* Mean?

1. Darren Oldridge, *Strange Stories: The Trial of the Pig, the Walking Dead, and Other Matters of Fact from the Medieval and Renaissance Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2.
2. Trevor-Roper, "European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 125.
3. Francesco Albertini, *Trattato dell'angelo custode* (1st ed., 1612), in Ciliberti and Jori, *Gli angeli custodi,* chap. 1, p. 165.
4. Ibid., chap. 17, p. 208
5. For a detailed account of his bibliographical discovery, see Liseux's introduction to his edition of Sinistrari's work: Isidore Liseux, "Avant-Propos," in Ludovico Maria Sinistrari, *De la démonialité,* ed. I. Liseux (Paris: Liseux, 1876), vii–xix.
6. Ibid., xviii. The English quotation comes from Montague Summers, introduction to Sinistrari, *Peccatum Mutum: The Secret Sin,* 14. *Peccatum Mutum* is the English translation of a portion of Sinistrari's *De delictis et poenis,* which examines the sin of sodomy.
7. Ludovico Maria Sinistrari, *De Sodomia Tractatus* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Curieux, 1921).
8. Summers, introduction to Sinistrari, *Peccatum Mutum,* 10; I. Liseux, "Notice biographe," in Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 262–63.
9. Summers, introduction to Sinistrari, *Peccatum Mutum,* 13.
10. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 2.

11. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (Turin: Marietti, 1948), pt. 2.2, question 154 ("de speciebus luxuriae"), art. 1, pp. 712–13.
12. Ibid., art. 11, p. 725.
13. Ibid., art. 12, p. 726: "in vitiis quae sunt contra naturam transgreditur homo id quod est secundum naturam determinatum circam usum venereum."
14. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 4.
15. On Prierio, an important figure of Renaissance demonology, see Michael Tavuzzi, *Prierias* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric,* chap. 1.
16. Sylvester Prierio, *Sylvestrinae Summae* (Venice: Rubinus, 1570), 267.
17. Ibid., 271.
18. Joannis Caramuelis Lobkowiz, *Theologia fundamentalis* (Frankfurt: Schonvvetteri, 1652), 563.
19. Ibid., 568.
20. Ibid., 577. Cf. 587. Most Renaissance demonologists contended that devils do not practice sodomy with men. We already find this theory in Nider's *Formicarius,* a deeply spiritual treatise that, however, served as the main source for the *Malleus maleficarum*. I refer to the following edition: Ioannis Nyder, *Formicarius* (Douai: Belleri, 1602), bk. 5, chap. 1, pp. 401–2.
21. Sinistrari, *De delictis et poenis* (Venice: Albriccium, 1700), 250.
22. Ibid., 251.
23. Ibid., 250.
24. Ibid., 255.
25. Ibid., 257. I quote from Sinistrari, *Peccatum Mutum,* 41–42. Cf. Thomas Bartholinus, *Anatomia* (Lyon: Hackium, 1651), bk. 1, chap. 34, pp. 186–88. Bartholinus writes that the clitoris and the penis are made of a similar substance (187).
26. Ibid., 187: "foramen habens uti penis."
27. I quote from Leroi's translation in *Mutants,* 226.
28. Ibid., 223.
29. Sinistrari, *De delictis,* 258; idem, *Peccatum Mutum,* 43.
30. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 4 and 8.
31. In *Strange Stories,* Oldridge mentions Sinistrari's belief that, when a demon copulates with a human being, the demon enters the body of a dead person (73). Oldridge also mentions del Rio's concern about the possible bad smell of the decomposing body and the Spanish conclusion that the demon is able to fool man's senses but not to produce any "physical change in the rank flesh that the demon wore."
32. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 20 and 18. In fact, Augustine doesn't specify that these sexual encounters take place during the Sabbath. I have consulted the following Italian edition of the second edition of Guazzo's work (1626): Francesco Maria Guaccio, *Compendium maleficarum,* ed. Luciano Tamburri (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), bk. 1, chap. 12, pp. 83–87.
33. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 22–32. Cf. Guaccio, *Compendium,* 51–64.

34. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 32.
35. Ibid., 34. Cf. Caelius Rhodiginus, *Lectionum Antiquarum* (Lyon: Honoratum, 1560), vol. 3, bk. 29, chap. 5, pp. 583–85. In Rhodiginus's text, the philosopher does not define the woman as "daemonem succubam" but rather as "lamia," that is, a monstrous being that feeds on human flesh (584).
36. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 36.
37. Ibid., 38–40.
38. Ibid., 44.
39. Ibid., 54.
40. Thomas Malvenda, *De Antichristo* (Rome: Vulliettum, 1604), 75–76. On Malvenda, see Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 229.
41. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 60 and 64.
42. Michaelis Ettmülleri, *Physiologia,* in *Opera Omnia* (Frankfurt: Zunneri, 1688), chap. 22 ("De conceptione foetusque formatione"), thesis 1, p. 39.
43. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 70.
44. Cf. Guaccio, *Compendium,* 85–86; Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine,* 1.26.2. For the numerous Patristic sources mentioned in this section of *Demoniality* Sinistrari also has in mind Francisco Suarez (*De malis angelis,* in *Opera omnia,* vol. 2, bk. 7, chap. 1, pp. 792–93, in which the Spanish theologian discusses Gen. 6:4).
45. Tertullian, *Apologeticum,* 22.3, p. 119.
46. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 84. Cf. Malachi 2:7: "The priest's lips ought to safeguard knowledge . . . he is Yahweh Sabaoth's messenger"; Malachi 3:1: "Look, I shall send my messenger."
47. Sinistrari offers a synthesis of the theological debate on the angels' physicality. He borrows from Francisco Suarez's treatise *On the Nature of Angels* (*De angelorum natura,* in *Opera Omnia,* vol. 2, chap. 5, pp. 16–20). Sinistrari mentions Suarez on p. 80.
48. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 86.
49. Ibid., 88–90.
50. Ibid., 90.
51. Thomas Aquinas, *Supplementum,* in *Summa Theologiae,* question 83, art. 1, pp. 991–93.
52. Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open,* trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), "Physiology of the Blessed," 17–19.
53. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 92.
54. Ibid., 94.
55. Ibid., 96.
56. Ibid., 98.
57. Ibid., 100.
58. Ibid., 102. Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* bk. 1, vv. 85–86, p. 9.
59. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 118. Cf. Augustine, *De divinatione daemonum* [On the demons' divination], *PL* 40 (Paris: Garnier, 1887), chap. 3, pp. 584–85. I discuss

the devils' "skills" according to Christian demonology in Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, chap. 1.

60. Sinistrari, *Démonialité*, 120.
61. Ibid., 128.
62. Ibid., 130.
63. Ibid., 132. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, in *Moralia*, vol. 5, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 360d, 61.
64. Sinistrari, *Démonialité*, 132–34.
65. For a brief discussion of some literary interpretations of demonic metamorphoses, see Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166–69.
66. Sinistrari, *Démonialité*, 142. Cf. Guaccio, *Compendium*, bk. 3, chap. 13, pp. 358–63.
67. Sinistrari, *Démonialité*, 144. Cf. Tobit 6:8.
68. Eusebius Hieronymus, *Vita S. Pauli primi eremitae*, 17–30, esp. 23–24.
69. Zakiya Hanafi, *The Monster in the Machine* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 50.
70. Giovan Francesco Pico, *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium*, bk. 1, pp. 22–23. Cf. *De rerum praenotione*, chap. 9, n.n.
71. Sinistrari, *Démonialité*, 174.
72. Hanafi, *Monster in the Machine*, 7–8; Aristotle, *Phsyics*, 2.199b.
73. Sinistrari, *Démonialité*, 190.
74. Genesis 6:2; Augustine, *City of God*, bk. 15, chap. 22.
75. Sinistrari, *Démonialité*, 190–92. Augustine, *City of God*, bk. 15, chap. 23, pp. 548–50.
76. Augustine, *City of God*, 546. However, Augustine stresses that "in the Septuagint too they are called both angels of God and sons of God. This reading, to be sure, is not attested in all manuscripts, for some have only 'sons of God'" (555–57).
77. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, *PL* 36 (Paris, 1841), Psalm 85, p. 1094.
78. Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 30–31.
79. On incubi's path toward penance, see Sinistrari, *Démonialité*, 218.
80. Ibid., 196.
81. Ibid., 220.
82. Acts 17:18.
83. It is worth remembering that 1 Enoch gives a detailed narration of the episode concerning the giants: "In those days, when the children of man had multiplied, it happened that there were born into them handsome and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw them and desired them. . . . And they [the angels] were altogether two hundred. . . . And they took wives unto themselves, and everyone (respectively) chose one woman for himself, and they began to go unto them." These women gave birth to giants "whose height were three hundred cubits." I quote from 1 Enoch 6:1–6 and 7:1–3, 15–16, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament: Pseudepigrapha*. In the *City of God* Augustine doubts the authority of the book of Enoch. He holds that "the writings presented under

Enoch's name with those tales about giants not having human fathers should not be attributed to him" (15.23, 559).

84. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 224.
85. Walter Stephens, *Giants in Those Days* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 74. For a historical review of the theological debate on the giants, see 58–97.
86. Philo, *On the Giants*, in *Philo,* vol. 2, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 1.7, 449.
87. Ibid., 3.12, 451.
88. Ibid., 3.13, 451.
89. Ibid., 4.16, 453.
90. Ibid., 13.60, 475.
91. Ibid., 15.65, 477–79.
92. Ibid., 15.66, 479.
93. Augustine, *City of God,* vol. 4, bk. 15, chap. 23, pp. 554–55. Cf. Stephens, *Giants in Those Days*, 75.
94. Stephens, *Giants in Those Days*, 85.
95. Sinistrari, *Démonialité,* 230.
96. Ibid., 228.
97. Ibid., 238.

A CONCLUSION

1. Celso Cittadini (1553–1627) was a famous grammarian and historian of the Italian language. He wrote important glosses on Boccaccio, the *Divine Comedy,* and Petrarch. In 1601, he published a *Treatise on the True Origin and Development and Name of Our Language*. I emphasize other aspects of Cittadini's self-commentary in Armando Maggi, "L' autocommento di Celso Cittadini in *Rime Platoniche* (1585)," in *Bruniana & Campanelliana* (forthcoming).
2. A recent analysis of a few important books of this genre is Sherry Roush, *Hermes' Lyre* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002), esp. 3–21.
3. Torquato Tasso, *Rime: Parte prima* (Brescia: Marchetti, 1592); and idem, *Rime: Parte seconda* (Brescia: Marchetti, 1593); G. Goselini, *Dichiaratione di alcuni componimenti del S. Giuliano Goselini* (Milan: Gottardo Pontio, 1573). I study Goselini's self-commentary in Armando Maggi, "Il commento al sé oscuro: La *Dichiarazione* di Giuliano Goselini e la fine del sapere rinascimentale," *Italianistica* 1 (2003): 11–28.
4. Celso Cittadini, *Rime Platoniche* [Platonic verses] (Venice: Arrivabene, 1585), 49r.
5. Ibid., 51r.
6. Ibid., 51r–v.
7. *L'histoire Aethiopique de Heliodorus,* trans. J. Amyot (Paris, 1547).

8. I quote from the following Greek-Italian edition: Eliodoro, *Le Etiopiche*, ed. Aristide Colonna (Turin: UTET, 1987), bk. 3.13, p. 208. My translation.
9. Acts 6:10 and 15 (New Jerusalem Bible, 1244–45).
10. Cf. Thomas Merton, *The Collected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1977), 385: "The desecration, de-sacralization of the modern world is manifest above all by the fact that the stranger is of no account. . . . An alien presence interferes with the superficial and faked clarity of our rationalization."

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