

“Like a Magician Who Tricks the Eyes”: Demonism, Epistemological Uncertainty, and Religious Heterodoxy in Seventeenth-Century Ukraine

Maria Grazia Bartolini 

University of Milan, maria.bartolini@unimi.it

“The air is full of evil spirits who wage war with us.”¹ This is how Ioanykii Galiatovs’kyi, a prominent Ukrainian Orthodox preacher and intellectual, described the nature of malevolent supernatural entities in 1687. A year before, he had penned an entire treatise, *Bohy pohanskii* (Pagan Gods), devoted to devils living inside pagan idols.² A prolific author and member of the intellectual elite of his day, Galiatovs’kyi (?–1688) wrote on a variety of topics.³ Why did he also compose a treatise on demonology? Viewed against the backdrop of European trends, this should come as no surprise. As Stuart Clark has demonstrated, ideas about the demonic were integral with early modern religious, political, historical, and scientific discourses.⁴ While in western Europe a proper demonological tradition had started in the late middle ages, in Ukraine books discussing the role of devils in human affairs had been virtually non-existent through the end of the sixteenth century.⁵ Only in the seventeenth century did sermons, miracle collections, theological treatises, and polemical pamphlets begin to appear that disseminated the description of demonic agency to a wider audience. While it would be inappropriate to speak of a “golden age of the demoniac” (William Monter’s term), during the seventeenth century, there was a development of demonology among the educated, and demonism, which had previously been at the margins of

1. Ioanykii Galiatovs’kyi, *Dushy liudei umerlykh z tilo vykhodiachii* . . . (Chernihiv, 1687), 40.

2. Ioanykii Galiatovs’kyi, *Bohy pohanskii* (Chernihiv, 1686).

3. On Galiatovs’kyi’s life and works, see Nikolai Sumtsov, *Ioanikii Galiatovskii: K istorii iuzhnorusskoi literatury XVII v.* (Kyiv, 1884); Natalia Iakovenko, *U poshukakh novoho neba: Zhyttia i teksty Ioanykiia Galiatovs’koho* (Kyiv, 2017).

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

5. For an overview of Ukrainian Orthodox demonology, see Kateryna Dysa, *Ukrainian Witchcraft Trials: Volhynia, Podolia, and Ruthenia 17th–18th Centuries* (Budapest, 2020), 51–94; Natalia Iakovenko, “Dyskurs opytiv oderzhymosti v ukrainskii myrakulistytsi simnadtsiatoho-visimnadtsiatoho stolit’ (mizh tradytseiu, osvichenistiu i novoiu politykoiu tserkvy),” in Alessandro Achilli, Serhy Yekelchuk, and Dmytro Yesypenko, eds., *Cossacks in Jamaica, Ukraine at the Antipodes: Essays in Honor of Marko Pavlyshyn* (Boston, 2020), 41–55; Iakovenko, *U poshukakh*, 440–52.

theological discourse, became more central.⁶ For instance, Galiatovs'kyi's writings contain quotes from the works of two of the major authorities on early modern demonology, Johann Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum* (On the Illusions of the Demons, 1563), and Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (Of the Demon-mania of the Sorcerers, 1580).⁷ Representations of the devil and demons, which were relatively few in East Slavic Orthodox art, also intensified during this period, pointing to a heightened awareness of the power of demons over human life.⁸ Vivid illustrations of demons coming out from the mouth of the possessed preface printed sermons based on biblical accounts of the exorcisms performed by Christ (Figure 1), while the devil appears on the title page of Lazar Baranovych's sermon collection *Mech dukhovnyi* (The Spiritual Sword, 1666), whose preface to the reader laments the "times full of trouble" that the Ukrainian lands were living through (Figure 2).⁹

This paper situates the new interest in demonological discourse within the framework of another, broader seventeenth-century shift, namely an increase in religious struggles, a crisis of church authority, and a widespread commitment to apocalypticism, all aptly epitomized by Baranovych's remark on the "times full of trouble" he and his contemporaries were facing. The period 1596–1686 brought about unprecedented religious and political upheaval in the Ukrainian lands. In 1596, the Union of Brest created a Uniate Church faithful to Rome, splitting the previously unified Eastern Orthodox confession. The Uniate Church was officially recognized by King Sigismund III of Poland as the only legal Eastern Christian religious body under his jurisdiction, while the Orthodox hierarchy was reduced to a single bishop, despite the fact that Orthodoxy remained the majority religion among the elites in Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, in Belarus. Ostracized and struggling to avoid annihilation, the Orthodox engaged in a vigorous debate about how they should understand and define their identity vis-à-vis other confessions.

The official reinstatement of an Orthodox hierarchy in 1632 did not mean, however, that trouble was over. In 1648, the Cossack uprising led by Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi swept across Ukraine, marking the beginning of a period of dramatic political and religious change. In 1654, the Treaty of Pereiaslav put a large part of Ukraine under Muscovite control. With the Truce of Andrusovo of 1667, Left-Bank Ukraine and the city of Kyiv came under the rule of Muscovy, whereas Right-Bank Ukraine remained under Polish control. The Church of Kyiv was also divided along political lines: after 1657, the metropolitans of Kyiv resided in Polish-controlled territory while the Russian government dealt with the Orthodox on the Left Bank through a vicar chosen among the local hierarchy. At the same time, a period of wars and political instability known as "the Ruin" began. Hetmans followed one another, each attempting to

6. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands During the Reformation* (Ithaca, 1976), 60.

7. Ioanykii Galiatovs'kyi, *Mesiia pravdyvyi* (Kyiv, 1669), 191v and 158v respectively. On these quotations, see also Iakovenko, *U poshukakh*, 613, 616.

8. Valerie A. Kivelson, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca, 2013), 54; Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb, 2001), 42.

9. Lazar Baranovych, *Mech dukhovnyi* (Kyiv, 1666), foreword to the reader, 1r.



Figure 1. Lazar Baranovych, *Mech dukhovnyi* (Kyiv, 1666), engraving preceding the sermon on the exorcism of the lunatic boy (Matthew 17:14–21). The same engraving had previously appeared in the *Evanhelie uchytelnoe* (Kyiv, 1637). Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

strengthen their authority by allying with a foreign power—Muscovite Russia, the Polish Crown, or the Ottoman empire.¹⁰

Simultaneously, concerns about the imminence of the Last Judgment and the appearance of the Antichrist became widespread in Ukraine, spurred by calculations that predicted the apocalypse would occur in 1666, as well as by the growing number of followers of Shabbetai Tzevi (1626–1676), a rabbi who was proclaimed to be the Jewish Messiah in 1666.¹¹ I argue that concerns about

10. For a summary of these events, see Frank E. Sysyn, “The Formation of Modern Ukrainian Religious Culture: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in Geoffrey A. Hosking, ed., *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine* (London, 1991), 1–22.

11. On the spread of the cult of Shabbetai Tzevi in the Ukrainian lands and the subsequent apocalyptic expectations, see Iakovenko, *U poshukakh*, 457–70; Tat’iana



Figure 2. Lazar Baranovych, *Mech dukhovnyi* (Kyiv, 1666), detail of the title page. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

demonic agency and demonic deception developed in tandem with these fateful events, stimulating a heightened awareness of the topic of the discernment of spirits, that is, of the skill that allows one to distinguish between angelic and demonic beings. The confessional struggles that followed the Union of Brest, the period of unrest and civil war brought about by the Khmel'nyts'ky Uprising, and the eschatological expectations of the year 1666 contributed to a perception of increased diabolic activity but also to the problem of recognizing the possible discrepancies between the truth and what appeared to the eyes. How could one distinguish true visions from illusory phenomena, if, as observed by one contemporary preacher, the devil could enter the mind through “bad thoughts” (*pomyshleniia zlaia*) and threaten the stability of one’s cognitive experience?¹² Furthermore, if there was more than one church, how could one distinguish between true and false doctrine? These questions, in turn, prompted early modern Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals to question the role and reliability of sensory perception and human cognition, with issues of epistemology and deception becoming increasingly entangled with confessional polemics and religious dispute. Faced with what Stuart Clark calls the “cognitive chaos” of demonism, Ukrainian literati tried to come to terms with a world that had become deeply problematic, one in which competing theological discourses and widespread political conflict brought about unprecedented instability.¹³

Placing demonology within the wider context of the discussions of truth and illusion that intrigued the early modern age, this study examines a body of sources drawn from the areas of literary culture—sermons, theological treatises, polemical pamphlets, and miracle tales—in which the devil is a significant presence, focusing on those passages that show how Ukrainian Orthodox

Oparina, “Chislo 1666 v russkoi knizhnosti serediny-tret’ei chetverti XVII v.,” in *Chelovek mezhdru Tsarstvom i imperiei: Sbornik materialov mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii*, ed. Marina Kiseleva (Moscow, 2003), 287–318.

12. Antonii Radyvyl’s’kyi, *Vinets Khrystov* (Kyiv, 1688), 93r.

13. Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford, 2007), 111.

literati used demonic possession and apparitions to draw boundaries between appearance and reality, true and false miracles, and religious authority and heresy. While belief in the reality of the devil and its powers has always been central to Christianity, the awareness of living at the fragile frontiers of Orthodoxy, where there was not one single source of religious authority, promoted a sense of urgency of the need for a struggle with the devil, whose theological figure, as will be shown, came to incarnate larger confessional and epistemological tensions within contemporary Ukrainian culture and society.

“Not Understanding That This Was the Devil Who Wanted to Persuade the Orthodox”: Religious Heterodoxy and the Discernment of Spirits

The new popularity enjoyed by demons and demonology in seventeenth-century Ukrainian Orthodox culture can be best understood if we first consider its theological and intellectual foundations. In particular, the transition of demonology from the periphery to the center of the Ukrainian cultural system took place against the backdrop of another important phenomenon: the identification of magic and witchcraft as sins against the first commandment and, therefore, as major religious offenses that involved a pact with demonic powers. The identification of magic as a sin against God—what Stuart Clark calls the “decalogical” reading of witchcraft—was established by Martín de Azpilcueta’s manual for confessors and penitents (1549) and eventually adopted by some influential Jesuit theologians whose works enjoyed a certain popularity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.¹⁴ These works include Hermann Busenbaum’s *Medulla theologiae moralis* (The Marrow of Moral Theology, 1650), Juan Azor’s *Institutiones morales* (Moral Institutions, 1600), and Peter Canisius’ Catechism (1558), the latter representing a model for some of the catechetical works that appeared in print in the Ukrainian lands.¹⁵ As John Bossy has persuasively demonstrated, the emergence of the Decalogue as the accepted moral code of Christian ethics marked the transition from a medieval system based on the seven deadly sins to one dominated by the obligation to worship God correctly.¹⁶ As a result, in early modern Europe, idolatry became the primary offense, stimulating the gradual demonization of heresy and the corresponding view of magic as heresy that characterizes “the age of the Commandments” and that, as we shall see shortly, was well established in Ukrainian Orthodox learned discourse. To take just a few examples, in his Catechism (1645), which is largely based on Canisius’s, the Kyiv Metropolitan Petro Mohyla (1596–1647) lists among the infringers of the first commandment those who give themselves to the devil, that is “necromancers, sorcerers, and those who practice magic spells” (*charnoknyzhnykove, charovnykove i tye vsi*

14. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 498–99.

15. On the reception of *Medulla theologiae moralis* and other theological works by western authors in seventeenth-century Kyiv, see Margarita Korzo, “Vneshnaia traditsiia kak istochnik vdokhnoveniia: K voprosu ob avtorstve kievskikh i moskovskikh pravoslavnykh tekstov XVII v. Dva primera,” *Studi Slavistici* 6 (2009): 59–84.

16. John Bossy, “Moral Arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments,” in Edmund Leites, ed., *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Eng., 1988), 214–34.

kotorye vorozhkamy baviatsia).¹⁷ His *Trebnyk* (1646), which aimed to impose standardized models for the liturgical life of the Kyivan church, includes a rite against magic spells and enchantments (*molebnoe soprotyv charodiianiam*): the devil, Mohyla specifies in the introduction, uses sorcerers as its instruments (*iakozhe svoimi orudii tvoriat*) just as it did with the Pharaoh's magicians in Exodus 7–8.¹⁸ In the first East Slavic treatise on moral theology, Inokentii Gizel's *Myr s Bohom cheloviku* (Man's Peace with God, 1669), sins against the first commandment include sorcery, witchcraft, divination, and other ungodly things (*hrikhy volkhov, charovaniia, proritsaniia*).¹⁹ In his manual for confessors published in Chernihiv in 1685, Ioanykii Galiatovs'kyi writes that "magicians and sorcerers" (*vorozhbytove i charovnyky*) who worship the devil as their god (*za boha maiut diiavolov*) violate the first commandment.²⁰

Unlike Muscovy, where there had been no attempt at categorizing magic as the moral equivalent to treason against God and a demonological discourse was non-existent throughout the early modern period, in the Ukrainian lands, the demonological reading of the first commandment stimulated an increase in the discussions of the role of demons in human affairs, with a special emphasis placed on the perils of idolatry.²¹ A significant example is the appearance of a whole treatise devoted to the nature and activities of demons, Galiatovs'kyi's *Bohy pohanskii* (Pagan Gods). As its title suggests, the treatise focuses on the demons living inside the statues of pagan gods, a choice that reflects both the early Christian idea that Greek and Roman gods were devils in disguise and the growing concern with idolatry, interpreted as a manifestation of demonism and a transgression of the first commandment, that characterized this period.²² Published in Chernihiv in 1686, it is the only Ukrainian work that presents a whole theology of evil, dealing extensively with how demons can trick humans into worshipping them and erode confidence in the veridicality of human cognition. Evil spirits, argues Galiatovs'kyi in one of the book's central chapters, live in the air (*na povetriu*) and can use air to take on the appearance of a human or animal body (*z povetria osobu dukh zlykh uchynyty*), which enables them to present themselves physically to human beings. Aptly closing this excerpt is a quotation from Saint Paul's Letter to Ephesians (2:2), which describes Satan as "the prince of the power of the air."²³ A recurring idea of early modern demonology, the theory that demons

17. Petro Mohyla, *Sobranie korotkoi nauki* (Kyiv, 1645), 91–92. Quotations from the texts have been transliterated according to Ukrainian conventions: и and ы are both represented by y, ѣ as i, and r as h.

18. *Eukhologion, albo Molytvoslov, ili Trebnyk* (Kyiv, 1646), 386. The *Trebnyk* (Book of Needs) is an Orthodox liturgical book that contains the sacraments and related services and prayers.

19. Inokentii Gizel', *Myr s Bohom cheloviku* (Kyiv, 1669), 68.

20. Ioanykii Galiatovs'kyi, *Hrikhy rozmaiitii* (Chernihiv, 1685), 12v.

21. On magic and demonology in Muscovy, see Robert Mathiesen, "Magic in Slavia Orthodoxa: The Written Tradition," in Henry Maguire, ed., *Byzantine Magic* (Washington, DC, 1995), 173; Kivelson, *Desperate Magic*, 52–54.

22. See Valerie Flint, "The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity," in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* (Philadelphia, 1999), 277–348.

23. Galiatovs'kyi, *Bohy pohanskii*, 25r, 29r. All Bible quotations are taken from the King James Version.

had aerial bodies evinces a substantial familiarity with the theory of spirits associated with Christianized, scholastic Aristotelianism that prevailed throughout the sixteenth century in both Protestant and Catholic countries and was disseminated among Ukrainian literati by the adoption of Thomism as canonical at Kyiv Mohyla College.²⁴ According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, demons were purely spiritual and incorporeal creatures but they could manufacture any corporeal shape from thickened air.²⁵ This idea was repeated with very few nuances in most demonological treatises from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. In the *Praestigiis demonum*—a work that, as mentioned at the outset of this article, is quoted by Galiatovs'kyi in the marginal references to his *Mesiia pravdyvyi* (The Real Messiah, 1669)—Weyer writes that demons “change their airy body at will into various forms, as when the wind blows the clouds.”²⁶ Elaborating upon Aquinas's theory of aerial virtual bodies, Galiatovs'kyi avers that by rearranging natural elements—air, earthly vapors, clouds, and the like—demons could create their own simulacrum before the organs of human perception. They could simulate bodily operations, like moving, speaking, and eating, animate a corpse so that it seemed alive (*iakoby toi chelovik z mertvykh vstal*), or help enchanters produce images of things with no real substance, for instance through catoptromancy (*v zvert-sadli iakuiu rech pokazuet*), mirrors being a traditional tool of magicians.²⁷

By assuming aerial bodies or interfering with the external senses, demons did things that were not what they seemed, and this challenged the distinction between representation and thing, sign, and signified. Indeed, the epistemological problem of the relation between representation and thing lies at the heart of this work, which opens with a reflection on the difference between the Christian notion of image and the pagan notion of idol. To comprehend Galiatovs'kyi's stance regarding demonology, it is vital to consider this introduction. An image, Galiatovs'kyi explains, is “a true similitude of a real thing that really exists in the world” (*pravdyvoe podobenstvo pravdyvoi rechy kotoraiia byla na sviti*). Christians pay honor to the “form” of an image, to its original, and not to its “matter.” An idol (*bolvan*) is a “false similitude” (*falshyvoe podobenstvo*) of “a false thing that never existed,” a definition that echoes Augustine's idea that idols are “material effigies, no matter how skillfully carved, that lack both life and feeling.”²⁸ Galiatovs'kyi is particularly interested in the notion of

24. On the early modern theory of spirits, see Euan Cameron, “Angels, Demons, and Everything in Between: Spiritual Beings in Early Modern Europe,” in Clare Copeland and Johannes Machielsens, eds., *Angels of Light?: Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden, 2013), 17–52. On the study of Thomism at Kyiv College, see James Cracraft, “Theology at the Kyiv Academy during its Golden Age,” *Harvard Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 8, 1–2 (June 1984): 136–54.

25. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Pt. I. question 50, articles 1 and 2, at https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1225-1274,_Thomas_Aquinas,_Summa_Theologiae_%5B1%5D,_EN.pdf (accessed September 19, 2023).

26. Johann Wier [Weyer], *Witches, Devils and Doctors in the Renaissance: Weyer's De praestigiis daemonum*, ed. George Mora and Benjamin Kohl, trans. John Shea (Binghamton, NY, 1991), 40.

27. Galiatovs'kyi, *Bohy pohanskii*, 29r.

28. Ibid., preface to the reader, 1r–1v; Saint Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, book 8, chapter 24, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan (Washington DC, 1952), 68.

“false similitude,” recounting at length how demons made fools of the ancient Greeks and Romans by presenting them with entities that had an (apparent) shape but lacked “life and feeling.” A recurring verb throughout his exempla is “to deceive” (*oshukaty*) as he focuses on the elements of imposture and artifice behind the devils’ conduct. In particular, *Bohy pohanskii* has a whole chapter devoted to demons misleading those who consulted the pagan oracles of antiquity through the ambiguity of their linguistic constructions, tricking their victims by using words that were at odds with a retained meaning. Drawing on a common tradition of the early modern period, the devil’s figure of speech is characterized as amphiboly (*otpovidaiuchy amfiboliio*), which Renaissance rhetorical manuals, following Cicero and Quintilian, defined as a word that “can be taken in two or more senses, but it is meant to be taken in the sense intended by the person who has spoken.”²⁹ For example, a demon predicted that Philip of Macedonia would be killed by a carriage. After banishing all carriages, he was finally killed by a sword with a carriage carved on it. In another instantiation of the possible discrepancy between external signs and internal meanings, the inhabitants of a city on Mount Olympus were told by a pagan god that their city would be destroyed by a swine. Not believing that a swine could violate their mighty fortifications, they all perished during the flooding of a river called Swine.³⁰ As is clear from these examples, the devils’ verbal illusions parallel their visual deceptions, raising basic questions about the nature of linguistic and sensory perception. Both their words and the forms they invent by rearranging natural elements thrive on duplicity—the amphiboly that defines the demons’ linguistic *modus operandi*—making individuals take the images they see or the words they hear to be the things they represent but in fact separating the exterior sign from the internal sense.

Arguably, Galiatovs’kyi’s discussion of the powers and nature of demons hardly adds anything new to contemporary debates, which elaborated on the Scholastic idea that what demons did was “not real but a semblance of reality.”³¹ However, the treatment of satanic machinations within the “semiotic” framework of the relation between sign and signified gives us an important glimpse into the meaning of *Bohy pohanskii*, in particular, and Galiatovs’kyi’s mindset in general. In his world, the devil actively works to perturb the boundaries between reality and illusion, and it is the task of the good Christian to distinguish between “true images” and the simulacra made by devils, and between the external likeness of things (the “matter” of an image) and the thing itself (the “form”), remedying the epistemological fracture caused by demonic amphiboly. Equally important, Galiatovs’kyi lived in a post-Reformation world: during a career spanning over thirty years, he conducted fierce confessional polemic against Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism, busying himself with the condemnation of contemporary heresies and errors, as in his *Primer for Various Heretics* (*Alphabetum rozmaitym Heretykom*),

29. Galiatovs’kyi, *Bohy pohanskii*, 10r; *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, IV. LIII 67, trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library 403 (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), 400. On demons and amphiboly, see also Ludwig Lavater, *De spectris* (Geneva, 1570), 168.

30. Galiatovs’kyi, *Bohy pohanskii*, 14r, 16v.

31. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, pt. 1, q. 114, art. 4.

published in Chernihiv in 1681.³² As such, the irresolution between certainty and uncertainty that runs through *Bohy pohanskii* reflects and amplifies the confusion of a world in which many different ideas competed with one another, religious truth could be contested, and one's religious rivals were often seen as the allies of demons and witches. Significantly, in one of the few exempla of *Bohy pohanskii* that is not drawn from pagan antiquity, Pope Sylvester practiced magic and became pope with the devil's help but was finally deceived by the devil himself—an apparently trivial story that, as a matter of fact, powerfully condenses the link between religious heterodoxy, demonism, and magic that is central to this article.³³

The implications of the devil's delusive spectacles in terms of religious polemics are especially evident in the miracle tales recounted by Petro Mohyla, in which the inability to distinguish between false and true appearances is often a prerogative of the "confessional other," who invariably appears as a zealous enabler of the devil's activities. Penned in the 1620s amid a bitter period of interconfessional strife, most of these episodes are set in confessionally divided cities, in which the Orthodox were a beleaguered minority lacking the clerical personnel, episcopal infrastructure, and political support enjoyed by their Uniate and Catholic neighbors. In this period of religious crisis, miracles could be used as evangelical tools in the struggle between confessions, making the discernment of spirits a particularly pressing task. Accordingly, not unlike Galiatovs'kyi, Mohyla shows a specific concern with perceptual signs and the investigation of their validity, aware as he is of the fractures the devil can insinuate between sensual appearances and real substances.

A case that demands detailed attention is his accounts of apparitions of supernatural entities, as the possibility of the devil masquerading as someone else made the formulation of perceptual judgments about such entities' veracity highly problematic, implying a broader discussion about truth and illusion, the instability of outward signs, and the role of error in human knowledge. A few examples will suffice here. In probably the most paradigmatic of these stories, a Polish farmer (*zemledilets*) named Wojtek lived in a village not far from Przemyśl, and his wife passed away. Soon after her death, Wojtek started hearing a female voice from under the stove. The voice said it was the soul of his wife trapped in the stove and urged him to pray for her so that she could be released from her purgatorial suffering. Failing to understand that this was the devil (*prelist' bisovskuiu ne rozumiv*), who wanted to persuade the Orthodox of the heresy of Purgatory (*v zabluzhdenii chystitel'noho ohnia utverdyty*), Wojtek ran to town and reported the occurrence to the Jesuits. Two Jesuits came to his house to confirm he was telling the truth (*radly uvirennia*). After hearing the devil speaking to them as if it was the wife's soul, they persuaded all the other Jesuits and Catholic priests in town that this was truly the

32. Galiatovs'kyi's polemical works include *Mesiia pravdyvyi* (1669), also appeared in Polish translation as *Messiasz prawdziwy* (Kyiv, 1672), *Rozmowa białocerkiewska* (Novhorod-Sivers'kyi, 1676), *Stary kościół zachodni* (Novhorod-Sivers'kyi, 1678), *Łabędź z piórami swemi* (Novhorod-Sivers'kyi, 1679), *Alphabetum rozmaitym Heretykom* (Chernihiv, 1681), *Fundamenta na których łacinnicy iedność Rusi z Rzymem fundują* (Chernihiv, 1683), and *Alkoran Machometow* (Chernihiv, 1683).

33. Galiatovs'kyi, *Bohy pohanskii*, 16v.

wife's soul (*iak istynna est dusha zheny onoia*). The episode was then exploited by Catholic propaganda to convert the Orthodox. Tricked by the devil, Catholic priests even began celebrating liturgy inside Wojtek's house, and many people, including the Orthodox, came to see and listen to that voice, thinking it was a soul (*prelshcheny, uviriakhusia, iak istynno dusha est*). The demonic show lasted undisturbed for twelve weeks, until one day, a certain Martyn Hrabkovych, the Orthodox aide of Prince Vasyl' Ostroz'kyi (1526–1608), “a pious and wise man, well-versed in the Scriptures,” came to the house and asked the voice to tell him if it was a soul or a demon (*ashche esi dusha ili bis, hlaholy s mnoiu*). Unmasked by Hrabkovych's question, the demon started howling and eventually revealed its real nature. In the end, interrogated by Hrabkovych, who inquired if someone in the house practiced magic, Wojtek's cook confessed to having brought the demon with her from Poland. She was then convicted of witchcraft and imprisoned.³⁴

The interpretation of perceptual phenomena, as well as the Orthodox polemics against Catholic belief in Purgatory, is a central component of this story, which reflects the intensification of the debate about apparitions that occurred after the Protestant attack against the doctrine of Purgatory, using the idiom of demonism as a rhetorical weapon against one's confessional rivals.³⁵ As noted by Keith Thomas, in the early modern period, the belief in ghosts was “a shibboleth that distinguished Catholic from Protestant” and, as this story seems to suggest, also Orthodox from Catholic.³⁶ Fully aware that by the end of the sixteenth century, apparitions had come to raise divisive doctrinal issues, Mohyla skillfully adapts this aspect of contemporary confessional debates to his own propaganda against Catholics and Uniates, using the spirit of Wojtek's wife as a test case for exposing the falsity of Catholicism and its purgatorial theology, which becomes identified with demonic simulation. The inversion that, according to Stuart Clark, is “habitually associated with religious enemies,” here is conveyed by having the Catholics mistake a masked demon for a wandering soul and perform liturgy in the devil's presence, in a grotesque (albeit involuntary) reenactment of a demon-worshipping sabbat that casts the Catholic Church as a form of anti-Church, and the Catholic mass as an anti-ritual.³⁷ Significantly, the very idea that human souls returning after death could be explained by evil spirits masquerading as ghosts was an important part of Protestant anti-Catholic propaganda, a circumstance that testifies to the unexpected convergences within interconfessional polemics during the post-Reformation era.³⁸ In keeping with the use of apparitions as

34. “Skazaniia Petra Mogily o chudesnykh i zamechatel'nykh iavleniiakh v tserkvy pravoslavnoi iuzhno-russkoi, moldo-vlakhskoi i grecheskoi,” *Arkhiv Iugo-Zapadnoi Rossii* 7 (1887): 105–8. This miracle is briefly mentioned in Dysa, *Ukrainian Witchcraft*, 74.

35. Stuart Clark, “The Reformation of the Eyes: Apparitions and Optics in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe,” *The Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 2 (June 2003): 143–60.

36. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, 1971), 588–89.

37. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 79.

38. On ghosts as demons in Protestant theology, see Cameron, “Angels, Demons, and Everything in Between,” 48.

an instrument of confessional apologetics, the spiritual blindness of the large crowds gathered at Wojtek's house—a hint toward the early modern Catholic use of miracles and exorcisms as a theatrical performance—is opposed to the discerning abilities of a single Orthodox man, who follows the ancient injunction to “try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1) and questions the veracity of what he perceives.³⁹

Two other stories in the collection link spiritual blindness and non-Orthodoxy against the backdrop of demonism and witchcraft, identifying rival confessions with demonic agency, as is typical of the post-Reformation religious landscape. In the first of these stories, the Catholic princess Anna Kostka (1575–1635) starts persecuting the Orthodox community of the city of Jarosław after her husband, the Orthodox Prince Aleksander Ostroz'kyi, dies in 1603. One night, Christ appears in a dream to her sister, who is a Catholic nun, and asks her to intercede with the princess to stop the persecution of the Orthodox. However, she mistakes him for a devilish vision (*iak mechtanie diavolskoe vydinnoe est*) and returns to sleep.⁴⁰ The second story equally exploits the uncertain epistemological status of appearances, using sensory uncertainty as a vehicle for exploring the problems of religious disunity and turmoil. In 1600, when the Union was spreading “across the body of the Church of Rus' like a gangrene or a cancer” (*iako gangren ili kantser*), a Uniate bishop named Afanasii was prevented from storming an Orthodox church by an “invisible divine force” that stopped him from approaching the altar. Like the Catholic nun in our first story, he mistakes it for a magic spell cast by the local Orthodox community (*iak hrazhdani nikoe charodiiiane sotvorysha*) and curses the church.⁴¹ It is later revealed that Afanasii makes use of black magic—an infringement of the first commandment, according to Mohyla's doctrine in his 1645 Catechism—and eats human flesh in an unsuccessful attempt to restore his declining health. As a fitting end to his ungodly life, demons appear at the moment of his death to brutally cut his head, to the amazement of a crowd of onlookers (*vo udivlenie vsim*).⁴²

Through these three accounts runs the challenge of 2 Corinthians 11:14: If “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light,” how is one to discern demonic from divine apparitions? “A major hermeneutic challenge” throughout the period between 1400 and 1700, the *discretio spirituum*—the need to scrutinize and discern supernatural apparitions—here intersects with the problem of religious heterodoxy, as the epistemological uncertainty surrounding these apparitions regularly involves representatives of confessions different from Orthodoxy.⁴³ Martyn Hrabkovich, the Catholic nun, and the Uniate bishop all show a degree of skepticism towards the reliability of the senses and are aware of the threat of demonic and magic deception, but the

39. On Catholic exorcisms as “baroque spectacles,” see Henri Weber, “L'exorcisme à la fin du XVI^e siècle, instrument de la contre réforme et spectacle baroque,” *Nouvelle revue du seizième siècle* 1 (1983): 79–101.

40. “Skazaniia Petra Mogily,” 62.

41. *Ibid.*, 115. This miracle is briefly mentioned in Dysa, *Ukrainian Witchcraft*, 73.

42. “Skazaniia Petra Mogily,” 116.

43. Moshe Sluhovskiy, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago, 2008), 1.

distinction between true and false miracles is evident only to Hrabkovych. Similarly, the Jesuits summoned to Wojtek's house duly apply the injunction to discern the spirits but equally fail in their judgment. Plagued by heresy, false faith, and magic, they all fail to grasp the nature of what they perceive, while the "charism" of true discernment belongs only to an exponent of the Orthodox faith.

Alone in his successful identification of the masked demon, Hrabkovych here fulfills a function that is typologically similar to that of the exorcist: diagnosing a demonic presence, confronting the demon, and casting it out as prescribed by exorcism manuals. Moreover, when he asks Wojtek if someone in his household practices magic (*ty ili kto ot tvoikh charodiianiem upraznhiaetes'*), hinting at the possibility that the appearance of the devil was the result of *maleficium*, he incarnates another characteristic of early modern exorcists, that of "forensic experts" who could identify malevolent collaboration between humans and demons.⁴⁴

In adumbrating an exorcist, Hrabkovych's character acts as an apt reminder of the importance of developing probing mechanisms for discerning spirits based on external, especially ecclesiastical, authority. In fact, in the other cases of demonic activity related by Mohyla in his miracle tales—a Catholic soldier becoming possessed after swearing against the relics of Saint John the New of Suceava and a devil entering a layman from Suceava after he steals alms during John's feast day—the exorcism is performed by an ordained member of the clergy, the Moldovan Metropolitan cum Mohyla's uncle Gheorghe, who commands demons to depart by reciting various formulae (*molytvy zaklynatelnyi*) in front of the large crowds gathered at the church.⁴⁵ This point deserves attention. As has been noted by Kateryna Dysa, in the Ukrainian Orthodox tradition the liberation from unclean spirits was usually performed by the sanctity of a place (a shrine or an icon), not by a man.⁴⁶ For instance, the preface to the 1661 Kyiv *Pateryk* (Patericon) praises the tomb of Saint Anthony, the Caves Monastery's founder, for its ability to miraculously cast out demons, while in one of the stories recounted in another collection of miracles, Ioanykii Galiatovs'kyi's *Nebo novoe* (The New Heaven, 1665), two possessed Belarusian women are brought to the Caves monastery, tied to a pillar (*lantsukhom do stolpa pryviazano*), and freed from evil spirits with the help of the Mother of God.⁴⁷ Mohyla's shift from objectual to human agency clearly reflects his longstanding concern with the priest's exclusive right to access sacred rituals and objects. This idea had become prevalent in Europe between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when it was increasingly required that the interaction between the sacred and the diabolical be controlled and structured by a member of the clergy, and after 1632 would become part of Mohyla's own reform efforts as Kyiv Metropolitan.⁴⁸ Thus,

44. On the early modern exorcist as "forensic expert," see *ibid.*, 82.

45. "Skazaniia Petra Mogily," 80.

46. See Dysa, *Ukrainian Witchcraft*, 79.

47. *Paterik, ili otechnyk pecherskii* (Kyiv, 1661), preface, 6r; Ioanykii Galiatovs'kyi, *Nebo novoe* (Lviv, 1665), 193r.

48. Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 62. On Mohyla's reforms and the role of the priest, see Liudmila Charipova, "Peter Mohyla's Translation of 'The Imitation of Christ,'"



Figure 3. *Eukhologion, albo Molytvoslov, ili Trebnyk* (Kyiv, 1646). Christ exorcizing the Gerasene demoniac. Engraving by Master Illia preceding the rite of exorcism. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

it is not coincidental that his *Trebnyk* (1646) contains a long section on the exorcistic rite illustrated by a dramatic engraving of Christ casting out a multitude of demons from the Gerasene demoniac, an episode that functions as the biblical prototype of priestly exorcism (Figure 3).⁴⁹ Frequent representations of Jesus exorcizing the demoniacs in the books printed in Kyiv in the second half of the century possibly suggest a similar effort to demonstrate the authority of the clergy in the battle against diabolic disorder (Figure 1).

An exception to this clerical trend is indeed the story about Martyn Hrabkovych, for there it is a layman, not church authorities, who unmasks the devil. One is struck, however, by the almost priestly attitude assumed by Hrabkovych, who addresses the demon directly and demands that the demon identify himself (“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

The Historical Journal 46, no. 2 (June 2003): 237–61.

49. *Trebnyk*, 308–85.

the Holy Spirit . . . tell me if you are a blessed soul or an accursed demon”) as prescribed by contemporary exorcism manuals.⁵⁰ The stark contrast between Hrabkovych, who skillfully interrogates the demon in a quasi-sacerdotal fashion, and the large crowds of local Jesuits and Catholic priests, who mistake the demonic apparition for a divine miracle, is perhaps designed to show that while lacking clerical manpower and the institutional support enjoyed by its rivals, the Kyiv Orthodox Church was still the institutional embodiment of Christian truth and a repository of numinous power. In this respect, there can be no doubt that Mohyla’s demonology was part of a wider effort to promote Orthodoxy at a time when the authority of the Kyiv Church had been challenged by the Union and the identification of miracles was increasingly contested across Europe due to rivalry between the churches. Mohyla’s repeated insistence on ocular witnesses—for instance, he specifies that the story of the wicked Uniate bishop was referred to him by a certain Stefan Iliakovs’kyi, who saw the demons cutting the bishop’s head “with his own eyes” (*sia vsia ochyma svoima uvidi*), and that his parents eye-witnessed the possession of the Polish soldier (*ot rodytelei moikh, samovydtsev byvshykh*)—is also eloquent in that connection, showing that larger issues were at stake than simply exposing the true nature of apparitions.⁵¹ If the ability to witness supernatural apparitions for what they are differentiates true religion from its diabolical rivals, then consigning one’s confessional rivals to the realm of perceptual error meant declaring their doctrines, and not only their senses, as deceitful and illusory. The process of understanding if one is confronting a demonic or divine entity thus mirrors the process of distinguishing between the true and false church, raising fundamental questions about the church’s role in interacting with the divine and mediating it to other Christians.

The concept of discernment has a wider significance also in the 1661 edition of the Kyiv *Pateryk*, which places it among larger questions about religious authority and the defense of the Kyiv sacred landscape against the attacks of rival confessions. The editors of the 1661 *Pateryk* make small but significant changes to the late fifteenth-century text of the First (1460) and Second Cassian redaction (1462) and to Sylvestr Kossov’s 1635 Polish translation, scattering the narrative with subtle reminders of the importance to guard against the manifold deceptions of demons and discern true from false visions.⁵² For instance, in the story of the Venerable Isaakii the Cave-Dweller (Discourse 36), to whom two demons appeared in the form of handsome youths, the 1661 *Pateryk* makes the demonic illusion clear immediately, writing of “two demons in the form of two very handsome youths” (*dva bisa v obraze iunosh prekrasnykh*), while the Cassian redaction and Kossov’s *Paterikon* speak more elusively of “two very handsome youths.” Moreover, while in the Cassian

50. “Skazaniia Petra Mogily,” 107. On the judicial practice of interrogating the demon, see Brian Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession & Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven, 2013), 66.

51. “Skazaniia Petra Mogily,” 80 and 116.

52. For a brief overview of the *Pateryk*’s textual transmission, see *The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery*, trans. Muriel Heppell (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), xxix–xxxix. A facsimile edition of Kossov’s translation can be read in *Seventeenth-Century Writings on the Kievan Caves Monastery* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 3–118.

redaction, the devil tempting Isaakii is named generically as the Antichrist, the 1661 editors use the name Beelzebub, “the prince of the devils” of the Christian Bible (Matthew 10:24–27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15–19).⁵³ This terminological accuracy—Beelzebub is correctly identified as the “prince of demons” and the accompanying illustration shows him wearing a crown—probably reflects the more sophisticated system of beliefs regarding demonology that was developing in contemporary Ukrainian Orthodox thought. Here it may be important to recall that while Protestants usually referred to the evil spirits possessing a person as Satan or the Devil, Catholics gave the spirits a variety of names, of which the most common was Beelzebub.⁵⁴ The 1661 version also expands the story of another monk, Matfei, who witnessed a demonic apparition, which in the Cassian redaction was just a small part of Discourse 12 but here represents an episode in its own right. The additions equally point to the problem of true and false visions in relation to demons. Thus, the title of the story, “Zhytie otsa Matfeia prozorlyvoho, izhe zriashe iave bisovskia mechty” (Life of the insightful Matfei who saw the demonic visions for real) underlines the veracity of Matfei’s demonic vision, which was seen *iave*, “for real.”⁵⁵ The adverb *iave* reappears in the body of the text to further emphasize the reality of the monk’s encounter with the “subterranean Ethiopian demons” (*zret emu iave lytsa podzemnykh efiopov bisov*), suggesting the urge for a straightforward interpretation of exterior signs, one that parallels Mohyla’s insistence on the presence of ocular witnesses as judges of the authenticity of his stories of demonic possession.⁵⁶

Although hardly fundamental, these changes focus the reader’s attention on the veracity of the monks’ visionary experience and their gift of discernment, which becomes a compelling mark of sanctity in the face of the fraught religious landscape of the second half of the seventeenth century. For a glimpse of the confessional significance of the book’s demonology, we must turn to its preface, which, as we saw above, praises the Caves Monastery and the shrine of Saint Anthony for their power to expel demons.⁵⁷ Even more

53. *Paterik*, 149v, 152r. For a comparison with the text of the Cassian redaction, see *The Paterik*, 205–10.

54. Levack, *The Devil Within*, 43. On the role of Beelzebub in highly publicized early modern cases of demonic possession, such as those of Nicole Aubry and Marthe Brossier in sixteenth-century France, see Jonathan L. Pearl, “Demons and Politics in France, 1560–1630,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 12, no. 2 (July 1985): 243; Moshe Sluhovskiy, “A Divine Apparition or Demonic Possession? Female Agency and Church Authority in Demonic Possession in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 1041–42.

55. *Paterik*, 147r. For a comparison with the text of the Cassian redaction, see *The Paterik*, 108–110.

56. On devils as Ethiopians, another detail that is absent from the Cassian redaction and that is clearly articulated in both Patristic and medieval literature, see Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, 2003), 80; Iakovenko, *U poshukah*, 441.

57. The Caves Monastery’s miraculous power to cast out demons was well known during the second half of the seventeenth century. See, for instance, Stefan Iavors’kyi’s Sermon on Saint Theodosius of the Caves (1036–1074), pronounced at the Caves Monastery on the saint’s feast day in 1696, which defines the Lavra as the “dread of demons” (*strashylyshche bisov*). Stefan Iavors’kyi, “Pretiosissimus Thesaurus in agro absconditus

importantly, it contains a long confutation of the “calumnies” (*khuleniia*) pronounced by Catholics, Uniates, and Protestants against the monks of the Caves and the sanctity of the place.⁵⁸ This indicates that one of the aims of this work was to reassert the dignity and status of one of the most sacred places of Kyivan Orthodoxy during what the authors of the preface define as “these ferocious times” (*v siia liutaia vremena*): a period in which, with the metropolitans of Kyiv residing in Polish-controlled territory, the Orthodox hierarchies of left-bank Ukraine fearing incorporation into the Moscow Patriarchate, and the civil war bringing chaos and destruction upon the Kyiv Metropolitanate, both religious and political authority were especially contested.⁵⁹ If, as it has been convincingly argued, in the early modern period, the idea that the devil appeared as an angel of light provided “a powerful tool within confessional conflicts of all types”—a notion that is clearly not lost on Mohyla and his miracle tales—the editors of the *Pateryk* also seem well aware of the importance of maintaining clear boundaries between the divine and the diabolic, using the monks’ ability to recognize demonic agency as an instrument in this struggle to enhance their reputation, claim sanctity, and confirm the privileges of the Caves Monastery.⁶⁰ In a sense, the emphasis on the monks’ ability to see demons “for real” parallels the preface’s effort to differentiate between true and false doctrinal claims (between reality and “calumnies”), showing that contemporary concerns about the genuine and the fake could manifest themselves in the textual as well as the spiritual realms. Much the same is true of the *Pateryk*’s iconographic program, in which demons are uncannily *real* presences. Some of the liveliest illustrations of demons that appear in the book are indeed appended to the stories of those Caves monks (the Venerable Isaakii, Ioann the Solitary, and Nikita the Solitary) that spent a long time under demonic attack, and as a result, were able to distinguish between demonic and angelic beings. In this respect, the very visual representation of demons—with their hideous combination of horns, tail, wings, goat or bird legs, hooves, claws, and ugly grimaces—point to the successful deployment of the gift for discerning spirits: the readers/viewers *see* demons just as the monks see the real face of demons behind their phantasms and deceptive apparitions. Emblematic of this idea is the fact that in some of these engravings, demons appear in front of the monks even when the corresponding story does not mention it. For instance, in the story “Ob ukrashenii ikonnom” (“Discourse 5: A miracle concerning Ioann and Sergii” in the Cassian Redaction)—in which a certain Sergii, goaded by the devil, commits perjury in front of the icon of the Theotokos in the church of the Caves Monastery—the illustration shows a swarm of demons attacking Sergii while the monks look at the scene with stupefied eyes (Figure 4). However, the story itself does not specify that the demons were visible to everybody, only saying that “fear fell on everybody” as they heard Sergii pronounce the words “O holy Antonii and Feodosii, do not

Regnum Dei,” Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi i istoricheskii archiv, fond 834, opis’ 2, delo 1592, fol. 1035v.

58. *Pateryk*, preface, 1–7.

59. *Ibid.*, preface, 2r.

60. Clare Copeland and Johannes Machielsen, “Introduction,” in *Angels of Light?*, 10.



Figure 4. *Paterik, ili otechnyk pecherskii* (Kyiv, 1661). Image prefacing the story of the miracle concerning Ioann and Sergii. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

bid this pitiless angel to destroy me! Pray to the holy Theotokos that she will drive away the many demons to which I am delivered!”⁶¹ Paralleling the collection’s emphasis on the monks’ “real” encounters with demons, these

61. *Paterik*, 117v–118r. See *The Paterik*, 114 for the Cassian redaction.

illustrations manifest an image of demonic agency, making the private, visionary experience available to the public, and possibly providing an example for others trying to resist the devil's temptations.

Important glimpses of this connection between the themes of religious heterodoxy, the visual fallacy induced by demons, and the discernment of spirits as a sign of religious authority can be seen in the sermons of one of the major vernacular preachers of the time, Antonii Radyvylovs'kyi (?–1688). On this matter, his sermon on the thirty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost is particularly telling, as it betrays a peculiar anxiety concerning the identity of supernatural visions and the threat posed by their potential use as an instrument of religious discord. Radyvylovs'kyi relates the story of a heretic who tried to convert a priest to his heretical faith (*na svoiu eres*), promising that he would show him that his teachings truly came from Christ. The heretic, who was a powerful sorcerer (*buduchy synym charovnykom*), made a cave assume the shape of a church (*vystavyl iaskyniu na kshtalt tserkvy*). Inside the cave, he made two chairs appear so that it looked as if (*iakoby*) Christ and the Virgin Mary were sitting on them. When the priest entered the cave and saw the heretic kneeling to honor those two “imagined figures” (*onym zmyshlenym osobam*), he took out a consecrated host and asked Mary to kneel to Jesus. As soon as he pronounced those words, both figures turned into dust (*v porokh obernulo*) and those “infernal spectacles” (*pekelye vydoky*) disappeared.⁶²

Deeply imbued with a concern for the blurring of falsity and truth that religious heresy can bring about, but also with the “hereticization of magic” that, as we saw above, was typical of the early modern period, Radyvylovs'kyi's account is based on the story of a miracle performed by the thirteenth-century Dominican inquisitor and saint, Peter of Verona, known as Saint Peter Martyr. In the original version of this story, Peter meets some Milanese heretics who were practicing their religion in a church set up in a castle. In a bold attempt to convert Peter, one of the heretics, who is also a necromancer (*nigromanticus*), summons a demon who appears as the Holy Virgin holding the child in her hands (*operatione diabolica non modica apparuit lux, & in forma virginis filium in gremio tenentis*). When the Virgin challenges Peter to leave the errors of the Roman faith, Peter takes out a consecrated host and asks her to “adore her son.” After that, “the whole fantastic vision disappeared” (*omnis illa phantastica visio disparuit*) and the church was reduced to rubble.⁶³ Following in the footsteps of his source's emphasis on the deeply visual component of diabolic illusion, Radyvylovs'kyi highlights the inherent theatrical quality of demonic activity, conveying his concern with fallible visual matters through expressions such as *pekelye vydoky* (infernal spectacles), *iakoby* (as if), and *zmyshlenyi osoby* (imagined persons). The latter points, again, to the idea that the devil may undermine the foundations of human cognition, separating form from matter and presenting us with simulacra that have nothing beyond

62. Radyvylovs'kyi, *Vinets*, 410v.

63. Godefroid Henschen and Daniel Papebroch, eds., *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis: Tomus III. Quo ultimi IX dies continentur* (Antwerp, 1675), 694c–94d. This episode is mentioned in Stuart Clark, “Angels of Light and Images of Sanctity,” in *Angels of Light?*, 288, which brought it to my attention.

their appearance—or that, even worse, exist only in the mind. For instance, according to Inokentii Gizel', the devil could use the movement of melancholic humors (*dvyzheniia par melankholychnykh*) to fill the mind with images of unreal things.⁶⁴ Radyvylovs'kyi himself points out elsewhere in his sermons that the devil can manipulate and control the external senses, and especially the organs of visual sense, with what he calls “the lust of the eyes” (*pokhot' oches*).⁶⁵ As we saw above, (visual) artifice is an integral part of the devil's nature and the implicit condemnation of demonic activity as virtual world and theater is also an important component of Mohyla's tale about the devil masked as a soul in Wojtek's house. Like Martyn Hrabkovych in that story, the priest in Radyvylovs'kyi's exemplum acts as another “forensic expert,” testing the spirit, diagnosing its demonic nature, and expelling it. In doing so, he reminds the audience of the importance of distinguishing between true and misleading visions, but also of the emergence of a newly purified Orthodox priesthood who had the exclusive right to structure the interaction between the sacred and the diabolical and, as is the case here, could funnel divine grace by handling sacramental paraphernalia (the consecrated host).

Interestingly, some of the engraved illustrations from this period tackle the subject of the devil taking on different appearances, offering a visual counterpoint to learned discussions on how demonic illusion might work. For instance, the Gospel printed in L'viv in 1636 features an illustration of the devil tempting Christ in the desert (Figure 5). The devil is disguised as an old man with a beard, but the artist added some visible marks of demonism such as horns and claws to indicate the falseness of the apparition. In an engraving printed in Kyiv by the Caves Monastery printing press in 1626 and based on an episode of the fourth-century *Life of Paul the Hermit* by Saint Jerome, the devil appears in front of Saint Anthony the Great as a centaur-like creature with the upper body of a naked woman and the lower body of a horse, a striking image that makes the devil's ambiguity—his *amphibolia*—almost physiologically grounded (Figure 6).⁶⁶ Significantly, Jerome speaks of “a creature of mingled shape, half horse half-man”: the engraver's decision to give the creature a female body—the quintessence of sin—should be seen as an attempt to visualize the “diagnostic traits” of demonism that Anthony's power of discernment was able to identify in the disguised demons tormenting him.⁶⁷ The very subject of Anthony's gift of *discretio spirituum* enjoyed enormous popularity in the early modern period. It is further testament to an ensuing interest in the

64. Gizel', *Myr s Bohom*, 600. On melancholy as a major preoccupation of the early modern period, see H. C. Erik Midelfort, *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Stanford, 1999), 20, who speaks of “an age of melancholy.” On melancholy, witchcraft, and demonism, see Charles Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft, and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2003), especially 333–74.

65. Radyvylovs'kyi, *Vinets*, 136v–7r.

66. The engraving is monogrammed by L.M., an engraver active in Kyiv in the first half of the seventeenth century. See Iaroslav Isaievych and Iakim Zapasko, *Pam'iatky knyzhkovoho mystetstva: Katalog starodrukiv vydanykh na Ukraïni. Knyha persha* (L'viv, 1981), nr. 152; Dmitrii A. Rovinskii, *Podrobnyi slovar' russkikh graverov XVI-XIX vv.*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1895), col. 598.

67. Jerome, “Chapter 7” in *The Life of Paulus the First Hermit*, at www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.vi.i.html (accessed September 20, 2023).



Figure 5. *Evanhelie* (Lviv, 1636). The devil tempting Christ in the desert. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

issue of discernment among Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals that a booklet about his fight against demonic temptation, *A wonderful story about the devil, as he came disguised as a man to Anthony the Great, asking for penance*, was also printed in Kyiv in 1626 by the Caves printing press.⁶⁸

“Like a Magician Who Tricks the Eyes”: The Devil as Jew

So far, I have discussed how Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals coped with the idea that the forces of evil had the power to alter reality, showing that demonism could be used as an idiom for exploring the equally urgent problem of the ways religious authority was to be established. This account, however, would not be complete without considering the issue of the longstanding tradition of associating Jews with the devil, which in our texts becomes another occasion for moral and intellectual anxieties about religious conformity.⁶⁹ Let us begin with an example from Galiatovs'kyi's *Mesiia pravdyvyi* (1669), in which he recounts a story drawn from John Cassian's *Collationes* (Conferences), an influential fifth-century work on monasticism. In this exemplum, taken from the *Collationes*'s second book, “On Discernment” (*De discretione*), the devil deceives a hermit by appearing in the shape of an angel of light (*v obrazi*

68. *Ot otechnyka skytskoho povist' udyvytelna o diavoli iako priide do Velykomu Antoniui, v obrazi chlovechestvi, khotia kaiatysia* (Kyiv, 1626). On Saint Anthony's prominence in the early modern tradition of *discretio spirituum*, see Clark, “Angels of Light,” 294; Michael Cole, “The Demonic Arts and the Origin of the Medium,” *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 4 (December 2002): 626.

69. The classic study on the devil and the Jews is Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (New Haven, 1943).



Figure 6. Master L.M., Saint Anthony the Great tempted by a centaur (Kyiv, 1626). Courtesy of the Polish National Library. <https://polona.pl/item/karta-drzeworytnicza-przedstawiajaca-sw-antoniego-idacego-do-pawla-z-teb-i-zycie-pawla,MTM1NzA4MDgy/0/#info:metadata>

aggela svitloho) and showing him the Christian saints suffering in hell and the Jews rejoicing in Heaven. Taking the devil for a good angel (*rozumiiuchy zhe to est angel dobryi*), the hermit converts to Judaism.⁷⁰ Central here, again, is the connection between the epistemological uncertainty of apparitions and religious heterodoxy, which Galiatovs'kyi reinforces through the combined use of the verb *oshukaty* (to deceive)—a recurring presence in *Bohy pohan-skii*—and 2 Corinthians 11:14, one of the classic biblical references on discernment. What is new in this story about (a failed) *discretio spirituum* is, however, its reference to the Jewish faith. Now, we should keep in mind that *Mesiia pravdyvyi* was written between 1666 and 1667 as a response to the claims that the rabbi and mystic from Smyrna, Shabbetai Tzevi, was the long-awaited

70. Galiatovs'kyi, *Mesiia pravdyvyi*, 405v–406r. Cassian's exemplum (*De lapsu et deceptione monachi Mesopotameni*) is contained in Book 2, Chapter 8 of the *Collationes*, at https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0360-0435_Cassianus_Callationum_XXIV_Collectio_In_Tres_Partibus_Divisa_Schaff_EN.pdf (accessed October 22, 2023).

Jewish Messiah, which Galiatovs'kyi interprets as an eschatological sign of a cosmic struggle between the powers of good and evil and between the true and false church. Jesus had indeed forewarned that in the End Times, "false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect" (Mark 13:22; Matthew 24:24). Paul's first Letter to Timothy also presented the seductions of false prophets and the "doctrines of devils" before the Apocalypse as unavoidable (1 Timothy 4:1), while in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 he warned that after the coming of the Antichrist the ungodly would be deceived by his "lying wonders."

This apocalyptic fervor—which, as observed in the introduction, was an important element of Ukrainian religious life in the second half of the seventeenth century—also permeates the book's dedication to the Muscovite Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. The text opens with an exegesis of Revelation 12:1 that identifies "the woman clothed with the sun" with the Church and the serpent with the Antichrist, as well as with "devils, Jews, and pagans."⁷¹ Galiatovs'kyi then exhorts the tsar to kill the serpent with the sword of his faith just like the medieval Prince Volodymyr crushed the pagan idols after converting Rus' to Christianity in 988. Notably, in Galiatovs'kyi's interpretation, the serpent has seven heads like the beast in Revelation 12:3: atheism, idolatry, Judaism, Islam, apostasy, heresy, and schism—a classification that, in placing exclusive emphasis on anti-Christian forces, provides further support for the association between demonism and infractions against God that was prevalent in the moral theology of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.⁷² Whatever one makes of this apocalyptic beast, there is indeed little doubt that its heads represent sins against the first commandment, as they all imply worshipping beings other than the Christian God. *Mesiia pravdyvyi* is thus premised on a conception of Judaism, and therefore of religious heterodoxy, as an expression of demonic subversion of the divine order of things. To take just one example, Nathan Levi (1643–1680), Shabbetai Tzevi's right-hand man and supporter, is said to be inhabited by many demons (*maiuchy v sobi i pry soby diavolov meshkaiuchykh*) and to practice "satanic witchcraft" (*charamy svoimy, za spravoii shatanskoii*) while the devil himself, Galiatovs'kyi stresses, has "total control" over Jews.⁷³

Unsurprisingly, then, Galiatovs'kyi bluntly states that he wrote *Mesiia pravdyvyi* for the people living in Little Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth "to expel all Jews from their lands" (*iz Panstv svoikh prech vyhonialy*).⁷⁴ If for Mohyla, the body of the Kyiv Church should be protected from the devilish shows of Catholics and Uniates, for Galiatovs'kyi, the body politic should be purged from its other demonic inhabitants—the Jews. However, while Mohyla emphasizes the salvific role of the priest in the fight against demonic infiltration, here the successful protection of society from demonism—the successful exorcism of the body politic—is a task of the divinely anointed tsar, who acts in his traditional capacity as protector of

71. Galiatovs'kyi, *Mesiia pravdyvyi*, dedication to the tsar, 2v.

72. Ibid., dedication to the tsar, 3v.

73. Ibid., 74r, 191r.

74. Ibid., preface to the tsar, 6v.

Orthodoxy. Galiatovs'kyi's emphasis on the godly ruler as an antagonist of the Antichrist may also help make better sense of his use of a direct reference to one of the most influential and widely known demonological treatises of the early modern period, Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers*, with which *Mesiia pravdyvyi* shares a vision of political authority as crucial for the creation of a godly society.⁷⁵

If we now return to the episode from Cassian's *Collationes* that opened this section, it is not difficult to understand why a treatise about the coming of the Antichrist, the epitome of dissimulation and deceit, recommends watchfulness against demonic counterfeit. While true miracles belong only to God, Galiatovs'kyi argues that impostors—false Messiahs, demons, and heretics—can only delude the senses with visual trickery. Nathan Levi worked the same way, tricking the Jews through his “satanic witchcraft,” just like magicians (*charovnyky*) trick the eyes (*oshukuiut ochy liudsky*) to make people believe that something exists that is not there (*nache vydiat rech iakuu nezhely byla*).⁷⁶ The adoption of a vocabulary of enchantment and visual delusion develops with unusual strength the connection between demonic activity, heresy, and magic that was inherent in early modern confessional polemic, anticipating the focus on demonic deception that will be central to *Bohy pohanskii* and that, as I have argued, is grounded in the idea of religious heterodoxy as the crucible of demonism. As noted by Stuart Clark, this rhetorical pattern was “so endemic in the discourse of religious difference, that it must be seen as constitutive of what opponents thought of each other, and not merely a decorative addition.”⁷⁷ Both Mohyla's miracle tales and Radyvylov's'kyi's exemplum about Peter of Verona are constructed this way. Similarly, in *Mesiia pravdyvyi*, Galiatovs'kyi extends the comparison between the ocular deception of demons and the trickery of magicians to the representatives of a rival religion, again suggesting that for a society threatened by religious disharmony and an approaching apocalypse, the language of demonism was a suitable vehicle for exploring wider controversies in which religion and epistemology were closely entwined. Illusion, *Mesiia pravdyvyi* seems to suggest, is what lies at the heart of non-Orthodoxy. This further implies that religious truth rests on perceptual accuracy and that there can be no true Church without drawing clear boundaries between the genuine and the fake.⁷⁸

Significantly, *Mesiia pravdyvyi* contains some passages that would later be incorporated into *Bohy pohanskii*, which, as we saw above, also explores the nature of demonic activity within the framework of the problem of visual

75. Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* is quoted in Galiatovs'kyi, *Mesiia pravdyvyi*, 158v. The episode Galiatovs'kyi refers to is contained in book 4, chapter 5 of Bodin's work and concerns a magistrate in Padua who convicted a Jew who feigned conversion to Christianity. On Bodin's “political demonology,” see Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 668–82.

76. Galiatovs'kyi, *Mesiia pravdyvyi*, 72v.

77. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 532. On visual delusions and demonism, see also Clark, *Vanities*, 78–160.

78. On this point see Clark, *Vanities*, 53, who writes of an early modern link between perceptual accuracy and “ethical, religious, and political stability.”

verisimilitude, teasing out the cognitive implications of demonism and magic.⁷⁹ This makes it plausible to assume that Galiatovs'kyi first conceived the idea of writing a demonological tract while working on this anti-Jewish pamphlet. The pending threat of the End Times, when demons and pseudo-prophets would abound, must have spurred his interest in theorizing the demonic, making more pressing the interlocking problems of demonic illusion and the discernment of spirits at a time in which the Kyiv Orthodox Church was without a formal head and was therefore more vulnerable to demonic contamination. Regarding these contaminations, it is important to emphasize that the accusations of demonolatry, idolatry, and apostasy advanced by *Mesiia pravdyvyi* against Jews are the same as those used by western inquisitors against another declared enemy of the order of Christian society: witches.⁸⁰ Indeed, Galiatovs'kyi's call for Jews to be expelled from the Ukrainian and Polish-Lithuanian lands can be seen as stemming from the same theological and legal background that advocated the eradication of witches. Both are premised on the notion that being a witch or a Jew (and for Galiatovs'kyi, Jews are the masters of witchcraft) implies a pact with the devil that infringes upon the first commandment. This is also clear from Galiatovs'kyi's description of the apocalyptic beast—a symbol of “devils, Jews, and pagans”—as the expression of a broader spectrum of sins against God, such as idolatry, apostasy, atheism, and schism.

In conclusion, the works examined in this study powerfully suggest that demonology was employed as a cultural idiom to express the sense of anxiety for a world in which religious heterodoxy threatened social, political, and epistemological order, revealing the underlying tensions in early modern Ukrainian Orthodox thought. During the seventeenth century, the Kyiv Church shuddered under the strain of various threats, and the desire to theorize the demonic and discern spirits should be seen as part of a regulatory and unifying process of constructing a collective Orthodox identity in a confessionally divided world, using the supernatural to combat heresy and reinforce contested tenets. If the conscious deviation from the truth of the church is represented as the work of the devil, whose disruptive actions loosen the relation between things and signs, then the ability to distinguish between spirits came to encapsulate the issue of religious authenticity itself. Thus, guaranteeing the validity of perceptual judgments meant guaranteeing the validity of the institutions that depended on those judgments. Accordingly, Kyiv-educated Orthodox intellectuals denounced other confessions as pervaded by sensory deception and demonism, complaining that they could not perceive things as they are: the possessed Uniate bishop interpreting a divine sign as a magic spell, the Jesuits mistaking a demonic apparition for the ghost of a Christian soul, or the Jews believing Nathan Levi's “satanic magic” are illuminating instances of the connection between demonic activity and

79. Compare, for instance, the excerpt of *Mesiia pravdyvyi*, 190v, which explains that devils are widespread among men and can possess and torment them, with that in *Bohy pohanskii*, 4v.

80. On the triad of heresy, idolatry, and apostasy in witchcraft trials, see Martine Ostorero, *Le Diable au sabbat: Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440–1460)* (Florence, 2011), 755–56.

improper perceptual judgment, both conceived as a major element of irreligiosity. Ukrainian Orthodox demonology provides important insights into the complex mechanics of seventeenth-century religious change by calling attention to many of its facets from a new perspective: questions of church authority, interconfessional competition, eschatological anxieties, and moral theology can be reexamined through the idiom of demonism.

MARIA GRAZIA BARTOLINI is an Associate Professor of Medieval Slavic Culture at the University of Milan. Her research focuses on the intersection of preaching and visual arts in seventeenth-century Ukraine, and she has published various articles on the religious culture of early modern Ukraine. Bartolini is the author of *Piznai samoho sebe* (Kyiv, 2017), a monograph on Hryhorii Skovoroda and Christian Neoplatonism, which was awarded the 2019 Ivan Franko International Prize.