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

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

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

Unlike the heathen gods and lesser spirits, the devils as such, especially Satan, belong to Christian theology. In Old Norse prose the Christian devil makes his appearance not only in hagiographic sagas – including the texts belonging to the special
genre of the descent to Hell and visions of the other world, such as the Niðrstigningar saga and the Duggals leidsla – but also in works of autochthonous content.

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

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

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

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

A similar semantic content is found in úvinr and andskoti, cf. Latin adversarium, which in fact occur as variant readings for each other in some texts. In bishop Árni’s ecclesiastical law, where the importance of baptism is stressed til styrs ok framgengu móti andskotanum, both fjândanum and úvininum are found as variants
in the same context (Storm 1890, 22). The proper meaning of andskoti is described by Clit as ‘one who “shoots from the opposite ranks”’, but in most occurrences the term is used in the definite form for Satan. The related Latin parallels are adversarium, Satan, hostis, diabolus. In the Old Norse Elucidarius the Latin etymology of the name of the first angel, Sathael, id est Deo contrarius, is translated with pat es gops andscote (Firchow & Grimstad 1989, 29). Andskoti is often found in connection with an adjective, a common expression being hinn forn andskoti as a counterpart of the Latin syntagma antiquus hostis, along with hinn forní fjándi, mentioned above. An analogous expression is andskoti manknýs, which translates the Latin inimicus humanis generis. These expressions are also used independently of a Latin source.

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

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

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

While fjándi, andskoti and úvinr belong to a more abstract concept of the devil as an incorporeal being, and there are no particularised descriptions of them, an interesting description of a dolgr is found in Kláruss saga, which according to the prologue is based on a now-lost Latin poem. Here, Princess Serena awakes on the morning after her marriage to the following sight:
Til hægri handar i sænginni ser hon liggia einn dolg ægig litinn ok helldr vysyniglan; hann var svartr sem rafn, nef hans var langt ok bivgt; at òll var hann afskapigr. Hann borfir vpp i loft ok hrytr sem einn overghvndr [...] hin illi hundr vaknar nu, ok lir þegar til hennar med elldlíðum augum (Cederschiöld 1879, 17b)

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

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

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

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

The specific word for ‘devil’ is the loanword djófull, a form that ultimately derives from the Latin diabolus (from the Greek διάβολος ‘calumniator, defamer’). It is to be found as a translation of a variety of Latin terms, the most frequent being: daemon, daemonium, diabolus, malignus spiritus, diabolicus spiritus. The heathen gods are often presented as devils, djóflar, as in the apparitions in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar by Oddr munkr, mentioned above. But the word djófull is also found as synonym for the supernatural beings of Nordic tradition. In the chapter following the apparition of Þórr,
called the Trolle þætr, two of Óláfr’s men are witnesses to a troll meeting: in a single occurrence in version S djǫfull is used as a variant for troll (Finnur Jónsson 1932, 176).

In the archives of ONP there are a number of compounds of which djǫfull is the second element: drambanardjǫfull, translates superbia demon in the Vitae Patrum (Unger 1877, 2, 385); drystildjǫfull is the ‘petty devil’ in Þorsteins þáttr skells mentioned above (Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Unger 1860-8, 1, 417), designated later in the same text as a fjándi jafntill; hofjudjǫfull and ríkisdjǫfull in the plural translate the Lat. inferus in Þórostningsar saga (Unger 1877, 2, 5); moreover, hofjudjǫfull is an extra specification of Lucifer in Duggals leiðsla (Cahill 1983, 73), where hofjudánvir and hofjudjándi are also found (75, 80); mannjudjǫfull is a term assigned in Vatnsdæla saga (Finnur Jónsson 1934, 50) to Hrolleifr, also designated as mannjándi (46, 51), that is a ‘devil incarnate’; mǐdegisdjǫfull occurs in version D of Guðmundar saga biskups (Guðbrandur Vigfússon et al. 1878, 78) referring to Selkolla, an evil spirit in the shape of a woman, with a head like that of a seal; smádjǫfull is used in Sturlunga saga (Kålund 1906, 529). In most of these compounds, the presence of a specifying first element reduces the meaning of the word djǫfull, and the compounds actually refer to demonic figures of a lesser degree or are used as disparaging attributes for people.

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AM 652 4° (ca 1250-1300)</th>
<th>AM 655 XII-XIII 4° (ca 1250-75)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pa syndi hann þæim mikinn skugga</td>
<td>Eptir þat geck ut or scurþgöþinnu ogorlegr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hreðiligan hrafni svartara, naf hans var</td>
<td>blamaþr biki svartari, hafþundlegur oc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hvast ok skegg hans var sitt, har hans tok</td>
<td>hvassnefjaþór, söðskæggjaþór oc svart skeggt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alt a festr niðr; eildr brann or augum</td>
<td>oc illilic, harit svart oc sitt, sva at toc a þer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hans, en gnæistar flugo or munni hans</td>
<td>honum, augun sem eildr væri i at sia, oc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collings (1969, 176-8) parallels this passage with a previous iconographic description of the apostle: both descriptions are examples of a rhythmic prose style, where emphasis is given through repetition and stress. As for the choice of words, blámaðr ‘a black person’ is here used in its negative and specific meaning of ‘a devil, a demonic figure’, often an exotic one. In most texts with a Latin source it translates Aethiops or Aegyptius, both in the neutral and specific sense, while in a single occurrence in the Vitae Patrum we find helvítíslig blámaðr for tartareus inferni (Tveitane 1968, 20).

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

bauluaðr blámaðr digr ok lagr, suartr ok kollottr geingr ylandi framm af hynningunne. Er nu allt i senn aa einu augabraugde, at fiændinn er kominn i fiorana (Unger 1871, 564)

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

Et ccce vidit per totam ecclesiam quasi Heilagr Macharius gat þa at lita laga ok parvulos quosdam puerulos Æthiopes liota, grimma ok gudrárliga blammenn, er tetros discurrere huc atque illuc, et velit frigu eda floktu fyrrir hvem brædra um volitando deferri alla kirkjuna higat ok þagat

This is also an example of the use of lexical pairs and alliteration as a device for achieving a more dramatic and dynamic style of prose than in the original, as in the excerpt from Barthólómeuss saga.

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

Henne syndiz þa kirkian full af draugum. ok hrœðilíum skuggum. ok sottu þessar ohrains anda seonhverfingar allar at Guðrunu kirkjukerlingu (Foote 2003, 104; 137)
The last two examples are from Marli saga, where Dunstanus meets a skuggi on his way to church, and from an ðevintyri, where a young boy called Vilhjálmr has a vision: willið illgiarn andi taalma hans ferd, ok wekr vpp mikin fiolda hunda þeira, sem hluta i kring vm hann geiyandi. Sueinninn Ottzat nu ak [...] slo hann medr wond, er hann hellt aa, þann raskilih skugga, er stod aa veignum fyrir honum (Unger 1871, 718)
sei hann til bëggja handa andaligan leiðinna, til vinstri handar engil himneskan en til hægri handar hæðiligan skugga, svæ at þegar ottaz hann (Gering 1882, 303-304)

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

1) a variety of names for the demonic figures and the devil that are derived from Christian theology: fjándi, andskoti, úvinr, dyggul, púki, some of which are appellations that seem to apply almost exclusively to Satan, the devil par excellence, such as fjándi, andskoti and úvinr;

2) a series of descriptions mostly used for other representations of evil, some of them evoking darkness: blámaðr, skuggi, dolgr.

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

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

Satan iotunn helvíts hofðingi, er sundóm er með .vii. hæðum en sundóm með .iii., en sundóm i dreka like þess, er omorlegr er oc ogorlegr oc illegre a állar hundir, hefir da þingat vîp iotna oc vîp diofla oc vîb rikistroll gørvoll, þau er i helvite voro, ok melte sva (Unger 1877, 2, 3)

Here Satan’s subordinates are rendered as jotnar, dygglar and rikistroll, partially drawing on Nordic tradition. Quite interestingly, these terms are only found in the
oldest version of the saga (AM 645 4º, ca 1225-50) while the other versions do not have jötnar and ríkiströll. Other epithets used of Satan in the saga are høfðingi myrkrann (Unger 1877, 2, 3, Lat. princeps tartari), høfðingi dauðans (4, 6, Lat. princeps mortis), dauða jofurr (6, Lat. princeps exterminationis, which in the AM 623 4º version is rendered by dauða skilfingr), jofurr helvitis (6, Lat. princeps Satan). But the semantic variety of terms related to representations of evil and to the devil in particular may also be due to a language taboo which made people prefer to use circumlocutions rather than mentioning Satan by name (Battaglia 1995, 122). In Duggals leíðsla, in accordance with the Latin source Vísto Trugdál, Lucifer is only mentioned once as the highest expression of evil, with the specification hofud djœfull (Cahill 1983, 73). Paraphrases are preferred, including, beside some of those already mentioned above, høfðingi myrkr, translating the Latin princeps tenebrarum, and hinn grimmi vargr, a rendering of dira bestia (Cahill 1983, 75, 77).

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

We have already seen that in Njörstíningar saga, independently of the Latin text, Satan is described as having sometimes seven, sometimes three heads, and sometimes the appearance of a dragon. In Þiðriks saga af Bern the protagonist comes to the aid of Sístram, who has almost been swallowed by a dragon. In the Holm perg 4 fol version of the saga the dragon is referred to as hinn mikli andskoti, and in the other version as hinn mikli djœfull (Bertelsen 1905-1911, 1, 197). In Erasmus saga the holy Erasmus makes as the image of Þorr collapse and disappear, and what is left is an awful dragon (Unger 1877, 1, 367). In the Latin Passio Sancti Erasmi martyr is the god in question is Jupiter, who is referred to as diabolum and materialises himself as a draco magnus (Mommbritius 1910, 1, 487). The identification of Þorr with a dragon not only reflects the content of the Latin legend, but is also in line with his association with the Miðgarðr serpent (Lindow 2001, 441). In this account, though, Þorr is no longer the antagonist of the Miðgarðr serpent, but is identified with it in a negative sense. And, thinking of the passage from the Revelations, an additional element which Þorr has in common with the devil and the draco rufus is the association with the colour red, so the identification with the dragon fits both with Nordic mythology and with Biblical culture. In hagiographic literature the Miðgarðsormr is found as the Old Norse counterpart of the Leviathan (Is 27, 1), also referred to as hinn forni fjándi (de Leeuw van Weenen 1993, 35v) or hinn mikla hval, þat er stífan fjóandi (Vita Patrum, Unger 1877, 2, 410).
The variety of Old Norse terms and expressions related to descriptions of evil shows how Christian demonology has been interpreted and mediated for the Nordic public as one of the central items in edificatory literature and missionary preaching about punishment and the consequences of immoral conduct. These terms are also imported in the indigenous works, where they coexist and alternate with those designating the spirits of Nordic tradition. Although they are basically synonyms, the different signifiers of the evil spirits and especially of Satan establish different associations, deriving from their different origin and etymology, which the authors seem to have been aware of. Thus, the shifting between Nordic and foreign-flavoured epithets in different works or versions of the same work can depend on the frame of reference which the author wishes to evoke in the audience.

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

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