



In the Company of Demons: Unnatural Beings, Love, and Identity in the Italian Renaissance

Armando Maggi

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Who are the familiar spirits of classical culture and what is their relationship to Christian demons? In its interpretation of Latin and Greek culture, Christianity contends that Satan is behind all classical deities, semi-gods, and spiritual creatures, including the gods of the household, the lares and penates. But with *In the Company of Demons*, the world's leading demonologist Armando Maggi argues that the great thinkers of the Italian Renaissance had a more nuanced and perhaps less sinister interpretation of these creatures or spiritual bodies.

Maggi leads us straight to the heart of what Italian Renaissance culture thought familiar spirits were. Through close readings of Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola, Strozzi Cigogna, Pompeo della Barba, Ludovico Sinistrari, and others, we find that these spirits or demons speak through their sudden and striking appearances—their very bodies seen as metaphors to be interpreted. The form of the body, Maggi explains, relies on the spirits' knowledge of their human interlocutors' pasts. But their core trait is compassion, and sometimes their odd, eerie arrivals are seen as harbingers or warnings to protect us. It comes as no surprise then that when spiritual beings distort the natural world to communicate, it is vital that we begin to listen.

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