

B KULTURWISSENSCHAFTEN

BE SCHÖNE KÜNSTE

BEC Graphik

Flugblatt

Deutschland

1450 - 1650

Teufel <Motiv>

- 24-4** *Zwischen Gott, Mensch und Teufel* : Beobachtungskonstellationen in der deutschen Flugpublizistik der frühen Neuzeit / Alena Martin-Ruland. - Berlin [u.a.] : De Gruyter, 2024. - 142 S. : Ill. ; 23 cm. - (Vigilanzkulturen ; 11). - Zugl.: München, Univ., überarb. Diss., 2023. - ISBN 978-3-11-132068-7 : EUR 29.95
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Humans have a long history of viewing the world in terms of an existential struggle between good and evil, a struggle that is felt not simply in the sphere of religion but more generally on a daily basis. Alena Martin-Ruland's study,¹ which is a revised version of her Munich University dissertation, is part of a series that focuses on historical and cultural foundations of vigilance. In everyday living individuals are continually confronted by situations where they must make judgments about the interests and motives of others and are forced to take action. Whereas we commonly experience this in the modern world, Martin-Ruland looks back to the Early Modern Period and bases her study on examples in German broadsheets of the seventeenth century.

For centuries the Devil, the embodiment of evil in the world, has been represented in various artistic media, including print, sculpture, painting, and mosaics. His characteristics are well established and immediately recognizable: horns, a tail, a cloven foot. Martin-Ruland, however, is interested less in a focus on the Devil *per se* than in more general dangers the Devil represented on a daily basis, and, thus, on the broadsheets she has chosen for her study, the Devil is not necessarily the central figure. He frequently stands to the back or side, where he is intended to denote the general dangers faced by people. Martin-Ruland sees the Devil on these sheets not simply as an image meant to scare the reader, but rather as a figure that forces the reader to think of the dangers represented by the Devil and to consider how he or she should act to counteract their influence. For the early modern reader,

¹ Table of contents: <https://d-nb.info/1323716009/04>

dangers were frequently perceived to be everywhere, and the surest way to overcome them was not necessarily through rational thought but, rather, through a steadfast faith in God.

Martin-Ruland's choice of broadsheets as the source for her study is crucial, for in contrast to other print media broadsheets, with their combination of image and text, tend to reflect general public concerns and interests in ways not feasible in other print media, such as pamphlets or printed sermons. In the main part of her study she focuses on seven broadsheets with differing content. One addresses the negative economic consequences caused by useless gossiping, which can only be counteracted by remaining vigilant and by taking responsibility for one's actions. Another focuses on the sin of pride, which can be overcome if one recognizes the influence of the Devil and through self-criticism changes one's ways. Other sheets have a more political bent but share the same emphasis on a need for personal vigilance if one is to recognize and counteract dangerous political activity. The final two sheets shift the focus somewhat and illustrate the inherent danger posed by one's fixating on the outward appearance of the Devil – in one sheet as a disguised Jesuit – and thereby overlooking the true nature of the danger.

What is evident through the study of this material is the complex nature of broadsheets, where meaning is often far more subtle than what is visually depicted. In connection with the Devil, there is no one interpretation for all, for the dangers posed are multifarious and demand constant vigilance. Rounding out the study are a useful 11-page bibliography and a list of the 22 broadsheets illustrated.

John Roger Paas

QUELLE

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