



Dragons in medieval art

Highlighting Research through IIIF

Elliot Fabert's project

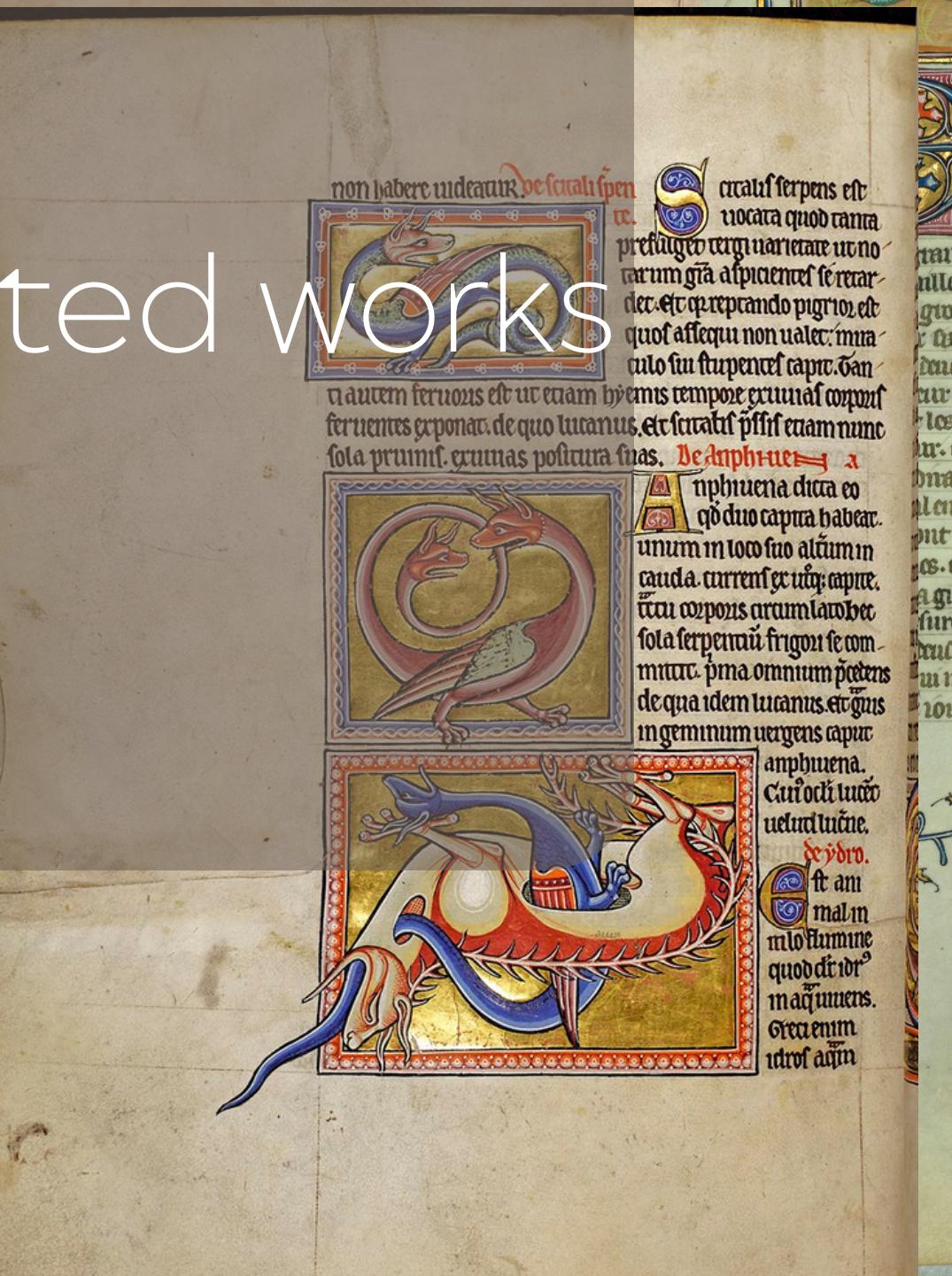
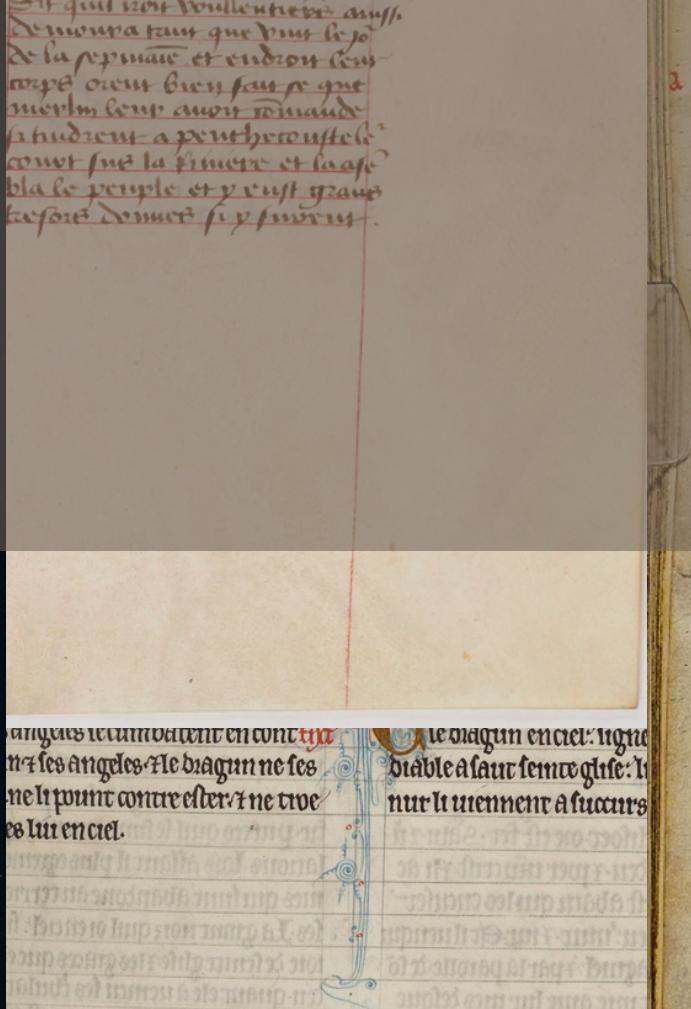
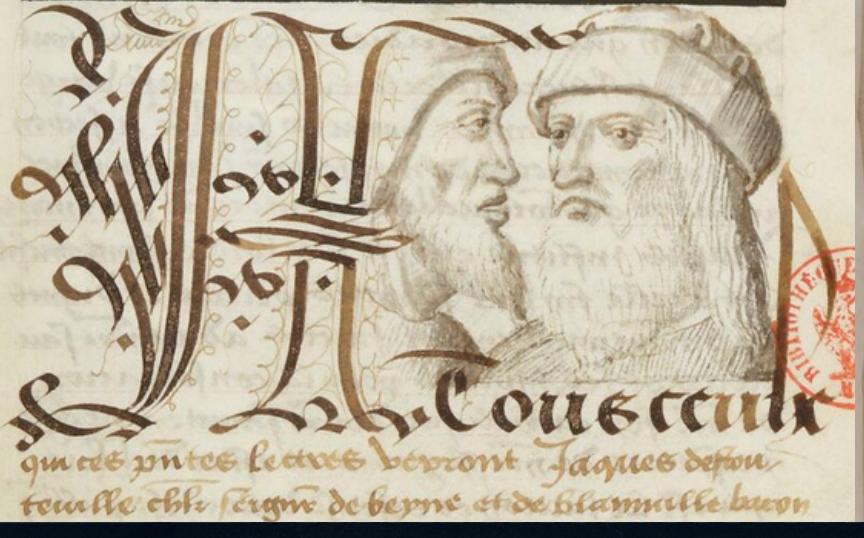


Why study dragons with IIIF?

- It is a legendary creature, known to all and spanning the ages.
- I'm a big nerd and a fan of medieval fantasy.
- IIIF allows working with images and highlighting various representations, describing them in detail.
- This allows highlighting research on this subject by working directly with the image.
- The dragon is a creature deemed hideous, malevolent.
So, why not showcase the hideous?
- Why not ?



Here are the selected works



Cest dist encore de la province de cariaian.

T quant le se part de este cite Jacu que ie voerlen a dreuandre x iournes par ponent. Sy core de este province de cariaian. Et si tenuer lez al sotz idoles et sont au grant haan. Et en el grant haan qui a nom cogatun. Et en este contie nolle a grant cordon. test en chuns et en lars et en gios que autre or il ont tant dor que ie vous dy qu'il ays dargut. Et encore despendent los pourceleman. Et vous dy que en ce pais netremment pourceur viennent ditz. En este province naissent et se les grans serpens qui sont a des mesures que ale qur. Et telle qui locent due sen devoient meucillier tonday comuent elles sont grandes et grosses. Or plen ja de telles qui sont longues bien x pas et telle ont bien la grosses comme une grosse tote qui nant uas. et si ont deux iambes pres de la teste qui sont au guide de facon ou de lion. le chies a mortis grant sure la tote a la giane qui bien engloutit un lous deus et si laides et si faches. quil ny a homme ne beu ne les croire. La manier comment il le prennent tour il demeurent loubz tare pour le grant charal.

Anphuena dicta eo qd duo capita habeat. unum in loco suo altum in cauda currere utq; capite. ita corporis circumlatobet sola serpentum frigori se committit. prima omnium potest de qua idem lucanus. Et tunc ingeminum uergens caput amphuena. Cui oculi lucet uelut lucene.

Se yoro.

Et am

mal

in

mo

lumine

quod

et

dor

ma

aq

uim

er

et

aq

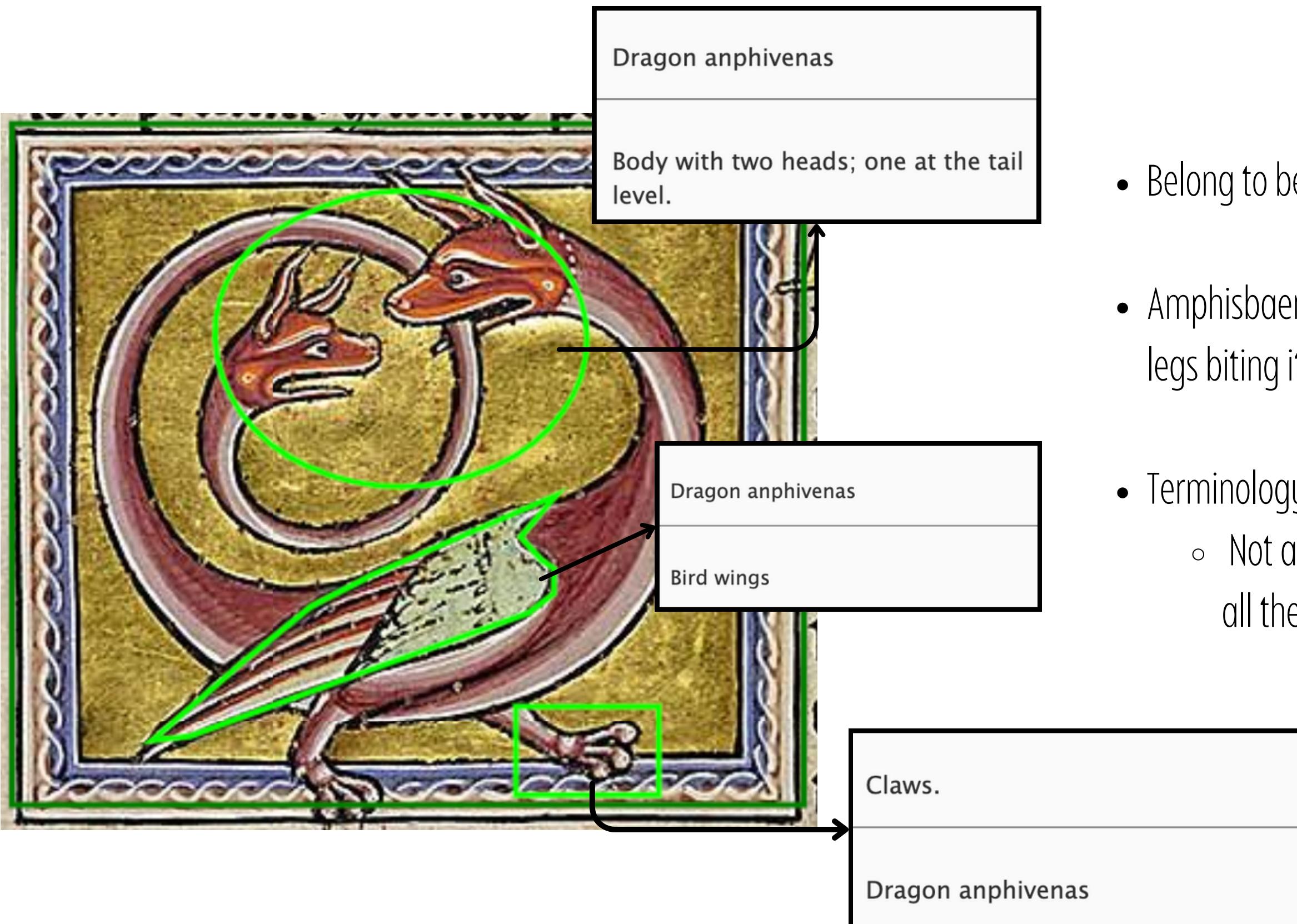
in

aq

Dragon amphivenas

University of Aberdeen, ms 24.

Bestiary of Aberdeen, 13th century



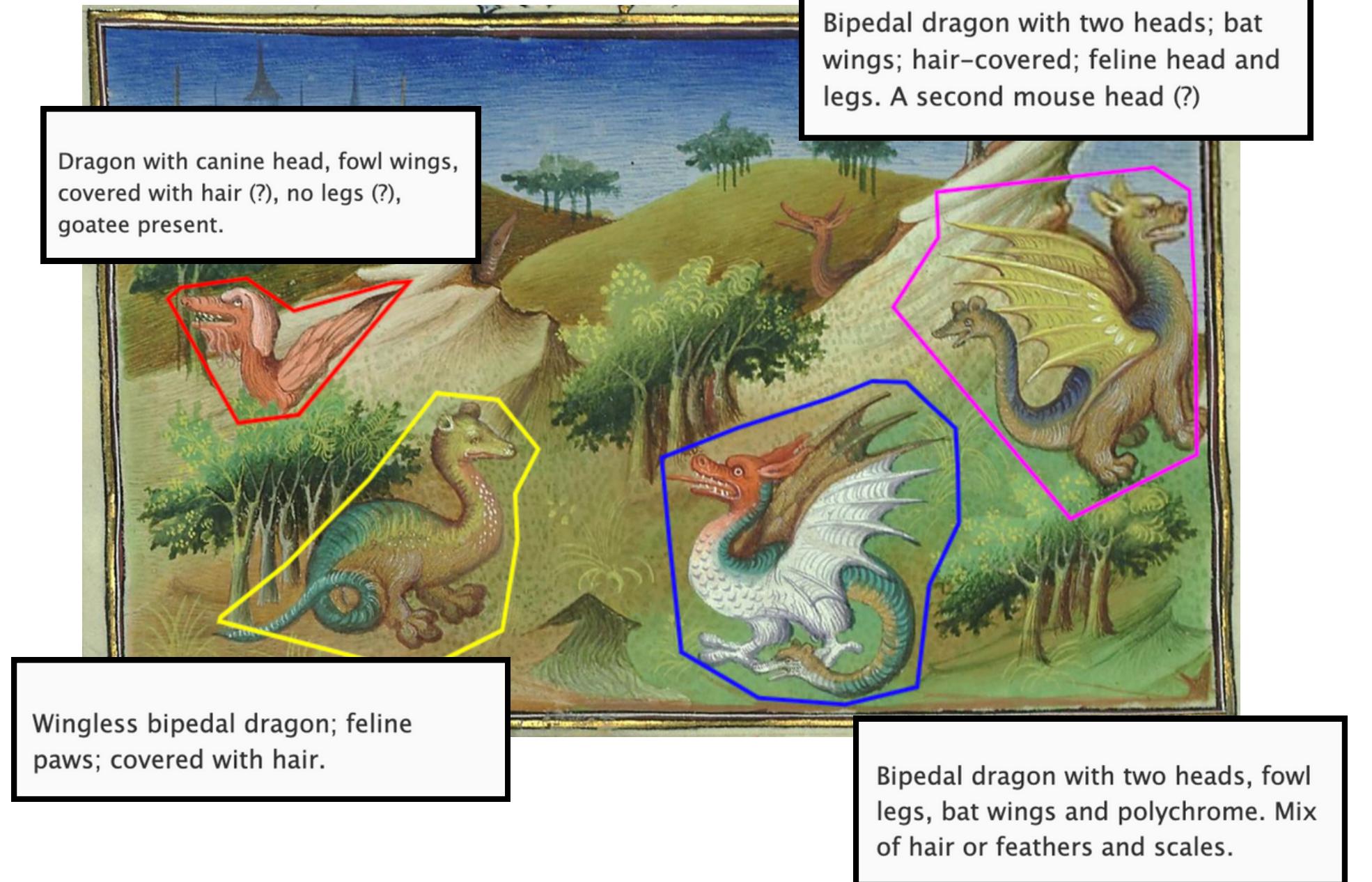
- Belong to bestiaries, straight from the imagination of authors.
- Amphisbaena/Amphivena, a two-headed dragon with two legs biting its tail.
- Terminology that will be diverse and very ambiguous:
 - Not a dragon per se, but rather a serpent representing all the characteristics of a dragon.

Fauna: Dragons of Yunnan

Devisement du monde (Livre des Merveilles),

France, Paris, circa 1410-1412

Paris, BNF, Department of Manuscripts, Français 2810

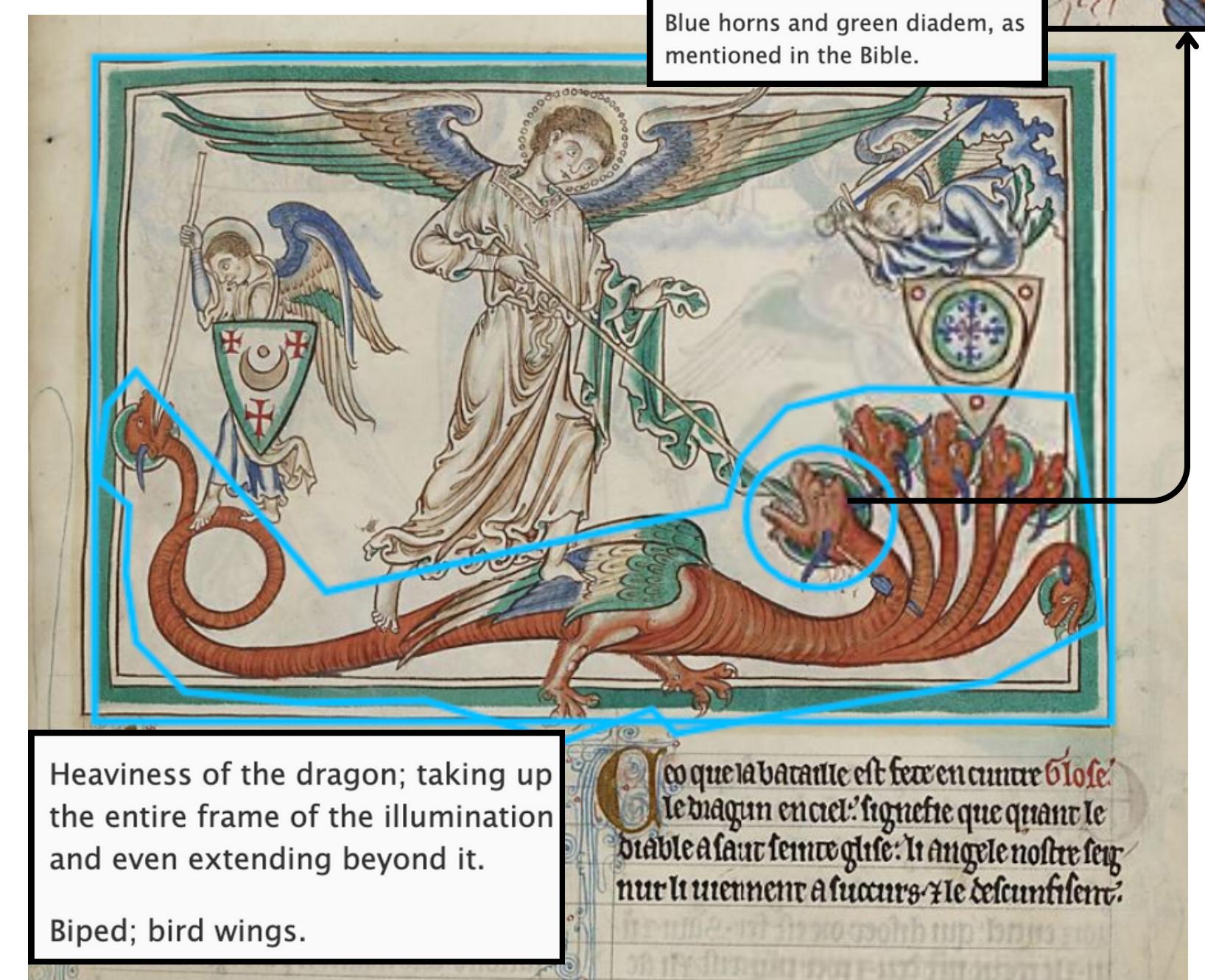


- In "Le livre des merveilles," snakes are described as hideous and terrifying.
- The illumination shows creatures with varied colors, shapes, and appearances, diverging from the description in the narrative.
- A perfect example of the freedom and diversity found in the representation of dragons in the Middle Ages.

Saint Michael and the dragon of the apocalypse

Bible, Glossed Apocalypse/ Britain, Salisbury, circa 1250 Paris,
BNF, Department of Manuscripts, Français 403

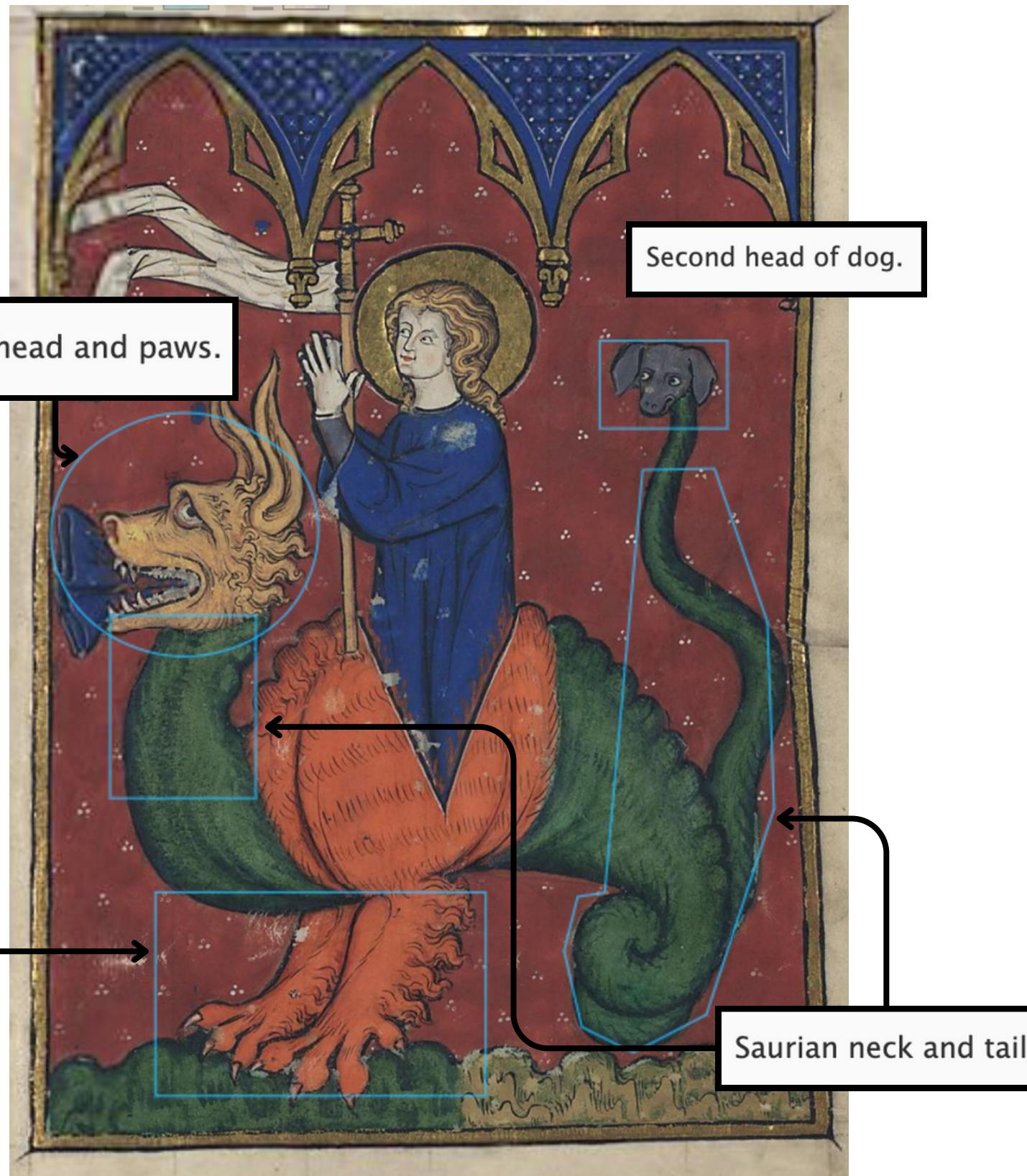
- Apocalypse's seven-headed dragon.
- Artist's juxtaposition: the angel's lightness against the dragon's heaviness (even overflowing from the frame).
- The dragon's red color symbolizing blood, pride, and evil.
- Similarity in wings: the angel and the dragon share the same type, indicating their common origin: divine creation.



Saint Margaret and the Dragon

Book of Images of Madame Marie / Belgium, Hainaut, circa 1285-1290

Paris, BNF, Department of Manuscripts, Nouvelle acquisition française 16251



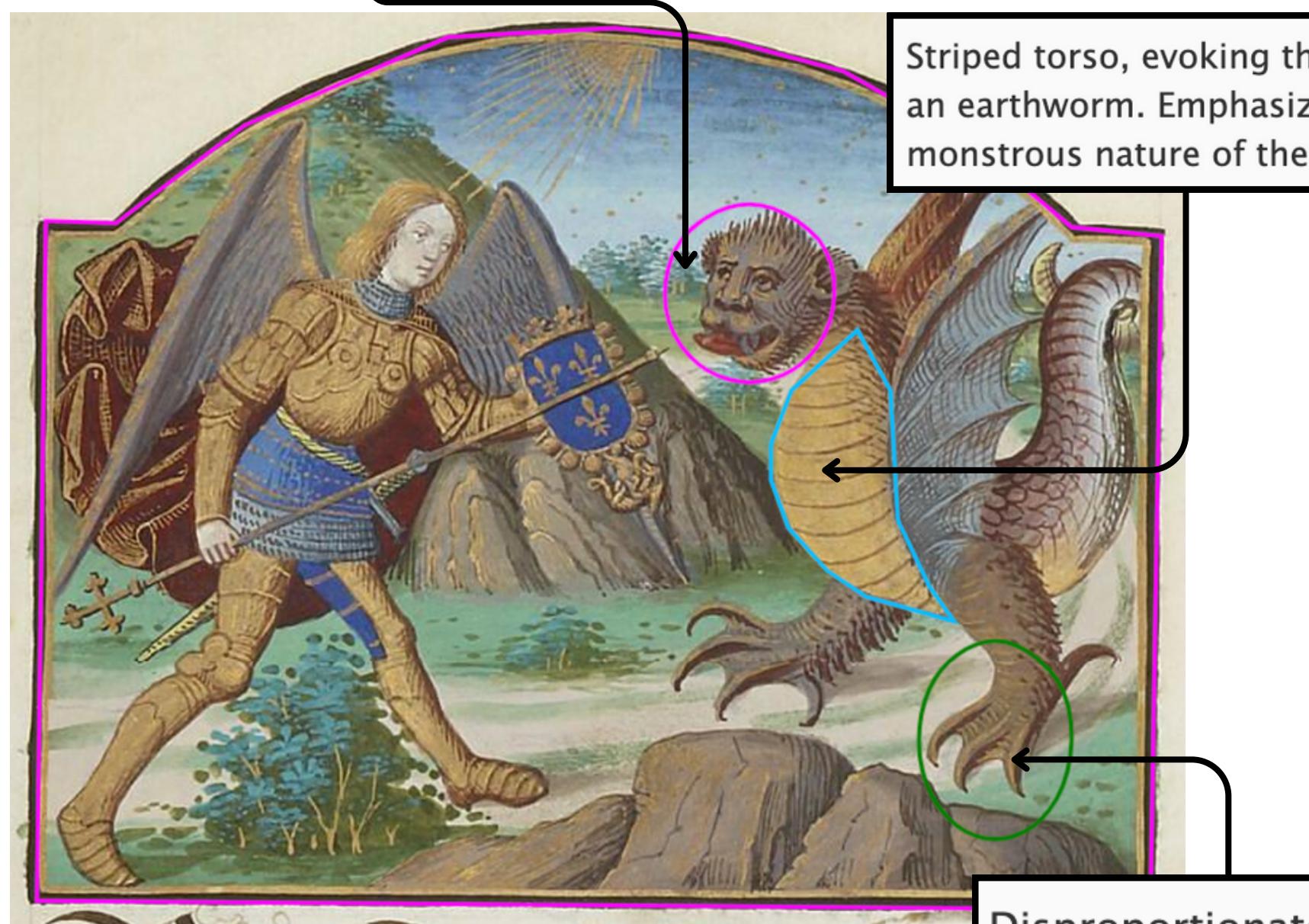
- Polymorphic and polychromatic dragon.
- Contrast between the monstrous figure of the beast and the beauty of the saint.
- Dual representation: a devouring, terrifying monster, and a defeated, ridiculed creature.

Saint Michael Slaying the Dragon

Statutes of the Order of Saint Michael / France, Moulins, 1493-1494

Paris, BNF, Department of Manuscripts, Français 14363

Bear's head (?); bright red tongue.



Striped torso, evoking the body of an earthworm. Emphasizes the monstrous nature of the beast.

- Wingless dragon.
- Representation of bestiality and monstrosity:
 - Oversized claws / Worm-like torso / Bestial maw.
- The beauty of the angel's golden-armored figure in contrast to the monstrosity of the beast.

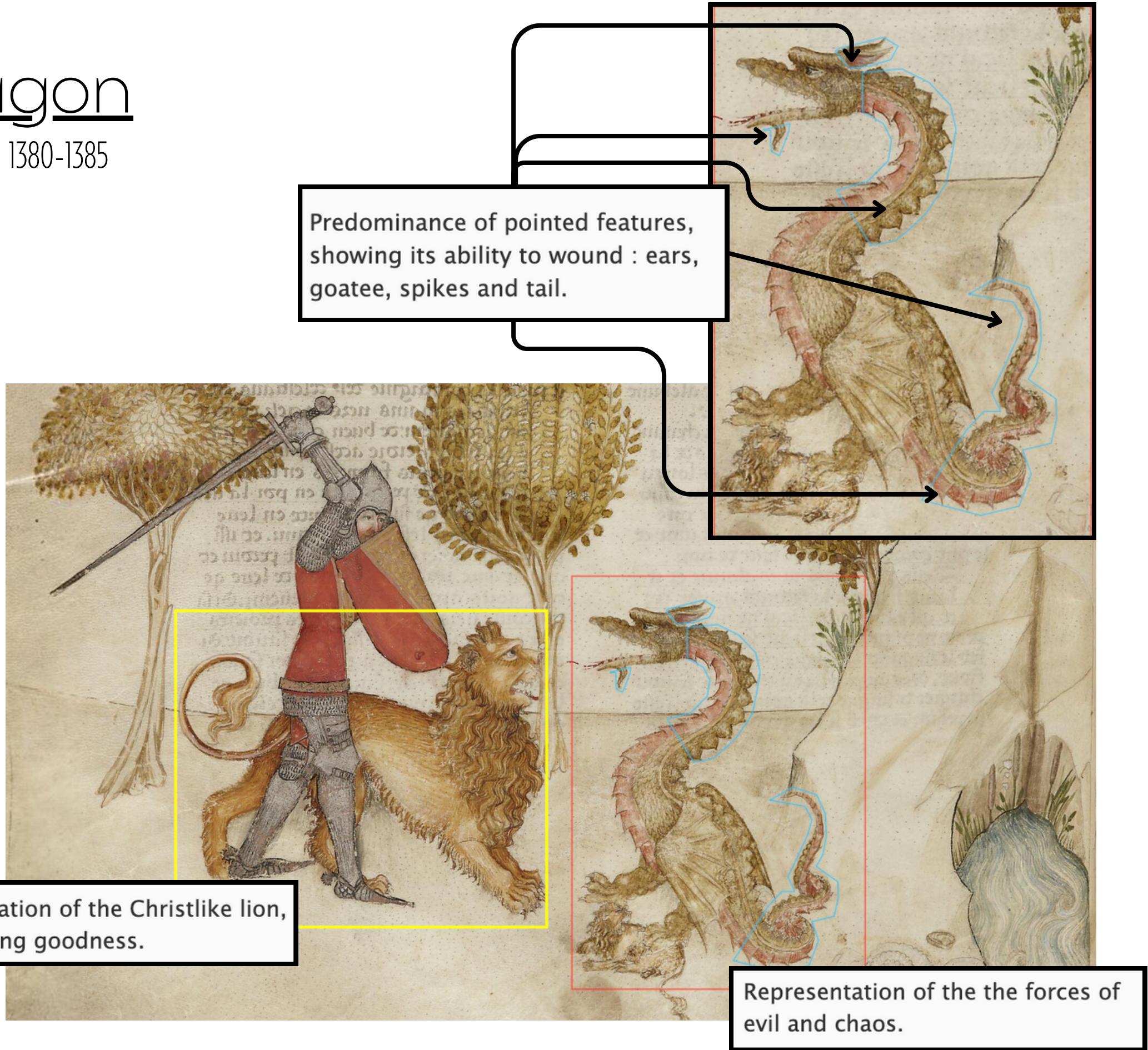
Disproportionate claws.

Perceval fighting the dragon

Queste del Saint Graal : Perceval combattant le dragon. Italy, Milan, circa 1380-1385

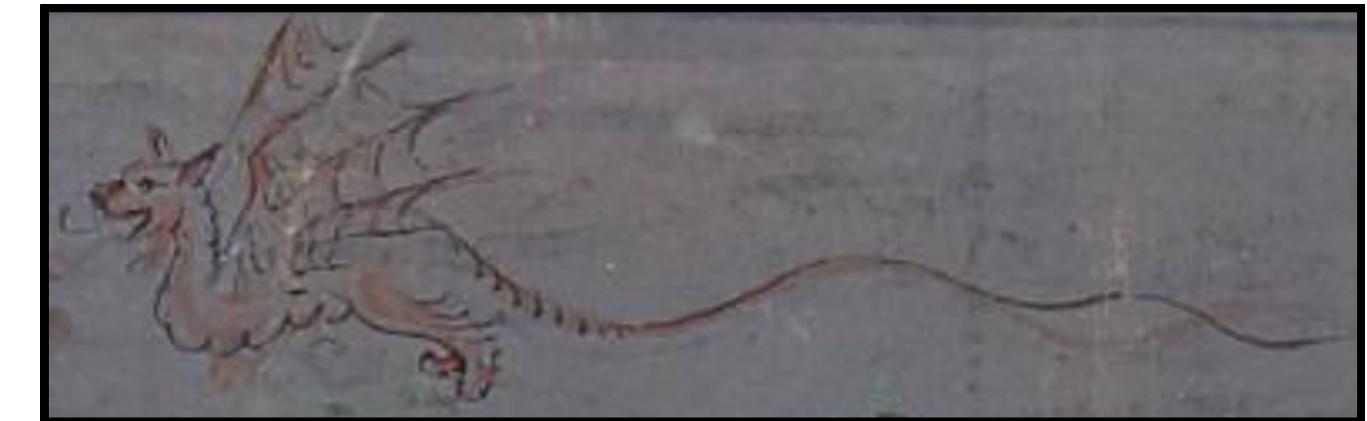
Paris, BnF, Department of Manuscripts, Français 343

- Mention of a serpent in the work.
- Contrast between the Christic lion and the diabolical dragon.
- Predominance of the representation of spikes on the dragon's body,



Battle of Salisbury

L'Istoire de Merlin » [by ROBERT DE BORRON], Battle of Salisbury,
BnF 91; 15th century.



- Dragon in the sky, soaring over the battlefield.
 - No mention of this in the work!
Just a mention of a banner held by Merlin with flames that he breathes, terrifying the Saxons.
- The artist depicts the dragon: bipedal, winged, with a mouth resembling that of a Drakkar.
- The dragon symbolizes royal power and Breton royalty. Far from being an evil creature.
- The emblem of the fusion between pagan and Christian culture.



If you would like to continue on the subject.

- Charpier, Marion. « Le dragon médiéval. “Physiologus”, encyclopédies et bestiaires enluminés (VIIIe-XVe s.): Texte et Image ». These de doctorat, Paris, EHESS, 2020.
<https://www.theses.fr/2020EHES0180>.
- Pierreville, Corinne. « Le dragon dans la littérature et les arts médiévaux ». In Le dragon dans la littérature et les arts médiévaux [Séminaire des médiévistes du CIHAM]. Lyon, France: Histoire, Archéologie, Littératures des mondes chrétiens et musulmans médiévaux (CIHAM UMR 5648), 2011. <https://univ-lyon3.hal.science/hal-00861954>.



Thanks for your attention.