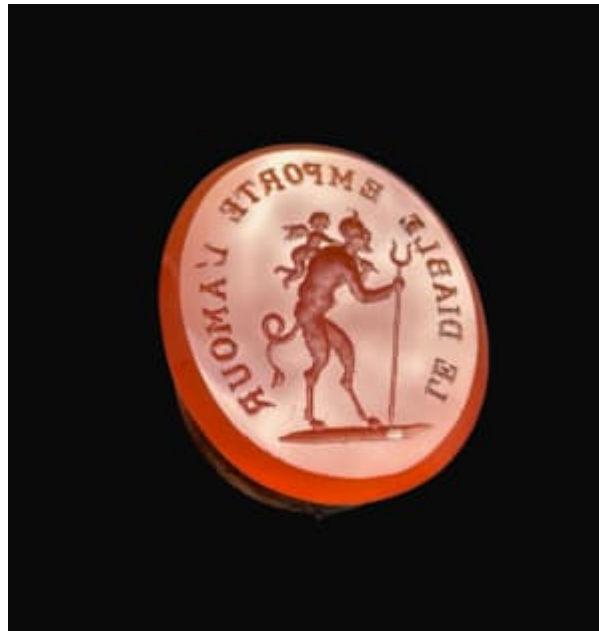




A 19th c. Puss in Boots gilt-metal fob seal with carnelian intaglio "Le diable emporte l'Amour".

Carnelian intaglio 13 × 16 mm

Gilt-metal fob seal with suspension ring – overall height 26 mm

Gross weight 5.15 g.

France, second quarter of the 19th century (c. 1825–1850).

A gilt-metal fob seal, the handle cast as Puss in Boots standing on an oval base: the cat wears a coat with turned-back sleeves and high boots with cuffs, a game bag slung on a strap across the chest, and holds his catch against his body; a suspension ring rises from the head. The base is set with an oval carnelian, flat-cut and bevelled, engraved in intaglio for sealing (the inscription reads correctly in the wax impression).

The stone shows a devil striding to the right, horned, with a satyr's hairy goat-legs and a looped, arrow-tipped tail, leaning on a long two-pronged fork. On his shoulders he carries a winged Cupid, who clings to his neck. Around the edge, the motto LE DIABLE EMPORTE L'AMOUR. Groundline.

Historical context

The fob seal and the motto seal The fob seal (cachet-breloque) hung from the watch chain and was the everyday instrument of private correspondence until the envelope and the gummed stamp made wax obsolete around 1850. Under the Restoration and the July Monarchy, Paris produced these in quantity: cast handles in gilt bronze or pinchbeck, and carnelian matrices engraved with devises — witty or galant mottoes rather than arms. The lettering and the humour of this stone belong to that moment. Perrault's *Le Maître Chat, ou le Chat botté* (1697) had become, through Épinal prints and illustrated editions, one of the most familiar figures of French popular imagery, well before Gustave Doré's plates

of 1862.

Iconography and symbolism

The motto plays on a curse and an image. "Que le diable emporte l'amour" is what one says when renouncing love; the engraver takes it literally and shows the devil carrying Cupid off. This devil is a satyr in all but name — horns, goat-legs, the body of Pan — and the ancients had already set Pan against

Eros: the Delos group of Aphrodite, Pan and Eros (c. 100 BC, Athens, National Archaeological Museum) and the many Roman marbles of Pan and Eros wrestling, where Love always wins, as Virgil's *omnia vincit Amor* promised. Here the outcome is reversed, and Love rides on the back of the beast. The cat of the handle, Perrault's trickster who makes a marquis out of a miller's son, adds a second sly servant: two figures who carry off what they were never given.