

## 4 Folklore

The domination of early medieval learning by monks meant that the colorful ideas of the desert fathers predominated, with their fierce emphasis upon the ubiquity and tangibility of demons. And the homilists dwelt upon the appalling for the explicit purpose of terrifying their auditors into good behavior. Folklore on the other hand tended to make the Devil ridiculous or impotent, probably in order to tame him and relieve the tension of fear. It is no coincidence that the period in which the Devil was most horribly immediate—during the witch craze of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries—is the period in which he commonly appeared on stage as a buffoon. Because of the contradictory nature of these traditions, popular opinion about the Devil oscillated between seeing him as a terrible lord and seeing him as a fool.<sup>2</sup>

Folkloric and popular definitions are never drawn so clearly as those of theology (which are blurry enough); the folkloric Devil shades off into other concepts such as the Antichrist, giants, dragons, ghosts, monsters, weranimals, and "the little people." Over generations folklore established a number of trivial points: what clothes the Devil wears, how he dances, how cold and hairy he is, and how he may be tricked or evaded. Some of these details were long widely believed, but they do not address directly the core question of how evil is perceived.

From the fourth century through the twelfth, Christianity encountered northern pagan religions that resembled those of the Mediterranean in being polytheistic and monist, but that introduced new elements and details. From Celtic religion, for example, came the "horned god of the west," Cernunnos, lord of fertility, and hunt, and the underworld. Cernunnos, somewhat similar in traits and appearance to the Greco-Roman Pan, was assimilated to the Devil in much the same way as Pan. Yet despite the enthusiasm shown by certain modern writers for an allegedly widespread and coherent religion of a horned god or his consort the great goddess, the idea is completely rejected by all historians and anthropologists today.<sup>3</sup> More

The Christian concept of the Devil was influenced by folkloric elements, some from the older, Mediterranean cultures and others from the Celtic, Teutonic, and Slavic religions of the north. Pagan ideas penetrated Christianity while Christian ideas penetrated paganism. The magical charms of Anglo-Saxon England, for example, have been shown to be largely Christian in that they were used by Christian priests for the benefit of Christian people, yet their contents are often frankly pagan.<sup>1</sup> As opposed to popular Christianity, folklore arises from a preconscious, unselfconscious level of storytelling or practice and leaves its traces in oral traditions that happen to have been recorded now and again in the past or set down by modern scholars. Folklore shades into popular religion, but the latter is more self-conscious, deliberate, and coherent. Popular religion consists of the beliefs and practices of people of simple or no education, and it appears most clearly in homiletic literature, the sermons, *exempla* (or formulas for sermons) of such writers as Gregory the Great, Aelfric, and Caesarius of Heisterbach.

Popular Christianity tended to present a vivid, frightening Devil.

2. R. Manselli, *La religion populaire au moyen âge* (Montreal, 1975), pp. 79-80.

3. The theories of Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult of Western Europe* (Oxford, 1921), R. Lowe Thompson, *The History of the Devil, the Horned God of the West* (New York, 1929), and Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (New York, 1948), are only a hindrance to understanding. For a critique of the Murrayites see J. B. Russell, *A History of Witchcraft* (London, 1980), pp. 41-42. Neither does evidence exist for a widespread, coherent Druidic religion: see S. Piggott, *The Druids* (New York, 1968). On the Celts see P. F. Bober, "Cernunnos: Origin and Transformation of a Celtic

1. Karen L. Jolly of the University of California, Santa Barbara, is preparing a doctoral dissertation on late Anglo-Saxon miracles and charms.

is known of Teutonic than of Celtic religions, but because the sources are virtually all foreign—Roman, for example—and late, we can have no clear idea of what these religions were like before they were influenced by Rome and by Christianity. Thus it is less proper to speak of the influence of Teutonic or Celtic concepts upon the Christian concept of the Devil than to discuss how the Christians adapted some northern motifs to their purposes. Yet the power and color of such motifs did help the Devil regain in the early Middle Ages some of the vigor he had once had in the minds of the desert fathers.<sup>4</sup>

The Teutonic gods, like all monist gods, are morally ambivalent. Wuotan, or Woden, ruler of gods and men, is also a god of rage (*Wut*) and destruction and a leader of the wild hunt. Thor, or Donar, is a champion of men and gods yet also appears as thunderer and hammerer, a figure of terror who, dressed in red, drives a cart pulled by two goats. Hilda, or Holda, goddess of sex, marriage, and fertility, is also a chthonic goddess of death and the underworld. Hilda can be a beautiful maiden or a terrifying hag, sharp nosed and long in the tooth, a leader of a hunt of wild women. In some accounts, the Aesir cast Hilda down into the underworld (Niflheim), where as Hel she rules the underworld and the dead. (Her name is related to the English "hell," etymologically associated with caves and holes; cf. Ger. *Hölle*, *Hölle*.) The conflict between the two classes of gods, the Aesir and the Vanir, is comparable to that found in Iranian, Hellenic, Hittite, and Hindu religions, but its origins and meaning are completely obscure. One thing is clear: it is not a struggle between "good" and "evil" gods, though the Vanir are more closely associated with the chthonic and with death.<sup>5</sup>

Though all Teutonic deities are ambivalent, some lean more toward evil and destruction than others. Prominent among these are the frost giants and the god Loki, all associated with the Vanir. Loki appears originally to have been an ambivalent, trickster god, analogous to the

Divinity," *American Journal of Archeology*, 55 (1951), 13-51; P. MacCana, *Celtic Mythology* (London, 1970); A. Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London, 1967).

4. Of course Teutonic religion varied greatly through time and place. The main sources are Old English literature (seventh to twelfth century) and Old Norse literature (ninth to thirteenth century). The power of the old gods can be felt as late as the thirteenth century but almost always with Christian coloring and interpretation.

5. H. R. E. Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Baltimore, 1964); *Scandinavian Mythology* (London, 1969), esp. pp. 94-96; G. Dumézil, *Gods of the Ancient Northmen* (Berkeley, 1973), esp. p. 4; U. Dronke, ed., *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford, 1969); Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda* (New York, 1920).

Greek Hermes, but as he developed through time, particularly under Christian influence, he became more and more evil and ended as analogous to Satan. Loki's connections with evil go back at least as far as the ninth century, and by the time of Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* (c. 1220), he is close to being a personification of evil. He is the father of Hel, of Night, of Fenrir the Wolf, of the World Serpent, and of Odin's steed Sleipnir. One of Loki's forms is Utgard-Loki, a frost giant of enormous cunning and power. (Often the myths distinguish sharply between Loki and Utgard-Loki, "Loki of the Outer Regions," but the name is token of their structural identity.) Loki appears at his worst in the later versions of the Baldr story. Baldr the Beautiful was a shining young god of the Aesir whom the Christian Norse identified with Christ. When Baldr was born, his mother, Frigg, summoned all of nature and caused each creature to take an oath never to hurt her beautiful son. But Frigg forgot one creature: the mistletoe. Frigg jealously guarded the secret of her son's vulnerability, but through trickery Loki discovered it. Loki made a dart out of mistletoe and, while the gods were at games, gave it to Baldr's blind brother, Hoder. The gods were amusing themselves by hurling weapons at the invincible Baldr, and Loki suggested that Hoder join in the fun. Hoder hurled the fatal weapon, and Baldr fell dead, to the consternation of the gods, who knew that his ruin presaged their own. In vengeance the Aesir pursued Loki; he escaped them momentarily by turning himself into a salmon (his ability to change his shape, like the Devil's, was a sign of his duplicity), but they captured the salmon and caused Loki to be bound in chains until the time of Ragnarok, the doom of the gods. At the end of time Loki will be loosed for a while to attack the Aesir at the head of an army of giants. For Snorri Sturluson, Loki has a beautiful exterior but a foul and corrupt spirit; he is "foe of the gods" and "forger of evil." The parallels between Loki and Satan are striking but are for the most part Christian coloring of paganism rather than the opposite.<sup>6</sup>

The theological distinction between the Devil as prince of evil and his followers the demons is often blurred in folklore. The use of *deofol*, "devil," as synonym for "demon" goes back in Old English at least as far as about 825 and persists to this day; French *démon*, Italian *diavolo*, and Spanish *diablo* have some of the same ambivalence, though in

6. Snorri, pp. 33-34; Davidson, pp. 176-182; G. Dumézil, *Loki* (Darmstadt, 1959); F. S. Cawley, "The Figure of Loki in Germanic Mythology," *Harvard Theological Review*, 32 (1939), 309-326.

German a distinction between *Teufel* and *Dämon* is often made. Folklore also sometimes split the Devil himself into one or more personalities. From the time of apocalyptic literature the Devil had many names, such as Satan, Belial, and Beelzebub, and the apocalyptic stories sometimes made them independent characters.<sup>7</sup> In medieval folklore and literature this dramatic device sometimes reappeared. In certain medieval plays, for example, Lucifer is cast as prince of hell and Satan as his messenger. But such a distinction is ignored in most of the literature and legend and is flatly rejected by theology. Such divisions were always vague and shifted in time and place, lacking consistency and coherence. Most important, the phenomenological type both in theology and in psychology is that the Devil is a single personality directing the forces of evil.

In addition to the ancient names deriving from the Judeo-Christian-Gnostic tradition such as Satan, Lucifer, Abbatōn, Asmodeus, Tryphōn, Sabbathai, and Satanael, the Devil attracts a host of popular nicknames that grow in number and variety through time. He is Old Horny, Old Hairy, Black Bogey, Lusty Dick, Dickon or Dickens, Gentleman Jack, the Good Fellow, Old Nick, and Old Scratch, with comparable sobriquets in French, German, and other languages.<sup>8</sup> Such names shade off into those of minor demons, themselves identified with the sprites or "little people" of paganism. Hundreds of such names exist, such as Terrytop, Charlot, Federwisch, Hinkelstein, Heinekin, Rumpelstiltskin (all -lin, -kin, -lein, -le, -lot names are diminutives), Hämmerlin, Haussibut, Robin Hood, Robin Goodfellow, and Knecht Ruprecht. Such nicknames were popular not only because of their association with the "little people" but also because to give the Devil an absurd name is to offer an antidote to the fear he engendered. In the twentieth century one hears fewer diminutive names for the Devil because fewer people believe in him. Associated with such names are hundreds of usually humorous phrases or exclamations:

7. DEVIL, pp. 204-220.

8. On the Judeo-Christian-Gnostic names see C. D. G. Müller, "Geister (Dämonen): Volksglaube," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, 9 (1975), cols. 762, 791-793. See M. Rudwin, *The Devil in Legend and Literature* (Chicago, 1931), pp. 26-34, for a long alphabetical list. On the demon-scribe Tutivillus see R. Dürckling, "Tutivillus," *Ruperto Carola*, 58/59 (1976/1977), 69-93. On Satanael, a name originating in eighth- or ninth-century Syria and then widely adopted by the Bogomils, see M. Dando, "Satanael," *Cahiers d'études cathares*, 30, no. 83 (1979), 3-11; 30, no. 84 (1979), 3-6; 31, no. 85 (1980), 14-32; 31, no. 86 (1980), 3-16.

what the Devil, *que diable*, was in des *Teufels Namen*, *ce n'est pas le diable* (it's not so great), *c'est un bon diable* (he's a good guy); between the Devil and the deep sea; the Devil take the hindmost; Devil-may-care (a reckless person); the Devil to pay; give the Devil his due; he's gone to the Devil; speak of the Devil; the Devil's luck, and so on. "Devil" is also a powerful negative: a "Devil-may-care" is a person who does not care at all; "Devil a one heard us" means that no one at all heard us; "to the Devil with it" signifies let us have nothing at all more to do with it.<sup>9</sup>

The Devil's appearance varied even more widely than his name. He was frequently identified with or associated with animals, sometimes following earlier Judeo-Christian tradition and sometimes because the animals were sacred to the pagan gods, whom the Christians identified with demons. The Devil appeared as adder, ape or monkey, asp, basilisk, bat, bear, bee or swarm of bees, boar, bull, camel, cat, centaur, chimaera (having the head of a lion, body of a goat, and tail of a serpent), crocodile, crow, deer, dog, dragon, eagle, fish, fly, fox, gnat, goat, goose, griffin, gull, hare, hawk, horse, hyena, leopard, lion, lizard, mole, ostrich, owl, phoenix, pig, raven, rooster, salamander, serpent, sheep, sparrow, spider, stag, swallow, tiger, toad, tortoise, vulture, wasp, whale, wolf, or worm. Of these the most frequent were serpent (dragon), goat, and dog.<sup>10</sup>

9. J. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, 4 vols. (London, 1882-1888), vol. 3, pp. 984-1030; J. Orr, "Devil a Bit," *Cahiers de l'association internationale des études françaises*, 3/4/5 (1953), 107-113.

10. Some of the associations are established. The serpent and the dragon are one and the same and derive from the Genesis story; the ape is the symbol of Satan's mockery of God; the bear is associated with lust and the spotted leopard with fraud; the fox is a symbol of wiliness; the pig, of female sexuality; and the cat, of vanity. The whale is a symbol (through Jonah) of the yawning mouth of hell; it is identified with Leviathan. The horse is a symbol of male sexuality. The raven is associated both with Cain and with Odin; the cat with Freya and Hilda; the goat, with Pan and Thor. The mole is blind, dwells underground, and pulls plants (souls) down to devour them. Some animals were protected from association with Lucifer owing to their association with Christ. In 1 Peter 5:8 the Devil is described as a lion: "diabolus tamquam leo rugiens circuit, quaerens quem devoret," but the lion was seldom used because it is a symbol both of Christ (Rev. 5:5) and of Saint Mark; the Devil could never be a lamb, because Christ is the lamb of God; the Devil was never an ox and seldom (in spite of its logical appropriateness) an ass, because the ox and ass were supposed to have been in the manger and the ass also bore Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. See B. Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolism* (Knoxville, 1973); B. A. Woods, *The Devil in Dog Form* (Berkeley, 1959); C. G. Loomis, *White Magic* (Cambridge, Mass.,

The Devil appeared in a variety of human forms as well—as an old man or woman, an attractive youth or girl, a servant, pauper, fisherman, merchant, student, shoemaker, or peasant. He frequently made his appearance as a holy man—a priest, monk, or pilgrim. He could be a theologian, mathematician, physician, or grammarian, and in these capacities he was highly skilled in persuasion and debate. He could appear as an angel of light, as Saint Paul had warned, and occasionally he even dared masquerade as Christ or as the Blessed Mother of God. He might appear in threatening forms—as a giant, idol, or whirlwind. His proper form is invisible or amorphous, but he can shift his shape to suit his purpose.<sup>11</sup>

Often the Devil appears monstrous and deformed, his outward shape betraying his inner defect. He is lame because of his fall from heaven; his knees are backward; he has an extra face on belly, knees, or buttocks; he is blind; he has horns and a tail; he has no nostrils or only one; he has no eyebrows; his eyes are saucerlike and glow or shoot fire; he has cloven hooves; he emits a sulphurous odor, and when he departs he does so with stench, noise, and smoke; he is covered with coarse, black hair; he has misshapen, batlike wings. Iconographically he becomes much like Pan, horned, hooved, covered with goat hair, with a large phallus and a large nose, and with Saturnine features.<sup>12</sup>

The Devil's color is usually black, in conformity with Christian tradition and almost worldwide symbolism. His skin is black, or he is a

1948); G. Faggin, *Diabolicità del rospo* (Venice, 1973); K. M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language*, 2 vols. in 4 (Bloomington, Ind., 1970), vol. 2:1, pp. 45-47, 74-75, 121-122, 143; F. C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales* (Helsinki, 1969), items 1530-1532; H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1952); the index of the Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, University of California, Los Angeles, s.v. "Devil," "Demons," etc., hereafter cited as UCLA. H. A. Kelly, "The Metamorphoses of the Eden Serpent during the Middle Ages and Renaissance," *Viator*, 2 (1971), 301-327, deals thoroughly with the transposition of serpent and dragon.

11. Loomis; Tubach, 1529, 1552-1553, 1558-1559; Briggs, vol. 2:1, 61-62; S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 2d ed., 6 vols. (Bloomington, Ind., 1955-1958), G 303.3; M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1924), p. 149; UCLA.

12. Thompson, G 303.4, 303.4.5.6, 303.4.1.1; Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 47-48, 143 (Devil as three-legged hare); UCLA. For the association of Pan with the Devil see P. Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), which deals mainly with modern literature. Flaming eyes: Prudentius (348-405) has a poem *Hamartigena* which mentions them: "Liventes oculos suffundit pelle perusto / invidia impatiens justorum gaudia ferre" (Grudging the joys of the just in his envy, his burning eyes stare out from his charred pelt).

black animal, or his clothing is black. Sometimes he is a black rider on a black horse.<sup>13</sup> The Devil's second most common hue is red, the color of blood and fire; the Devil dresses in red or has a red or flaming beard.<sup>14</sup> Occasionally he is green, owing to his association with the hunt. The image of the Devil as a hunter with souls as his game was a popular metaphor of the medieval encyclopedists, and green is the traditional color of the hunter's clothing. Another connection is with the Green Man, a common Celtic and Teutonic fertility figure.<sup>15</sup> The Devil carries a fiery sword or an iron bar, or he wears chains and clanks them (the origin of Marley's ghost). He carries money and sometimes gives it away, but it invariably changes sooner or later into something gross.<sup>16</sup>

The Devil is associated with certain places and certain times of day. His direction is north, the domain of darkness and penal cold. Lapland is a favorite place of his, and there he drives reindeer. Since all churches were built facing east, north is always on one's left as one enters a

13. Loomis; Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 49-51, 54, 65-67; Thompson, G 303.5, 303.5.1; Tubach, 1534-1535, 1643; James, p. 345; UCLA; G. Penco, "Sopravvivenze della demonologia antica nel monachesimo medievale," *Studia monastica*, 13 (1971), pp. 34-35, on demons as Ethiopians. The Council of Toledo in 447 described the Devil as a large, black, monstrous apparition with horns on his head, cloven hooves, ass's ears, claws, fiery eyes, gnashing teeth, huge phallus, and sulphurous smell; B. Steidle, "Der schwarze kleine Knabe" in der alter Mönchszählung," *Erbe und Auftrag*, 34 (1958), 329-348. Cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 2.4. In the biography of St. Afra (c. 750-850), the Devil is black, naked, and wrinkled (*Acta Sanctorum*, 5 August, 1.9). See I. Sachs, "L'image du Noir dans l'art européen," *Annales*, 24 (1969), 883-893, for the relationship of the bad image of black to black people.

14. Red was associated with evil in ancient Egypt as the color of the sterile desert and of blood. Red-haired people were commonly supposed to be evil in the Middle Ages. Thompson, G 303.4.1.3.1, 303.5.3; UCLA. See E. Kirschbaum, "L'angelo rosso e l'angelo turchino," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* (1940), 209-248. It is possible that the common iconographic trait in medieval art of showing the Devil or demons with upswept, pointed hair is a depiction of flaming hair; another explanation is that it is in the mode of the barbarians, who greased their hair and swept it up into points in order to intimidate. See R. Mellinkoff, "Judas's Red Hair and the Jews," *Journal of Jewish Art*, 9 (1983), 31-46.

15. Thompson, G 303.5.2.2; UCLA. The Devil appears in green in Chaucer's "Friar's Tale," and green has demonic tones in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. See D. W. Robertson, Jr., "Why the Devil Wears Green," *Modern Language Notes*, 69 (1954), 470-472; J. L. Baird, "The Devil in Green," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 69 (1968), 575-578. Rarely is the Devil blue, a Neoplatonic color for the demons of the lower air. See Thompson, G 303.5, and B. Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christlichen Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends* (Vienna, 1966).

16. Thompson, G 303.2.1; UCLA.

church, and the Devil lurks on the north side of the church outside the walls, so that people prefer not to bury their dead there. Left (Lat. *sinister*) is associated with the ill-omened and dangerous in many cultures. On the medieval stage, north is the direction of hell.<sup>17</sup>

Anything sacred to the pagan gods may also be sacred to the Devil. Pagan temples were considered his dwelling places and were either pulled down or else sanctified as churches. Trees, springs, mountains, stiles, caves, old ruins, wells, groves, streams, and woods were also haunts of the Evil One. Sacred to the old gods because of their numinous qualities, such places were doubly feared by the Christians as both numinous and pagan. Demons can also haunt houses; an alleged "ghost" is really a demon.<sup>18</sup> The Devil favors noon and midnight, but he also likes dusk; he flees at dawn when the cock crows.<sup>19</sup> In accordance with Judeo-Christian tradition, the demons were supposed to dwell in the air or in the underworld, but they issue forth to torment people. The air is so full of demons that a needle dropped from heaven to earth must strike one; they swarm in the air like flies.<sup>20</sup> Lucifer is most commonly believed to dwell in the underworld. Usu-

17. It is in the north that the Lucifer of Is. 14:13 set up his throne; cf. Job 26:6-7; Jer. 1:14; Ecclus. 43:22. Bonaventure specifically placed hell in the north, heaven in the south, in his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 11:3. See Rudwin, *The Devil*, p. 63; UCLA; S. Shahr, "Le Catharisme et le début de la cabale," *Annales*, 29 (1974), 1185-1210, which shows that evil was associated with the north and with the left in the kabbalah. The handedness is widely regarded as a sign of evil, as with the Latin word *sinister*. The connections between the Devil and Santa Claus (Sinter Claes, Saint Nicholas) are pronounced. In addition to his association with the north and reindeer, the Devil can wear red fur; he is covered with soot and goes down chimneys in the guise of Black Jack or the Black Man; he carries a large sack into which he pops sins or sinners (including naughty children); he carries a stick or cane to thrash the guilty (the origin of the candy cane); he flies through the air with the help of animals; food and wine are left out for him as a bribe. The Devil's nickname (!) of Old Nick derives directly from St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas was often associated with fertility cults, hence with fruit, nuts, and fruitcake, which are characteristic of his gifts. See C. W. Jones, *Saint Nicholas of Myra, Bari, and Manhattan* (Chicago, 1978), pp. 309-323; A. D. de Groot, *Saint Nicholas: A Psychoanalytic Study of His History and Myth* (The Hague, 1965). De Groot points out that in the Netherlands, St. Nicholas is often accompanied by a little black companion, Zwarte Piet.

18. Thompson, G 303.15.3, 303.15.5; UCLA. Sometimes the demons built palaces under water: cf. Grendel's mere.

19. Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 56, 139-140; Thompson, G 303.6, 303.17. Müller, pp. 775-776, gives examples of Neoplatonic or Gnostic influence on the belief that there is a demon for each hour of the day and night, or each day of the week, the seven-day demons being derived from the seven planetary demons of the Neoplatonists.

20. Müller, pp. 772-773. Bonaventure: "ad modum muscorum in maximo numero" (like a great swarm of flies). Sometimes, particularly in Egypt under Neoplatonic



Lucifer, the Celtic horned god of the wilderness, was incorporated into the iconography and folklore of the Devil. Devil from the Göttingen manuscript, second or first century B.C., excavated in Denmark. Courtesy of the National Museum, Copenhagen.

ally hell was placed at the center of the earth; a minor tradition set it in Iceland, whose extreme cold and groaning glaciers reminded people of a place of torment.<sup>21</sup>

Lucifer and his followers are active everywhere and at all times. They obsess us, attacking us physically and mentally. They cause physical and mental illnesses; they steal children, shoot arrows at people, attack them with cudgels, or even leap upon their backs. They enter the body through every orifice, especially the mouth during yawning and the nose during sneezing.<sup>22</sup>

The Devil is especially attracted to the vices and to sinners. He tempts people to sin and then gladly becomes the instrument of their punishment. Taking the form of a pretty girl, he enjoys tempting monks and hermits, and as a handsome youth he seduces girls, especially servants. In a typical story the handsome young Devil solicits a young girl for sexual favors; when he adds money as a further inducement, she yields; immediately he resumes his hideous form and carries her shrieking off to hell. These stories have a certain sexist bias, for the men are usually more successful in repelling temptation than

influence, "deacon demons" tried to block the soul's ascent to heaven. Calculations of the numbers of the demons were made, and though these belong more to popular religion than to folklore, they were widely accepted as testaments to the terrifying omnipresence of evil spirits. About A.D. 180 Maximus of Tyre estimated that more than 30,000 demons existed. Under the influence of Rev. 12:4 it was generally believed that one-third of all the angels fell. In the thirteenth century the abbot Richalme observed that there were as many demons as grains of sand in all the sea; the sixteenth-century scholar Johann Wier listed 1,111 legions of 6,666 demons, for a total of 7,405,926. Others, supposing 6,666 legions of angels of whom one-third, 2,222 legions, fell, calculated 133,306,668, still a low number compared with that of humans. Müller, col. 765; Rudwin, *The Devil*, pp. 17-25. A tradition existed in folklore, derived from the Gnostics and popularized by *The Voyage of Saint Brendan* and other Irish legendary literature, that in addition to good and bad angels a third group of neutral angels existed, angels who chose neither God's side nor Lucifer's. See M. Dando, "Les anges neutres," *Cahiers d'études cathares*, 27, no. 69 (1976), 3-28; Chapter 8 below, on Dante's use of the concept.

21. On hell, see DEVIL, pp. 240-241; SATAN, pp. 120-123; J. Kroll, *Gott und Hölle: Der Mythos vom Descensuskampfe* (Leipzig, 1932); K. Maurer, "Die Hölle auf Island," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, 4 (1894), 256-358; H. R. Patch, *The Other World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950). Hell is a vast subject as well as a vast place, but as it is tangential to the subject of the Devil I leave it to the infernologists. Alan Bernstein of the University of Arizona is preparing a book on the invocation of hell in thirteenth-century France. On purgatory the master work is now Jacques LeGoff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago, 1984).

22. Whence the custom of saying "God bless you" or *Gesundheit*? Tubach, 246.

the women: when the Devil as a pretty girl tried to seduce Saint Dunstan, the monk drove her off by pinching her nose with tongs.<sup>23</sup> Satan enjoys playing cards, gambling, and gossiping, and at the same time he takes pleasure in punishing those mortals who follow his example. He carries off sabbath breakers, kills a clergyman who plays cards on Sunday, and punishes vain women and naughty children. He hunts the souls of sinners as well as their bodies. The didactic purpose of such stories meets the eye, but they appear in genuine folklore as well as in homiletic literature.<sup>24</sup>

In widely credited stories, the Devil leads the wild hunt surrounded by his demonic dogs; a similar motif is the rout of wild women, which became one of the leading elements in witch lore.<sup>25</sup> Like his manifestation the dragon, Satan guards underground treasures.<sup>26</sup> Demons hold tournaments or parliaments.<sup>27</sup> The Devil writes letters, some of which were allegedly preserved. The Evil One particularly loves to foment general discord in a village or town or to disrupt a congregation at prayer or divine service.<sup>28</sup>

He and his followers ride animals backwards.<sup>29</sup> The Devil loved architecture, because he took the place of the Teutonic giants, who were builders of giant artifices. Any large, mysterious object of stone was supposed to have been thrown down, built up, or dug out by the Evil One: hence there are Devil's ditches, dikes, bridges, and gorges. Meteorites are hurled down by Lucifer; he piles up sandbars in har-

23. Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 45, 53, 80-81, 141-143.

24. Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 54-56, 71-74, 79-80, 109-111, 140-141; Thompson, G 303.6.2, 303.7.1.3, 303.24; Tubach, 1202, 2452, 3503.

25. Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 61-62, 67-68, 74, 114, 152-153; A. Runeberg, *Witches, Demons, and Fertility Magic* (Helsinki, 1947), pp. 7, 126-132; E. H. Carnoy, "Les acousmates et les chasses fantastiques," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 9 (1884), pp. 370-378; J. B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1972), pp. 48-50, 79-80, 211-213. Often, motifs are mixed. For example, one version of the wild hunt has the Devil riding out with his "dandy dogs"; this was confused with the tale of the dogs of wild Parson Dando, whom the Devil carried off to hell on account of the sensuality of his life.

26. Briggs, vol. 2:1, p. 148; A. Wünsche, *Der Sagenkreis vom geprellten Teufel* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 71.

27. Tournament: Tubach, 4931; parliament: Thompson G 303.25.19.

28. Siebert of Gembloux, *Chronica*, year 858, in MPL 160.163; Tubach, 240.

29. R. Mellinkoff, "Riding Backwards: Theme of Humiliation and Symbol of Evil," *Viator*, 4 (1973), 153-176, shows how riding backward was originally a mark of shame and then was transferred to evil. Similarly, riding, walking, or dancing widdershins, i.e., in a circle opposite to the sun's motion, is associated with evil and with the witch

harbors so that ships will run aground. The custom of naming large natural features of stone—the least alive of all natural objects—after the Devil, particularly in remote or desolate areas, persisted into the twentieth century in the Devil's Kitchen, the Devil's Punchbowl, the Devil's Slide, the Devil's Tower. Of artificial constructions the Devil's favorites are bridges, though he also constructs piers, houses, roads, and even (in special circumstances) church towers. When he pipes at a wedding, the guests may turn to stone. The following story is typical: Jack and the Devil build a bridge near Kentmouth. Whatever they build up by night falls down by day. Finally Satan completes the bridge with the understanding that he will obtain the soul of the first living creature to cross the bridge, but Jack tricks him by throwing a bone across the bridge, so that the first creature to pass is a dog. The Devil also is a destroyer and pulls down by night whatever people build by day. Several parish building programs were impeded by such activity, and sometimes the location of the church had to be changed before building could be completed.<sup>30</sup>

As Jack showed with the dog and the bone, the Devil can be foiled and gulled by a quick wit. The function of such stories is to tame the terror. The Devil built a house for a cobbler after the cobbler promised that the Devil could have his soul when a lighted candle guttered out; but the cobbler blew out the candle before it could burn down. The candle trick was a great favorite. Lucifer wooed a servant girl and promised to marry her; a candle was lit during the service, and the girl agreed that when it burned out the Devil would have her soul; the priest saved her by swallowing the candle. A man who beat the Devil at cards claimed as wager that the Devil should plant him a fine avenue of trees. Satan agreed on the condition that when the man died he should have his soul whether he was buried in the church or outside it; the man secretly provided in his will that he be interred in the church wall. Even schoolboys outwitted the Old Boy by challenging him to cord a rope of sand or to count the letters in the church Bible. The Devil was defeated in wrestling matches, mowing or sowing contests, drinking bouts, gambling wagers, or debates (as in Stephen Vincent Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster"). He could even be thwarted

30. Such stories are parodies of the activities of saints as well as rooted in the folklore of giants: I have seen a staircase in New Mexico that Saint Joseph constructed in one night, and the Holy House of Loreto was moved from Palestine to Italy by the Blessed Mother of God. Thompson, *G* 303.9.1; Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 52, 60–61, 73, 85–89, 91–92, 95–96.

*Si come teophilus far ommaige au deable.*



*Si come teophilus sermō. 7 il prie merv. 7 madame sainte marie  
saperit a lui.*

The legend of Theophilus. In the upper panel Theophilus does homage to the Devil, placing his hands within Satan's in imitation of the feudal contract. Satan holds the contract, inscribed with the words "I am your vassal." In the lower panel Theophilus pleads with Saint Mary for for-

(though this is rare in folklore) by a deathbed confession and repentance.

Sometimes Lucifer's humiliation was satisfyingly grotesque, as when he attempted to keep Saint Theobald from attending a council by removing a wheel from his cart; the saint forced him to take the wheel's place and went happily on his way with Lucifer rolling along the road beneath him. The Old One did not always stand for such treatment. A farm lad who tricked him into doing his chore of spreading muck found the muck all back in its original heaps the next morning. But on the whole the message was clear: an ordinary person, using his native wit, could make a fool of the Prince of Darkness. The ubiquity of such stories is testimony to their appeal to basic needs. Schoolboys, farmers, shoemakers, smiths, farmhands, servant girls, cobblers, and monks are common heroes of these tales; much more rarely is it a priest or a gentleman. The rich and the successful come more readily into tales in which the Devil carries off the avaricious and arrogant. Fabliaux, beast epics, and other medieval tales close to the people's hearts featured the poor making fools of the rich and the proud; and no one is more arrogant than Lucifer. The stories of the duped Devil derive from the folklore about stupid trolls and giants and are closely linked to the misadventures of the "little people." The duping of Rumpelstiltskin, a little man, a nature spirit, and/or a minor demon, is in the same genre. But the immense popularity of the tales was rooted in the resentment that the humble feel for the mighty. Such tales suggest that even the Dark Lord can be brought down by courage and common sense, and this idea agrees with the theology that the Devil, though crafty, is at bottom a fool who understands nothing.<sup>31</sup>

The Devil could be a silly prankster, playing marbles in church or moving the pews about. He could even genuinely help people, repaying kindnesses or finding lost objects, though the people he helps are usually socially objectionable, such as heretics or thieves.<sup>32</sup> The stupidity and occasional helpfulness of the Devil gave rise to such expressions as "poor Devil." Folklore was usually aimed at taming the Devil, but the opposite side of folk ambiguity sometimes expressed itself in frightening tales. "Jack of France" encountered a monk who was reciting the names of all who would die in the year to come; Jack heard him mention his name; horrified, Jack peered under the monk's

31. Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 56-59, 65-83, 92-94, 116-117, 124-128, 145-149; Wünsche, pp. 80-108; Tubach, 1567.

32. Thompson, G. 203.0.0.202.22; Tubach, 1567.

cowl—and saw the Devil's face. One must never call upon Satan in irritation or anger, for he may answer the call. A man irritated by his whining little daughter exclaims that he wishes the Devil would carry her off; he does. An innkeeper vowing "May the Devil take me if this be not true" wished that he had held his tongue.<sup>33</sup>

The Devil has aides and accomplices and even a family. His grandmother (more rarely his mother) is a persistent figure in folklore. In origin the fertility goddess Cybele, the Magna Mater, or Holda, the Devil's granddam is a terrible figure of great power, the prototype of Grendel's monstrous mother. Satan had a number of wives. His wife was sometimes a former fertility goddess. Or he could take his bride from among those women who have slept with an incubus. Still, the Devil's marriage is not always happy: he may successfully woo a woman who turns into a terrible nag and scold. The Devil's family often appeared in didactic literature. The Devil has seven daughters, representing the seven cardinal vices, or else he has two children, Death and Sin, whose incest produces the seven vices; the grandchildren delight their grandsire, who sends them out into the world to tempt humanity. The Devil has twelve disciples in mockery of Jesus. He also has sons: he impregnates a Jewish maiden of the tribe of Dan living in Babylon, thus fathering the Antichrist upon "the whore of Babylon." Or he seduces another sinful woman, begetting Merlin, Attila, Robert the Devil, Caliban, or a giant. The Devil's impregnation of a mortal woman is a mockery of the Incarnation of Christ. Since the Devil has no sex but can take on whatever form he chooses, he/she could presumably have borne a child to a man, but such an arrangement would have provided no parody of the Incarnation, and a pregnant Devil would have been grotesque and detracted too much from the dignity of the prince of hell. Beyond that is a misogynistic assumption: since the Devil, like God, is a great lord, he is assumed to be a male. It is for this reason that the Devil has no father or grandfather, though he may have a mother or grandmother. Lucifer's mother, sometimes called Lillis, or Lilith, is eager for her son the Devil to succeed. In a parody of the Blessed Mother and the angels, she joins the ranks of demons singing praises round the throne of her son. Masculine, the Devil rules the infernal roost.<sup>34</sup>

33. Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 105-106, 120-121, 132, 145-148; UCLA.

34. Briggs, vol. 2:1, pp. 153-155; Thompson, G. 303.11; H. Bächtold-Stäubli, ed., *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1927-1942), vol. 8, col. 1844; UCLA; Tubach, 1452, 1589. The seven vices can also be represented by the seven heads of Satan, who can also have four daughters in mockery of Peace, Mercy,