SATAN & WESTERN DEMONOLOGY IN POPULAR CULTURE

# The Lure of the Dark Side

EDITED BY
CHRISTOPHER PARTRIDGE
& ERIC CHRISTIANSON

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# Introduction:
## A Brief History of Western Demonology

Christopher Partridge and Eric Christianson

This collection of papers has its genesis in a 2006 conference on demonology organized by the Research Centre for Religion and Popular Culture (University of Chester and St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, North Wales[1]). While we were very much aware of the interest such a perennially fascinating topic would provoke, we were delighted by the response. Although a further couple of chapters were commissioned following the conference, the volume indicates the breadth of scholarly interest in the topic and, more broadly, in popular culture *per se*. From testimonies of encounters with demons in early modern Scotland to contemporary Satanism and Norwegian black metal, and from the manifestation of evil in Thomas Harris' Hannibal Lecter to the demonic in Harry Potter, this collection provides a tour de force of the demonic in Western popular culture. For those angelic souls unfamiliar with "the dark side," the following introductory essay provides a brief history of Satan and Western demonology.

In the Classical Greek *daimon* (meaning "spirit")—from which "demon" is derived through late Medieval Latin—was used of any malevolent or benevolent spirit (*agathos daimon*), deified hero, demigod, or ancestor spirit that mediated between the transcendent and temporal realms. Over time, however, such demons gradually came to be understood as malevolent. Hence, by the late Greco-Roman period, the term *daimonia* was specifically applied to evil spirits, the main work of which was to frustrate, to harm, and particularly to tempt humans into sin (see Russell, 1977: 34, 142; Forsyth, 1987: 293). Indeed, the Stoic systematization of late Platonic demonology, which understood the *daimonia* to exist at an ontological level between the gods and humanity, is reflected in 1 Enoch 15 and 2 Enoch 29:5, where fallen angels are described as hovering in the lower air (see Galloway, 1951: 25; Russell, 1977: 191ff.; Forsyth, 1987: 160–81). It is this understanding of the term *daimonium* that is adopted in the Septuagint, the New Testament, and the early church. Moreover, it should be noted that, whilst some reference to evil

demons can be found in the Hebrew Bible—e.g. *Aza'zel* (Lev. 16:8–10), *lîlîth* (Isa. 34:14) (see Trachtenberg, 1970: 27; Baker, 1974: 19–21), the *shédîm*, to whom people sacrificed their sons and their daughters (Ps. 106:37), and, of course, the Satan figure (1 Chron. 21; Job 1, 2; 1 Zech. 3.1; see Nielsen, 1998; Forsyth, 1987: 107–23)—and whilst some of the basic characteristics of a good–evil dualism can be traced back to Iranian Zoroastrianism, it is not until the second and first centuries BCE that a sophisticated demonology began to evolve within Jewish theology.

As to the differences between early and late Jewish demonology, firstly, in the later demonology, the chief characteristic is not that demons physically harm humans, but rather that they spiritually interfere with them, tempting them into sin and thereby disrupting their relationship with God. More specifically, whereas some heavenly messengers sought to reveal to individuals the nature of humanity in relation to celestial realities, its origins and its divine destiny, the *daimonia* seek to deceive with false revelations, to pervert true divine revelation, and to confuse. Secondly, and far more importantly, in Jewish apocalyptic demonology there evolved the notion of a single source, or unitary concept of evil. This latter point is particularly significant, in that there was a "movement of thought away from the explanation of evil in terms of numerous capricious spirits operating at random, towards an explanation in terms of a hierarchy or unified body of evil [which] reaches its climax in the New Testament" (Ling, 1961: 9). Whilst, originally, the term *satanas*, meaning "adversary" or "opponent," could be used of any adversarial demon, and thus could also be used in the plural, in apocalyptic literature, and particularly in the New Testament, the term is focused on a particular *satanas*, "Satan"—also called the Devil. (In a way related to the early usage of *satanas*, English also permits the plural "devils" for lesser "demons," keeping "the Devil" for Satan.) That said, it is important to note that, because of the strength of Christian monotheism, Satan and God are never understood in terms of an absolute dualism, in the sense that Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman) are in Zoroastrianism.[2] Good and evil have never been two equal and co-eternal adversaries in the Christian faith. Principally because God alone is the creator

> in the apocalyptic writings the evil powers remain quite clearly subject to the authority of God. He has the supreme power…and finally it is he who will punish the evil spirits. Satan and his subordinates are free to operate on Earth only until the day of judgement… Satan as the archfiend, or representative leader of all evil, is regarded at most as a leader of rebel forces, a would-be, but unsuccessful, usurper of God (Ling, 1961: 10).

Indeed, the Assumption of Moses 10 looks forward to the ultimate demise of Satan as God finally establishes his rule (Barrett, 1987: 331–32). Likewise, in Christian theology the death and resurrection of Christ firmly exclude any possibility of demonic supremacy, let alone victory. As Gustav Aulén persuasively argued many years ago, because of the popular preoccupation of early Christianity with demons and the demonic, the defeat of Satan and the forces of darkness was understood to be one of the central accomplishments of Christ's death and resurrection (1931). In the New Testament and the writings of the fathers, Jesus is *Christus Victor*: "He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him" (Col. 2:15). "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the Devil" (1 Jn 3:8). Of course, as several chapters in this volume indicate, in some contemporary Satanist demonologies, the perceived balance of power is reversed and Christ has become a victim and a symbol of weakness and defeat, as suggested by, for example, Akercocke's 1999 debut album *Rape of the Bastard Nazarene*.

We have noted that the Satan figure appears in the Hebrew Bible. However, even the casual reader will quickly discover that he is portrayed differently than he is in the New Testament (see Kluger, 1967). Indeed, he is one of the "members of the court of heaven," one of the *bene 'elohim*, a "son of God" (Job 1:6). The Book of Job in particular describes him as a being who works closely with Yahweh as his agent in the testing of Job (Nielsen, 1998: 59-105). To put it another way, in Job the Satan can be read as a provocateur who meets with little opposition from the Lord God. Indeed, it is from the mouth of the Satan that one of the Hebrew Bible's most incisive and modernist questions comes: "Does Job fear God *for nothing*?" It is the Satan who makes possible the book's existential probings into the integrity of Job.

According to Russell, Satan as a son of God has his origins in Canaanite religion:

> In Canaan these "sons" are gods, manifestations of the divine principle. Clearly, the original idea in Hebrew religion was that Yahweh was surrounded by a pantheon comparable to that of Zeus or Wotan. The idea of a pantheon was displeasing to strict monotheism [a phenomenon incisively explored by Aichele in this volume], and the *banim* (*bene ha'elohim*) became shadowy figures. Yet they retained an important function of separating the evil aspect of the divine nature from the good (1977: 184).

Kirsten Nielsen explains the relationship between God and Satan more literally in terms of father and son:

> At the beginning father and son are together, but at a certain time their paths separate. Satan in the book of Job [is] the son of God who for some time roamed the earth. He lived among the other sons of God, close to his father. There is nothing to indicate that he was denied this position after he had tested Job, neither was there a revolt against his father or any fall from the heavenly to the earthly (1998: 156).

Only in later Jewish legend do we find Satan banished from heaven. Although Rabbinical Judaism reacted against apocalyptic thought and minimized the role of Satan (demonology *per se* becoming peripheral in later Jewish theology), in Christianity Satan continued to be understood as a rebel angel who challenged the rule of God and led other angels, now fallen angels, into a like rebellion. It is this figure, of course, that has become central to contemporary popular demonologies and, as Dyrendal's, Blake's, and Gribben's chapters show, a provocative and powerful symbol of transgression and chaos.

As to the origin of demons, widespread in Jewish literature and clearly stated in 1 Enoch 15 (see also 6:2ff.) and Jubilees 5:1 is the belief that they are to be identified with the *nephilim*, which are the product of a union between angels and human women. Much of this theorizing focuses on the enigmatic story in Genesis 6:1–5 (often read as justification for the flood in Gen. 7):

> When men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God [or sons of the gods] saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose. Then the Lord said, "My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." The *nephilim* were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Tracing this story back to Canaanite mythology, Claus Westermann argues that it belongs to a distinct cycle of relatively common narratives that deal with the sexual union of deities and humans (1994: 369). While there is much scholarly debate as to the meaning of "sons of God" in Genesis 6, the oldest and most common interpretation within the Christian tradition is, perhaps not surprisingly, that of "angel" (see Westermann, 1994: 371–72; Clines, 1996: 33–46; Nielsen, 1998: 156–83; Russell, 1977: 174ff.). Or, because of the particular baggage that that term carries, Gordon Wenham prefers the more ambiguous term "spirit," recognizing that such "sons of the gods" may be benevolent or malevolent (Wenham,

1987: 140). Less convincing are the arguments of those such as Umberto Cassuto, who insists that the term should be interpreted as "angels of a degraded type" (cited in Westermann, 1994: 372). This understanding simply reflects post-apocalyptic Christian interpretations. Justin Martyr, for example, is very clear that they were in fact "fallen angels" and that demons are the product of their unnatural union with human women (see Kelly, 1977: 167). Martin Luther likewise reiterates the early Christian belief that the "sons of the gods" are fallen angels and the *nephilim* demons (Luther, 1955: 10–12). Indeed, whilst it would be interesting to analyse the significance of gender in these relationships, it is also worth noting the identification of the demonic with the erotic, which is a prominent theme within Western—and Eastern—demonologies, and, of course, central to the demonization of the witch in the early modern period and also to the development of contemporary popular Satanist discourse. Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) is a good example of this, in that, central to the narrative is the sexual union of the demonic and the human, concluding with the birth of a hybrid being—the Antichrist. Again, the theme is also central to vampire fiction.

These ancient demonologies are clearly influenced by apocalyptic speculation. One of the most influential early apocalyptic accounts of the fall of the *bene 'elohim* and their *nephilim* progeny appears in 1 Enoch. Whereas in Genesis it is not clear that these beings are particularly evil, in the apocalyptic literature they reveal their evil nature in their lust for human women. Referred to as "the Watcher angels," 1 Enoch also identifies their leader, Semyaz (1 En. 6:3). The decision takes the form of a conspiracy, in which they enter into a mutual obligation under the leadership of Semyaz. Their leader is well aware that their plan is contrary to God's will. He therefore wishes them to undertake a mutual obligation, so that the others do not suddenly abandon the plan and leave him on his own, and "I alone will become responsible for this great sin." Then all 200 angels take an oath to stand together as concerns responsibility, and they descend to the summit of Mount Hermon, divided into units of ten, each with its leader, as if they were about to embark on a campaign of war (Nielsen, 1998: 161). We are told that, having had sexual intercourse with human women, the "angels" teach them magic charms and incantations—a point which, again, has not gone unnoticed by those in Christian history who seek to construct a demonology of the witch. We are told that the offspring of the *nephilim* who were a race of giants, eat all the food gathered by humans, leaving them to starve, and, eventually, turn on the humans themselves in a cannibalistic rampage. Furthermore, *Aza'zel*, one of the Watchers, who

is later identified with Satan, teaches humans to make weapons of war and introduces them to jewellery, costly gems and dyes, all of which lead to greed, violence, and vanity. Eventually, God responds by sending the four archangels—Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel—to slay the giants, although their malign spirits remain to "afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on earth" (1 En. 15:1). Raphael is also instructed to bind *Aza'zel* and to cast him into an outer darkness, where he is to remain until the day of judgment, when he shall be "sent into the fire" (1 En. 10:5–7). It is also in the apocalyptic writings that we see pride ascribed to the Devil. Enoch applies Isaiah's satirical song about the King of Babylon—the "bright morning star" now "fallen from heaven" (Isa. 14:12–15)—to Satan, who has been cast out because of the sin of pride. (Hence he acquired the name Lucifer—meaning "light-bearer"—a name used of the morning star.) The distance between God and the Devil gradually widens in apocalyptic literature. No longer is Satan God's agent in the world, accusing and harming humans with divine permission. Unlike the Hebrew biblical tradition, which does not problematize God's close association with evil (e.g. 1 Sam. 16:14–15; Job 42:11; Jer. 12:1–5; 18:11; 31:28), apocalyptic developments push towards a dualism in which God is wholly dissociated from evil, which is exclusively the Devil's business. "The Lord is closely associated with ethical good, and the Devil with ethical evil. The Devil is the personification of sin, and he commands at his right and left hands the spirits of wrath, hatred and lying. He is lord of fornication, war, bloodshed, exile, death, panic and destruction. He tempts humankind into error. He rules over the souls of the wicked" (Russell, 1977: 209–11). While in later Jewish thought, as Joshua Trachtenberg comments, the Devil "never played a very prominent role as a distinct personality," being "little more than an allegory, whose moral was the prevalence of sin" (1943: 19), in Christianity his role was much greater.

The apocalyptic writings provide substantial foundations for the construction of a complex demonology. All the key themes, from the sexual sin of the *bene 'elohim* to the pride of Lucifer, from the imprisonment of demons beneath the earth in the pit (or in the "lower atmosphere") to their continuing interference with humans in order to tempt them away from God, and, finally, to their demise "at the end of the world when the Messiah comes" (Russell, 1977: 207) are carefully developed in Christian demonology. Yet, Jewish apocalyptic demonology is responsible for a shift away from the prophetic insistence on interior human responsibility for one's own sin, to an exterior source other than God. Jewish apocalyptic provides a way of explaining human evil which does

not require God as its source, and yet, which does not need to explain any ills that befall individuals as the consequence of sin. As Bernard McGinn's study of the history of the Antichrist shows, although there is an external–internal polarity throughout Christian history, more attention is given to the notion of an external foe (1996: 4). Indeed, although many Christian thinkers, certainly in the modern period, have tended to focus on the interior nature of evil, as this volume demonstrates, the perennial human fascination with an objective source of evil still persists—and, as Crawford Gribben's chapter argues, has been an important device within fiction. Certainly central to much early and medieval Christian theology was the belief that, although all are responsible for their own sins, they are also continually subject to the advances and corruption of personal demons—all of which operate as the agents of Satan. This view is, again, clear in the theology of Justin, for whom devils and demons were understood to be "swarming everywhere, [obsessing] men's souls and bodies, infecting them with vice and corruption" (Kelly, 1977: 167). Likewise the Desert Fathers, whose influence continued throughout the Middle Ages, believed that hordes of malign demons populated the world, taking every opportunity both to obsess human beings—to attack and influence them from without—and to possess some unfortunate individuals—as Augustine puts it, to "inhabit their bodies" and seize them from within (Augustine, 1945: 326). According to Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, Antony, believing the desert to be the abode of demons, went there "to do battle with the powers of evil" (Russell, 1981: 172–77). Alone in the desert, he was "attacked by demons, who tried various devices to distract him from the holy life" (Hall, 1991: 174). Similarly, in the tradition of the Desert Fathers, Evagrius wrote *Antirrhetikos*, a survey of eight evil thoughts related to eight demons that obsess monks. That is to say, particular demons were attached to the following eight sins: gluttony, lust, love of money, grief, wrath, sloth, vainglory, and arrogance (Hall, 1991: 181). Again, as Gribben demonstrates so clearly, things had not changed a great deal by the early modern period. James Hogg and his contemporaries were very familiar with the wiles of the Evil One. However, whilst all manner of harm to humans and animals, as well as natural disasters, were understood to be the result of demonic activity, a demon's ultimate aim was to corrupt the soul, to tempt, and to disrupt a person's relationship with God. Temptation is, as one theologian has put it, "the invasion of Satan's power into the world of creation. [It is] seduction, leading astray" (Bonhoeffer, 1955: 24).

Hence, Jewish apocalyptic demonology, which was subsequently developed in the New Testament and systematized in early Christian

thought, eventually shaped Western demonology in general. Distinguishing it from Pagan religions, of particular significance is the clear understanding that "Satan embodies the ultimate truth behind the profuse demonology of popular thought" (Ling, 1961: 12). This led to the incorporation of folk beliefs that were not specifically Christian into a systematic demonology (a process evident in several of the chapters of this volume). For example, Karen Louise Jolly notes in her study of popular religion in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries that

> amoral creatures such as elves were gradually "demonised" to fit the Good–Evil paradigm of the Christian moral universe. This process enhanced their similarity to demons. Their invisibility, their malicious attacks, and the need to "charm" them away all took on new meaning in Christian eyes so that elves began to resemble the fallen angels who seek to inflict internal and permanent harm on humans and their works, demons for Christian ritual to exorcise (Jolly, 1996: 136).

Furthermore, individual events and disturbances experienced on the plane of history are, on the one hand, understood as particularized demonic activity, and, on the other hand, are projected into eternity, being fundamentally related to cosmic, demonic principalities and powers and the satanic attempt to thwart God's ultimate, salvific purpose.

As demonology evolved through the Middle Ages, and as is clearly evident in Heinrich Kramer's witch-hunter's manual of 1486, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, "*Hammer of Witches*," Christian demonology focused increasingly on obsession, possession, and demonic alliances with humans. As well as being the source of evil, as Jean La Fontaine comments,

> Satan and his demons were believed to have human allies and servants… One of the ways in which devils, or the Devil, were believed to associate with human beings was in lending them extra-human powers to perform acts that were beyond the range of human beings… By the Middle Ages, learned magicians were suspected of summoning and using demons by their magic in order to exchange their souls for magical powers in Faustian contracts (1999: 85).

It was such beliefs in swarming hordes of demons obsessing and possessing individuals, and in the notion that certain of these individuals were able to summon up and utilize demonic power, that led (particularly in a period stretching roughly from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth century) to witch-hunts and witch-trials. As Robin Briggs notes in his comprehensive study of the social and cultural context of European witchcraft, the witch is, in this period, "an incarnation of the 'other', a human being who has betrayed his or her natural allegiances and become an agent of evil" (1996: 3). That said, it is important to

note that, whilst this could be true of witches in many cultures, in that witchcraft is in no sense limited to European thought, it was only in the Middle Ages that, as Keith Thomas argues, "a new element was added to the European concept of witchcraft which was to distinguish it from the witch-beliefs of other primitive peoples. This was the notion that the witch owed her powers to having made a deliberate pact with the Devil" (Thomas, 1973: 521). She (and alleged witches usually were female, the significance of which is not lost on Michel Foucault) was not just an incarnation of the "other," but was so by virtue of being fundamentally allied to the ground of Otherness, the Devil. This widespread idea that witchcraft or *maleficium* involved a pact with the Devil, and thereby constituted a Christian heresy, was initially the work of the Church, "whose intellectuals rapidly built up a large literature of demonology, outlining the manner in which the witches or Devil-worshippers were thought to conduct themselves, and laying down the procedure for their prosecution" (ibid.). This new teaching about heretical, Devil-worshippers making pacts with Satan and meeting to carry out abominable rites was, as Thomas observes, "developed in a series of edicts culminating in the Papal Bull, *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, of Innocent VIII in 1484, and the compendious treatise by two Dominican Inquisitors, the *Malleus Maleficarum*" (ibid.), which became an immediate best-seller, second only to the Bible. Pacts with the Devil, it was claimed, led to the acquisition of certain powers, including the ability to harm individuals, animals and crops, influence over the weather, and, more rarely, the ability to fly and shapeshift—and, of course, as Pinn and Blake discuss in relation to the Robert Johnson legend, virtuoso musicianship and subsequent influence on the history of music (not least, the Devil's own rock in all its varied forms). In the medieval and early modern periods, descriptions of shapeshifting, for example, "are found in many areas of Europe. Here… one may suspect traces of ancient shamanistic ideas, readily assimilated into the folklore of witchcraft. Greases, special skins, incantations and the direct action of the Devil were all invoked to explain these transformations into animal form" (Briggs, 1996: 105). (This, of course, has close links with the demonologies of vampirism and lycanthropy.) However, while such exciting powers might have attracted many to experiment with a little Devil-worship, they were dissuaded by a well-known downside. Because it was commonly assumed that "witches had crossed a hidden boundary when they gave allegiance to the Devil," and because Satan was understood to be a deceitful, macabre, and cruel master, the consequences were often severe. He could, for example, "coerce them directly, beating them and even threatening to kill them" (ibid.).

In effect, the human servant of the Devil becomes an ill-treated slave. "Witnesses," says Briggs, "sometimes alleged the accused had shown physical signs of mysterious beatings or been heard crying out. They plainly implied that they had been maltreated by their master, so the idea that witches were to some degree the miserable dupes of the Devil was widespread" (ibid.). Again, thinking of Genesis 6 and the confluence of the demonic and the erotic, it is perhaps not surprising that, particularly in the *Malleus*, there is much discussion of demons (i.e. incubi and succubi) engaging in sexual intercourse with witches and producing devilish offspring.

If belief in demons in the modern period has significantly retreated before the forces of rationalism and empiricism, as this volume argues, it has not disappeared entirely. Indeed, interest in the demonic is experiencing something of a revival. Even if demons no longer seem credible to many in the West, particularly as most of their various works can be explained quite easily by modern science and medicine, the belief and popular interest in Satan in particular has continued. Although the modern period has seen the detraditionalization of the demonic, an internalizing shift, in which the emphasis has moved from obsession and possession by external demonic forces to internal spiritual battles, there are still a great many in the contemporary West who understand there to be external forces of evil operating in the world. For example, the French historian Robert Muchembled, in his analysis of the changing perceptions of the Devil in Western history since the Middle Ages, notes the upsurge in exorcists and exorcisms. In France, he writes,

> exorcists numbered a mere fifteen, very unevenly distributed between dioceses. They were particularly thin on the ground north of a line running from Le Havre to Chambéry, excluding Alsace; they were absent altogether from the bishoprics of Champagne and Lorraine and from most of those in the Paris region, with the exception of the capital itself and Pontoise. South of the line, few bishoprics were without an exorcist; some had two or even three, in particular in the west and south west (Bayeux, Coutances, Angers, Le Mans, Angoulême, and Agen), Montpellier and the Lyonnais. At Autun, Father Lambey, appointed president of the French Association of Exorcists in 1977, believed that the irrational had made spectacular advances since he had started work in the field in 1955. He now saw up to three "bewitched" persons a week, compared with about twenty a year in the past. Their real problems began, he said, when they became convinced that someone had cast a spell on them; this produced a feeling of deep anxiety at the impossibility of effectively counteracting it… They first went to a "spell-breaker," faith healer, or clairvoyant… Since January 1999, the number of exorcists in France has spectacularly increased, from fifteen to 120, as if in response to the dramatic escalation

> of anxiety in society and to the challenge posed by the Catholic Church both by the slump in religious observance and the proliferation of sects (2003: 231–32).

Neal Milner, who has analysed the contemporary resurgence of exorcism within the Church of England, refers to an "official revival of a theology that accepts the existence of poltergeists, ghosts, and the Devil" (2000: 248). Moreover, as Muchembled demonstrates, far from this being simply a phenomenon amongst the uneducated, as some would have us believe, "no social category, no cultural stratum, and no power has been spared." Indeed, "many beliefs in the paranormal demand a degree of culture" (2003: 232). "Out of a sample of 2,350 persons questioned in 1981, more from the upper eschelons than from the middling ranks believed in telepathy (54 per cent), horoscopes (30 per cent), spells (23 per cent), and table-turning (22 per cent)… Of Montpellier University students surveyed in 1988, 24 per cent accepted the existence of the devil" (ibid.). Again, whatever the reasons for such beliefs, the point is that they continue and are increasing in Western societies, even amongst the educated.

Surveys of religious belief elsewhere have produced comparable figures. In Australia, for example, surveys have found that not only do two thirds of Australians declare spirituality to be important to them, but 33 percent believe in the existence of the Devil.[3] More significantly, recent polls in America have found much higher and rising levels of demonological belief. In 1968, for example, 60 percent believed in the literal existence of Satan. In 1994 it had risen to 65.5 percent and in 2001 a Gallup poll found that it had again risen to 68 percent. A 2003 Harris poll found that the number had remained stable at 68 percent (Waldman, 2004). However, a more recent Gallup poll shows that while the proportion of North Americans who believe in God has remained relatively steady at upwards of 90 percent, increasing numbers of Americans believe not only in heaven, hell, and angels, but that belief in Satan is currently at its highest since pollsters began to inquire. During the last decade, it has grown from 65.5 percent in 1994 to 70 percent in 2004—70 percent of women and 69 percent of men are believers. Albert Winseman, Gallup's religion and values editor, concludes that the evidence suggests that, "as science, technology and rational explanations uncover and explain more and more about the known world, Americans are likely becoming more intrigued by the unknown" (Eckstrom, 2004a).

As to who believes in the literal existence of Satan in America today, the strongest belief was found among rural dwellers (78 percent), followed by those living in urban areas (66 percent), and then suburbanites

(64 percent). More interestingly, however, belief in the reality of the Devil varies less across age and education: 70 percent of adults (aged 30–64); 66 percent of young adults (aged 18–19); 70 percent of high school graduates; 68 percent of college graduates; and 55 percent of people with postgraduate degrees (Eckstrom, 2004b). These statistics are significant. As Gallup contributing editor, Jennifer Robison, comments, "we might expect belief in the Devil to have largely evaporated… It hasn't. Regardless of political belief, religious inclination, education or region, most Americans believe that the Devil exists" (ibid.). While North American belief in the Devil is higher than in other Western countries, the evidence suggests that such beliefs are particularly resilient and fascinating to Westerners. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that, as Milner has shown, the Church of England has officially revived its commitment to exorcism (see Milner, 2000). Similarly, in 1999 the Roman Catholic Church issued a new ritual of exorcism and increased the number of priests assigned to deliverance ministry, which, in France, Muchembled notes, was from 15 to 120. He also makes the rather sensational point that, accompanying the rise in belief in the Devil, "Satanist sects have become firmly entrenched in a number of countries, especially the United States and England. The Devil has made an impressive comeback" (2003: 1). Although there is little evidence to suggest that he ever really went away, it is certainly true that widespread fascination with the diabolical and the dark side continues in the West—encouraged, to a significant extent, by popular culture. Hence, while, of course, many Westerners would look for more human and mundane reasons for the existence of evil in the world, there still appears to be a widespread unease about the dark side. Moreover, as Muchembled points out, it is important to remember that society is not

> a homogenous whole. It would be mistaken to claim that all the inhabitants of the Catholic countries have rid themselves of the ancient fear of the Devil, as the activities of exorcists make plain. Also, the ludic demonic culture is consumed at very different levels. For some it is a means of relaxation, while others believe everything they read or see on the screen (2003: 228).

Such belief in demons has a dark fascination, for, as Gerardus van der Leeuw argued, it "does not mean that chance rules the universe, but rather that I have experienced the horror of some power which concerns itself neither with my reason nor my morals; and it is not fear of any definite concrete terribleness, but vague terror of the gruesome and the incomprehensible, which projects itself objectively in the belief in demons. Horror and shuddering, sudden fright and the frantic insanity