

## 29. The Devil and a Thirteenth-Century Schoolboy

In illā ecclesiā<sup>1</sup> erat scholaris<sup>2</sup> parvus. Cum hic die quādam<sup>3</sup> versūs componere ex eā materiā<sup>4</sup> a magistro datā non posset et tristis<sup>5</sup> sederet,<sup>6</sup> diabolus<sup>7</sup> in formā hominis vēnit. Cum dixisset: “Quid est, puer? Cur sic tristis sedes?” respondit puer: “Magistrum meum timeo quod versūs componere non possum de themate<sup>8</sup> quod ab eo recepi.” Et ille: “Visne mihi servire si ego versūs tibi componam?” Puer, non intellegens quod<sup>9</sup> ille esset diabolus, respondit: “Etiam, domine, paratus sum facere quidquid<sup>10</sup> iusseris—dummodo<sup>11</sup> versūs habeam et verbera<sup>12</sup> vitem.” Tum, versibus statim<sup>13</sup> dictatis,<sup>14</sup> diabolus abiit. Cum puer autem hos versūs magistro suo dedisset, hic, excellentiam<sup>15</sup> versuum miratus, timuit, ducens scientiam in illis divinam,<sup>16</sup> non humanam. Et ait: “Dic mihi, quis tibi hos versūs dictavit?” Primum puer respondit: “Ego, magister!” Magistro autem non credente et verbum interrogationis<sup>17</sup> saepius repetente, puer omnia tandem<sup>18</sup> confessus est.<sup>19</sup> Tum magister “Fili,” inquit, “ille versificator<sup>20</sup> fuit diabolus. Carissime, semper illum seductorem<sup>21</sup> et eius opera cave.<sup>22</sup>” Et puer diabolum eiusque opera reliquit. (Caesar of Heisterbach, *Miracula* 2.14; 13<sup>th</sup> cent.)

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<sup>1</sup> **ecclesia**, -ae, church

<sup>2</sup> **scholaris**, -is, scholar

<sup>3</sup> **die quādam**: *dies* is feminine here

<sup>4</sup> **materia**, -ae, material

<sup>5</sup> **tristis**, -e, sad

<sup>6</sup> **sedeo**, -ere, **sedi**, **sessum**, sit

<sup>7</sup> **diabolus**, -i, devil

<sup>8</sup> **thema**, -atis, *n.*, theme, subject

<sup>9</sup> **quod**, that, introducing an indirect statement, common in Medieval Lat.

<sup>10</sup> **quidquid**, whatever

<sup>11</sup> **dummodo** + *subj.*, provided

<sup>12</sup> **verbera**, -um, *n.*, blows, a beating

<sup>13</sup> **statim**, immediately

<sup>14</sup> **dicto** (1), dictate

<sup>15</sup> **excellētia**, -ae

<sup>16</sup> **divinus**, -a, -um; **divinam** is *pred. acc.*

<sup>17</sup> **interrogatio**, -onis, *f.*

<sup>18</sup> **tandem**, at last

<sup>19</sup> **confiteor**, -eri, -fessus sum

<sup>20</sup> **versificator**, -oris, versifier

<sup>21</sup> **seductor**, -oris, seducer

<sup>22</sup> **caveo**, -ere, **cavi**, **cautum**, beware, avoid