

MISCELLANEOUS

DANGIERS LI VILAINS

GUILLAUME de Lorris in vv. 2932-6 of the *Roman de la Rose* (edition of Francisque Michel) described Dangiers in the following terms:

Atant saut Dangiers li vilains
De là où il estoit muciés.
Grans fu, et noirs¹ et hériciés,
S'ot les iex rouges comme feus,
Le nés froncié, le vis hideus.

French courtly poetry of the middle ages is not lacking in unpleasant portraits of the *vilains*.² But this description of Guillaume de Lorris's has some peculiar features. The "eyes red as fire" particularly attract attention as unusual,³ and raise the question whether the poet has not fused with the usual characteristics of the ill-favored *paisant* (*Rose*, v. 4280) those of a type-personnage of some other literary genre. This personnage would most likely be one whose position within his genre would be analogous to that of the *vilains* in courtly poetry, *i. e.*, one who was an object of scorn and derision, and the exaggeration of whose defects was a matter of professional pride. Such a personnage was the devil of mediaeval literature. His ugliness is exaggerated in the Latin Christian visions for the purpose of inspiring wholesome fear and an equivalent reaction in the direction of righteousness, and when he is transplanted into other literary forms, as, for example, the drama, his uncouthness becomes the comic element whose intent is to relieve

¹ Cf. v. 964, where five of the ten arrows carried by Dous-Regars are said to be *Plus noirs que déables d'enfer*.

² E. g. *Yvain*, vv. 288-302; *La Mule sans Frain*, v. 506; Bartsch, *Altfranzösische Romanzen und Pastourellen*, i. 35, v. 25; *De Constant du Hamel*, vv. 56-57; *Du vilain au buffet*, vv. 84-91; *Du prestre et du chevalier*, vv. 109-113.

³ They form part of no other description of the *vilains* known to me in Old French literature.

the heaviness of the serious action. A comparison of Guillaume's description of Dangiers with previous and contemporary descriptions of devils in monastic literature shows significant resemblances. Vision of Drihthelm:⁴ "Interea ascenderunt quidam spirituum obscurorum de abyssu illa flammium, et adcurrentes circumdederunt me, atque oculis flammantibus et de ore ac naribus ignem putidum efflantes angebant." Vision of Fulbert:⁵

Ecce duo daemones, pice nigriores,
 quorum turpitudinem totius scriptores
 mundi non describerent, nec ejus pictores,
 ferreas furniculas manibus ferentes,
 ignemque sulphureum per os emittentes,
 similes lignibus sunt eorum dentes,
 et ex eorum naribus prodeunt serpentes;
 sunt eorum oculi ut pelves ardentes,
 aures habent patulas sanie fluentes;
 sunt in suis frontibus cornua gerentes,
 per extrema cornua venenum fundentes,
 digitorum unguulae ut aprorum dentes.

*Herberti de Miraculis*⁶ (A. D. 1178), liber I, caput iii: "Sed neque hoc silendum, quod hostis ille antiquus multoties et multiformiter ab eo videbatur. Una siquidem vice apparuit ei sub humana effigie in choro Clarevallensi, oculis ardentibus et vultu terribili. Erat autem statura enormis atque deformis valde." *De Sancto Bartholomeo*.⁷ "Tunc ostendit iis Aethiopem nigriorem fuligine, facie acuta, barba prolixa, crinibus usque ad pedes protensis, oculis igneis ut ferrum ignitum scintillas emittentibus, flammam sulphuream ex ore et oculis spirantem." It is unnecessary to multiply examples from Christian vision literature, nor would it be profitable to cite the less detailed

⁴ *Venerabilis Bedae Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, liber V, caput xii.

⁵ *The Latin Poems commonly attributed to Walter Mapes*, London, 1841. Edited by Thomas Wright. P. 95, f. Vv. 260-271.

⁶ Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, vol. 185, col. 1278.

⁷ Jacobus a Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, rec. Graesse, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1850, p. 543. Jacobus died in 1298, so the version of the saint's career which he incorporates may or may not antedate the first part of the *Roman de la Rose*. The importance of the comparison lies in the fact that the devil is a stock figure of mediaeval literature, with practically constant attributes.

description of devils from contemporary French poetry.⁸ It suffices to have shown that Guillaume de Lorris in his portrait of Dangiers has drawn upon the stock features of current devil description in order to make more repellent than ever *li vilains*, always an object of interested scorn and derision to the courtly poet.

STANLEY LEMAN GALPIN.

AMHERST COLLEGE.

⁸ *E. g. Perceval* (Potvin's edition) vv. 39858-60:

Un grant dyable tout ardant
De fu, et ot le brac tout taint,
Et plus noir c'un carbon estaint.