

# The Iconography of the Mythological Characters in the *Divine Comedy* Manuscripts of the XIV-XV Centuries: Possible Functions and Iconographical Sources

## Authors

Miroshnik, Alina – Bachelor of Arts, Researcher. Research University Higher School of Economics, st. Staraya Basmannaya, 21/4s1, 105066, [admiroshnik@edu.hse.ru](mailto:admiroshnik@edu.hse.ru), [28alinam@mail.ru](mailto:28alinam@mail.ru)

Pozhidaeva Anna – Associate Professor, Candidate of Science (PhD). Research University "Higher School of Economics", st. Staraya Basmannaya, 21/4s1, 105066, [apozhidaeva@hse.ru](mailto:apozhidaeva@hse.ru), [apojidaeva69@mail.ru](mailto:apojidaeva69@mail.ru)

## Abstract

The history of illustration of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries rarely attracts the attention of researchers. Nevertheless, a careful analysis of the manuscripts would make it possible to clarify the process of the emergence of separate iconographic schemes within the framework of a very specific task: illustrating a text replete with literary devices and references to ancient sources that were often unknown to the authors of the iconographic program. The current study is devoted to the iconography of mythological characters found in Dante's text and their possible iconographic sources based on a number of manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy* dated from mid-14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, six of which are fully illustrated (e.g. so-called *Budapest Codex*, *Egerton Codex*, *Chantilly Codex* and some others).

## Introduction (A.Pozhidaeva)

In the 1330s, that is, just over ten years after Dante's death in 1321, the first illuminated manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy* began to appear – for example, the so-called *Budapest*

*Manuscript* (Budapest, University Library, Cod. ital. 1)<sup>1</sup> or the so-called *Dante Poggiali* (Florence, National Central Library, Ms. Pal. 313, 1333–1345)<sup>2</sup>. Illustrating the text of the poem presented a number of difficulties for miniaturists and authors of the iconographic program because the narrative is saturated with elements that inevitably require the master to go beyond his everyday horizons. These include illusionistically described mythological characters and numerous references to ancient texts (for example, Dante repeatedly refers to the *Aeneid* by Virgil and the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid, as well as to the *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle, the *Pharsalia* by Lucan, plays by Terence, etc.). A further difficulty is the almost complete absence of illustrated texts which belong to the genre of *visio*.

The problem of illustrating Dante's manuscripts was introduced into scientific discourse by the German researcher Ludwig Volkmann (1870–1947) in his monograph *Iconografia dantesca; le rappresentazioni figurative della Divina commedia* (1898)<sup>3</sup>. In this work, Volkman traces the influence of the Last Judgment's iconography on the visualization of plots from the first canzone – *Inferno*. His approach is largely developed by the American researchers Millard Miss (1904–1975), Peter H. Brieger (1898–1983) and Charles S. Singleton (1909–1985) in the collective monograph *Illustrated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy* (1969)<sup>4</sup>. They expand the range of monuments iconographically associated with the scenes of the Last Judgment and describe in detail the iconographic schemes for all the cantos of the poem. However, both the study of Volkman and the work of Miss, Brieger, Singleton are mainly descriptive, and only the scenes of the Last Judgment are singled out as possible sources for the manuscripts' iconographic program. At the moment, studies of the *Divine Comedy* manuscripts lack an analytical approach and rarely seek to identify the genesis of iconographic schemes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cod. ital. 1 or the *Budapest Manuscript* was made by an unknown Venetian master, commissioned by Andrea Dandolo (1306–1354) – Doge of Venice – in c. 1333–1350. The manuscript contains 94 in-text miniatures. The illustration ends on Canto XII of *Purgatorio*, however, judging by the remaining empty sections, it was supposed to be fully illustrated. At the moment, the manuscript is stored at the University of Budapest (Budapest, Vienna).

<sup>2</sup> Manuscript Ms. Pal. 313 or *Dante Poggiali* was made in the Florentine workshop of Pacino di Buonaguida (c. 1303–c. 1347). Contains comments by Jacopo Alighieri (1289–1348). Stored in the National Central Library of Florence (Florence, Italy).

<sup>3</sup> Volkmann L., *Iconografia dantesca; le rappresentazioni figurative della Divina commedia*, Firenze, 1898.

<sup>4</sup> Brieger P. H., Meiss M., Singleton S. Ch., *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, Princeton, 1969.

This work is an attempt to generalize the existing approaches and, on their basis, to propose a methodology that would expand the range of possible iconographic sources and focus on the iconographic genesis of each selected mythological character. Ten manuscripts of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> half of the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were selected, which are most often referred to by the researchers indicated above: the so-called *Budapest Manuscript* (see above); London, British Library, Egerton MS. 943 (so-called *Egerton Codex*)<sup>5</sup>; the so-called *Dante Poggiali* (see above)<sup>6</sup>; Chantilly, Bibliothèque Condé, MS.0597 (so-called *Chantilly Codex*)<sup>7</sup>; Naples, National Library, MS.CF.2.16 (further *Naples Codex*)<sup>8</sup>; Venice, Marciana Library, MS.It.Z.54 (further *Marciana Codex*)<sup>9</sup>; New York, Morgan Library, MS. M. 676 (further *Morgan Codex*)<sup>10</sup>; Paris, National Library, MS.It. 74 (further *Paris Codex*)<sup>11</sup>; London, British Library, Yates Thompson MS. 36 (further *Yates*

---

<sup>5</sup> Manuscript Egerton MS. 943 was made in the 1<sup>st</sup> half 14<sup>th</sup> century (c. 1320–1350) presumably in Padua by the Master of the Padua antiphonaries. It contains 261 in-text miniatures. The manuscript is accompanied by comments by an unknown author in Latin. Stored in the British Library (London, UK).

<sup>6</sup> Manuscript Pal. 313 was made in c. 1333–1345. It contains 37 miniatures (32 of them illustrate *Inferno*). The manuscript is the work of various hands – for instance, a master from the circle of Bernardo Daddi and a master from the circle of Pacino de Bonaguida could be identified. It is currently stored at The National Central Library (Florence, Italy).

<sup>7</sup> Manuscript Chantilly 0597 was executed ca. 1330–1340 in a Siennese workshop – possibly, by the artist Francesco Traini (1321–1365). Contains miniatures exclusively for *Inferno*, placed in the bottom margins of the page and related to the commentary of Guido da Pisa (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 13<sup>th</sup>–middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries). Contains 55 miniatures. Stored at the Condé Museum (Chantilly, France).

<sup>8</sup> Manuscript CF.2.16 was executed in 1355–1360 in a Neapolitan Workshop. It consists of 146 miniatures. Currently it is stored at the National Library of the Girolamini Oratory, Naples.

<sup>9</sup> Manuscript It.Z.54 in the last quarter of the 14th century. The first known owner is Jacopo Contarini (1536–1595). Manuscript consists of 38 miniatures. Currently it is stored at Biblioteca Marciana, Venice.

<sup>10</sup> Manuscript MS. M. 676 was made in 1345–1355 in a Florentine workshop. It contains 127 miniatures placed in the top and bottom margins of the page. In the 15th century the manuscript belonged to Ferdinand I (1423–1494) – the king of Sicily and Naples. Prior to this, her provenance is unknown. Stored at the Morgan Library (New York, USA).

<sup>11</sup> Manuscript It.74 was made in the 14th century by florentine painter Bartolomeo di Fruosino (1366 / 1369–1441). It was owned by Jean Cossa (1400–1476) – lieutenant general of Provence. It contains 34 miniatures. Currently it is stored at the National Library, Paris.

*Codex*)<sup>12</sup>; Vatican Library, MS.Urb. Lat. 365 (so-called *Dante Urbinate*)<sup>13</sup>. We propose to consider the iconography of mythological characters acting as guardians of hellish circles in the first cantica *Inferno* (Charon, Minos, Cerberus, Plutus, Phleggyus, Three Furies, Minotaur, Geryon). These were chosen because: firstly, the appearance of these characters in the art of Greek and Roman antiquity does not always coincide with their description by Dante, and secondly, not all guardians of the circles appear in the previous artistic tradition of the Western Middle Ages as under their own and other names<sup>14</sup>. Their most possible function in the role of guardians is the personification of the sin that is punished in this circle as was already indicated by the first commentators on the poem's text (Jacopo Aligheri, 1322; Jacopo della Lana, 1324–1328, Guido da Pisa, 1327–1328, etc.)<sup>15</sup>. We will try to trace how the iconographic types of these characters were formed and identify how often and in what way the authors of the iconographic program took into account that characters functioned as personifications. This study is intended to become an experience in the analysis of the associative connection between the text and the image in Italy in a certain period, a kind of link between the medieval allegorical approach<sup>16</sup> and the obvious antiquation of the visual materials in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Before moving on to the features of the visualization and functioning of personifications in the *Divine Comedy* manuscripts, it should also be mentioned that the depiction of personifications as a whole has a rather long tradition, known in Italy from the frescoes by Giotto in the Lower Church of the San-Francesco (c. 1334, Assisi) or by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Palazzo Pubblico (1338-1339, Siena). However, the first examples can already be found in Romanesque and Gothic art in the form of vices and virtues' personified (the western wall of the southern portal of the narthex in Saint-Pierre abbey, 1120–1135, Moissac; the jambs' statues of the

---

<sup>12</sup> Yates Thompson MS Code. 36 was made in 1444–ca. 1450s presumably in Siena for Alfonso V of Aragon (1396–1458). The illustrations of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* were made by the Sienese artist Priamo della Quercia (1400–1467), *Paradiso* – also by the Sienese artist Giovanni di Paolo (1403–1482). Contains 110 illustrations placed in the top and bottom margins of the page. Stored in the British Library (London, UK).

<sup>13</sup> Manuscript Urb. Lat. 365 was illustrated ca. 1480 commissioned by the Duke of Urbino Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482). The miniatures illustrating the *Inferno* cantica may have been made by the artist Guillemo Girardi. It is currently kept in the Vatican Library (Vatican).

<sup>14</sup> Sez nec 1961: pp. 11–37.

<sup>15</sup> Brieger, Miss, Singelton 1969: pp. 81–82.

<sup>16</sup> Sez nec 1961: pp. 11–37.

western portal of the Strasbourg Cathedral, 1280–1290, Strasbourg; frieze of the Notre-Dame-de-Paris, 12 century, Paris)<sup>17</sup>. The main source of inspiration for the visualization of some vices and virtues was the *Psychomachy* (4–5 centuries) of the Roman poet Prudentius (348–405), the illustrated manuscripts of which had been known since the 9<sup>th</sup> century up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The description of the guards who personify vices in the text of the *Divine Comedy* will differ somewhat from the previously existing visual options. First of all, these images, as a rule, are not anthropomorphic, their visualization is based on verbal or visual (or both) information about the mythological character. It would seem that the author of the iconographic program, and after him the miniaturist, has an idea of both the history and appearance of the mythological character since in most cases his relationship with a certain circle of Hell arises due to the peculiarities of functioning in the ancient texts, about which it would be noticed below. Accordingly, when visualizing guardians, the authors of the iconographic program and miniaturists are forced (depending on the degree of their awareness and / or on the availability of samples) either to directly follow the description in Dante's text, or to use the schemes of depicting the corresponding mythological characters known to them, or to make their images more standardized and comprehensible (for example, the demons from the scenes of the Last Judgment). Thus, we have to find out which of the three options is chosen in the process of illustrating the manuscripts.

Description of Charon in Canto III of *Inferno* and his visual embodiment in the manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy* of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. (A.Miroshnik, A.Pozhidaeva (ed.))

After passing through the gates of Hell, Dante and Virgil get to the banks of the Acheron, where they see the souls of the indifferent and meet Charon. Charon in Ancient Rome is an old man who ferries souls across the river Styx or Acheron to Hades. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, which had a strong influence on Dante's *Comedy*<sup>18</sup>, he is described as follows: "Portitor has horrendus aquas et flumina servat / terribili squalore Charon, cui plurima mento / canities inculta iacet; stant lumina flamma, / sordidus ex umeris nodo dependet amictus. / Ipse ratem

---

<sup>17</sup> Seznec 1961: pp. 149–160.

<sup>18</sup> Hollander 1968: pp. 142–144. Terzoli 2016: pp. 23–25, pp. 45–48.

conto subigit, velisque ministrat, / et ferruginea subvectat corpora cumba, / iam senior, sed cruda deo viridisque senectus." <sup>19</sup> (The *Aeneid* by Virgil, Book VI, 298–304).

In the *Divine Comedy* Charon transports souls across the Acheron River to the First Circle – Limbo (*Inferno* III, 82–83, 97–99). In the description of the mythological character, the Italian poet has several intersections with the text of Virgil's *Aeneid*: "Ed ecco verso noi venir per nave / un vecchio, bianco per antico pelo."<sup>20</sup> (*Inferno* III, 82–83; *Aeneid*, Book VI, 300) and "Quinci fuor quete le lanose gote / al nocchier de la livida palude, / che 'ntorno a li occhi avea di fiamme rote"<sup>21</sup> (*Inferno* III, 97–99; *Aeneid*, Book VI, 301–302). So, the presence of a "beard <...> uncomb'd, unclean", which the ancient Roman poet points to, turns into a "hair <...> white with years" in Dante, and the eyes which "were ringed about with wheels of flame's", that is, Charon acquires obvious demonic features, which is further indicated by the author ("Caron dimonio, con occhi di bragia"<sup>22</sup>, *Inferno* III, 109). With this definition, Dante himself gives a hint to the illustrator – we do not find any such epithets in Virgil (and we cannot find them).

Such a vivid description of the elder by Dante, coupled with clear indications that he is a demon, as it may seem should serve as a clear instruction for miniaturists. However, two possible iconographic variants of Charon's image are found: 'Charon the man' and 'Charon the demon'. Interestingly, in the analyzed manuscripts, both variants are presented with an equal degree of frequency. This situation indicates the absence of a common iconographic scheme, a

---

<sup>19</sup> "There Charon stands, who rules the dreary coast – / A sordid god: down from his hoary chin / A length of beard descends, uncomb'd, unclean; / His eyes, like hollow furnaces on fire; / A girdle, foul with grease, binds his obscene attire. / He spreads his canvas; with his pole he steers; / The freights of flitting ghosts in his thin bottom bears" Translation: Virgil, *The Aeneid* / trans. by John Dryden, last access 06.18.2023, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.6.vi.html>

<sup>20</sup> "And here, advancing toward us, in a boat, / an aged man—his hair was white with years." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-3/>

<sup>21</sup> "Now silence fell upon the wooly cheeks / of Charon, pilot of the livid marsh, / whose eyes were ringed about with wheels of flame." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-3/>

<sup>22</sup> "The demon Charon, with his eyes like embers" Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-3/>

single developed version of Charon's visualization. So, *Egerton Codex*, f. 7v (fig.1), *Yates Codex*, f. 6r (fig.2) and *Dante Urbinate*, f. 6v contain the first variant, while *Budapest Codex*, f. 12) (fig.3), *Chantilly Codex*, f. 50r (fig.4) and *Morgan Codex*, f. 7v – the second. It is not known why the authors of the first three manuscripts depict Charon as a man (thus, deviating from Dante's text), but his depiction as a demon seems to be very reasonable. Most likely, the fact is that the miniaturists could have in mind the scenes of the Last Judgment, where all hellish characters, in any way connected with the torment of sinners, were depicted as demons. In fact, mythological characters, since they are in Hell, also receive 'demonic' characteristics. In the case of Charon, this is also due to the text itself but further we will see that other mythological characters will be depicted in a similar way despite the absence of corresponding instructions in the poem.

The reason for the spread of the 'anthropomorphic' variant remains unclear (we will call the second variant 'demonic'). The most likely assumption seems to be that the authors of the manuscripts' iconographic program knew a manuscript or a certain sample depicting Charon as a person. This option is found, for example, in an ancient Roman sarcophagus (c. 170, The Vatican Museum, Vatican) (fig.5)<sup>23</sup>. It is interesting that none of the masters refers to the association of time with the elder Charon by endowing it with some stable attributes in accordance with the commentary of Pietro Alighieri (1300–1364), repeating the interpretation of Fulgentius (468–533): "Charon is for *ceron*, that is, time"<sup>24</sup>. Perhaps, in accordance with the association that goes back to Plutarch, and in the visual arts to the Pompeian frescoes and the Calendar of Philocalus, which combine the elder Saturn and the personification of Time, it is precisely his senile appearance that indicates the connection of Charon with time<sup>25</sup>.

Thus, in the iconography of Charon, two possible iconographic versions of the image coexist: anthropomorphic and demonic, which, apparently, indicates the presence of a certain visual model for the first version (possibly associated with the image not so much of Charon himself as of Saturn), and the distribution of the second can be explained both by following the text and by the miniaturists' appeal to the scenes of the Last Judgment.

---

<sup>23</sup> Eisner 2021: pp. 1–15.

<sup>24</sup> Brumble 1998: p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Panofsky 1962: pp. 69–95.

Description of Minos in Canto V of *Inferno* and its visual embodiment in the manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy* of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. (A.Miroshnik, A.Pozhidaeva (ed.))

In the Second Circle, in which voluptuous people are executed, travelers are met by Minos, the mythological king (according to Homer and Virgil, also the legislator<sup>26</sup>) of Crete. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, he is described solely as a judge so that his external characteristics are not mentioned: "Quaesitor Minos urnam movet; ille silentum / consiliumque vocat vitasque et crimina discit"<sup>27</sup> (*Aeneid*, Book VI, 432–435).

In Canto V Minos is described as follows: "Stavvi Minòs orribilmente, e ringhia: / essamina le colpe ne l'intrata; / giudica e manda secondo ch'avvinghia"<sup>28</sup> (*Inferno* V, 4–6) and further: "vede qual loco d'inferno è da essa; / cignesi con la coda tante volte / quantunque gradi vuol che giù sia messa."<sup>29</sup> (*Inferno* V, 10–12). So, the Cretan king receives an interesting feature in the form of a tail, the origins of which are still disputed by researchers<sup>30</sup> (Pseudo-Apollodorus, v. 1, IX). The suggestion of Herbert D. Austin seems to be the most convincing<sup>31</sup>. He points to the merger in the image of Minos of two underworld judges - Minos himself (*Aeneid*, Book VI, 432–433) and Rhadamanthus, the brother of Minos, who also acts as one of the judges of the underworld (*Aeneid*, Book VI, 564–569). The latter in Virgil defines execution for souls (executes – "castigatque"), which usually represents scourging ("accincta flagella") by Tisiphone (*Aeneid*, Book VI, 570–573). Accordingly, the judicial function of Minos is "superimposed" on the

---

<sup>26</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book IX, 569. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book VI, 432–434; Servius, *Virgilio Aeneidos*, Book VI, 566 (Cit.: Brumble 1998: p. 222).

<sup>27</sup> "Minos, the strict inquisitor, appears; / And lives and crimes, with his assessors, hears. / Round in his urn the blended balls he rolls, / Absolves the just, and dooms the guilty." Translation: Virgil, *The Aeneid* / trans. by John Dryden, last access 06.18.2023, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.6.vi.html>

<sup>28</sup> "There dreadful Minos stands, gnashing his teeth: / examining the sins of those who enter, / he judges and assigns as his tail twines." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-5/>

<sup>29</sup> "The depth in Hell appropriate to it [the soul]; / as many times as Minos wraps his tail / around himself, that marks the sinner's level." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-5/>

<sup>30</sup> Austin 1932: pp. 1–5. See also: Barolini 1996: pp. 437–454.

<sup>31</sup> Austin 1932: pp. 1–5.

punitive of Rhadamanth and Tisiphone in such a way that the tail (as an instrument of scourging) becomes a rudimentary instrument of execution, which Minos can only use to determine the soul in a certain circle. However, such detail naturally becomes an important part of the way Minos is depicted. In the manuscripts his tail is usually shown wrapped several times around his body. At the same time, Minos is depicted as a demon everywhere, except for *Chantilly codex*, f.61r (fig.6) where the Cretan king is depicted as a man in judicial robes, and his tail falls in rings around his legs.

It is noteworthy that the text does not indicate whether Minos is a man, a monster or a demon, and there is no established previous iconography for this character. However, such an important detail like a tail, apparently, predetermined his image as a demon in the *Budapest Codex*, f. 14 (fig.7), *Egerton codex*, f. 10r, *Dante Urbinate*, f. 12r (fig.8). The fact is that in some examples of the Last Judgment demons are depicted with snakes wrapping around their body, which, apparently, can be taken for a tail (see, for example, Lorenzo Maitani, sculpture of the facade of the cathedral in Orvieto, 1310–1331, Orvieto). The judicial function of Minos is indicated by crowds of souls who kneel before him with their arms folded (*Yates Codex*, f. 8v; fig.9) or approach him in turn (*Egerton Codex*, f. 10r; *Dante Urbinate*, f. 12r). However, the presence of a serpentine tail in a demonic character does not contradict the allegorical commentary of Pietro Alighieri, who associates Minos with "reproaches of conscience" (in Latin "remorsio concientiae", i.e. "bites")<sup>32</sup>. The obvious evidence of such an influence would be the images of snakes digging into the bodies of sinners, as in the Last Judgment by Lorenzo Maitani already mentioned above in the cathedral in Orvieto. Indeed, such a version exists in a miniature manuscript of the *Comedy* dating from 1355–1365 (*Naples Codex*, f.12r; fig.10) – where Minos' tail is wrapped not around his body, but around a sinner!

Thus, under the influence of the poem's text (and possibly the first commentary on *Inferno*) miniaturists turn to the well-known images of demons with serpentine writhing tails taken from the Last Judgments. Apparently, this detail also caused the transformation of Minos into a tailed demon in some manuscripts (*Budapest Codex*, *Egerton Codex*, *Dante Urbinate*). In *Yates Codex* authors of the iconographic program, trying to find a compromise between the known

---

<sup>32</sup> Brumble 1998: p. 223.

images of demons and the anthropomorphic image of Minos, depict him in human form, but with horns on his head.

Description of Cerberus in Canto VI of *Inferno* and its visual embodiment in the manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy* of the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. (A.Miroshnik, A.Pozhidaeva (ed.))

The guardian of the Third Circle, in which gluttons are executed, is the three-headed dog Cerberus. His description in the *Divine Comedy* has much in common with Virgil's *Aeneid*. In an ancient Roman poem about Cerberus the following is said: "Cerberus haec ingens latratu regna trifauci / personat, adverso recubans immanis in antro. / Cui vates, horrere videns iam colla colubris, / melle soporatam et medicatis frugibus offam / obicit. Ille fame rabida tria guttura pandens / corripit obiectam, atque immania terga resolvit / fusus humi, totoque ingens extenditur antro."<sup>33</sup> (*Aeneid*, Book VI, 417–423). In Dante, the dog as a whole retains the features indicated by Virgil ("outlandish, vicious" ("fiera crudele e diversa")<sup>34</sup>, *Inferno* VI, 14 (13)), but a number of new characteristics appear: "Li occhi ha vermigli, la barba unta e atra, / e 'l ventre largo, e unghiate le mani; / graffia li spirti ed iscoia ed isquatra"<sup>35</sup> (*Inferno* VI, 16–18). As we can see, in the poem, the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic features of Cerberus are combined in a single image.

In the manuscripts we are considering, Cerberus retains his most obvious distinguishing feature – three mouths, heads or faces, united together. At the same time, the three heads of Cerberus, growing from one body (*Budapest Codex*, f.16 (fig.11); *Egerton Codex*, f. 12r (fig.12); *Chantilly Codex*, f.67r (fig.13); *Morgan Codex*, f.11v (fig.14) date back to early iconographic

---

<sup>33</sup> "The triple porter of the Stygian sound, / Grim Cerberus, who soon began to rear / His crested snakes, and arm'd his bristling hair. / The prudent Sibyl had before prepar'd / A sop, in honey steep'd, to charm the guard; / Which, mix'd with pow'rful drugs, she cast before / His greedy grinning jaws, just op'd to roar". Translation: Virgil, *The Aeneid* / trans. by John Dryden, last access 06.18.2023, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.6.vi.html>

<sup>34</sup> Translation: Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-6/>

<sup>35</sup> "His eyes are bloodred; greasy, black, his beard; / his belly bulges, and his hands are claws; / his talons tear and flay and rend the shades." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-6/>

versions from the illustrated manuscripts of the *Aeneid* (Vat. Lat. 3225, 5th century, f. 9r and f. 48v, Vatican Library, Vatican; fig.15). It is important that, unlike Charon and Minos, who rarely, but sometimes appear in their anthropomorphic form, the opposite process occurs with Cerberus in most manuscripts – he loses his original animal appearance, becoming an upright bipedal demon. Cerberus appears as a three-faced demonic creature without any signs of a canine nature in the *Marciana Codex*, f.5v, and in the corresponding miniature of *Dante Poggiali*, f.14r (fig.16) (beard and clawed hands mentioned in the text are not depicted).

Cerberus became a dog with three muzzles and three tails only by the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in *Yates Codex*, f. 8v (fig.17), and in this case the three-faced Cerberus serves as a kind of antipode to the image of The Holy Trinity in the form of a 'trikefal', which is also expressed iconographically. So, for example, in *Yates Codex* all three faces of Cerberus are combined into one, just as it was done in the images of the three-faced Holy Trinity<sup>36</sup> (e.g. fresco depicting the Trinity, XIII century, former St. Agatha, Perugia, Italy). Lucifer is depicted in a similar way in this manuscript, having three faces, supposedly located on one head and very similar to the iconography of the Trinity. One more association is interesting – in Yates Thompson MS. 36 instead of tails, Cerberus has poisonous snakes, as in Greek vase painting and Roman mosaics (for example, Hercules and Cerberus, Llyria, III century, the National Archaeological Museum, Madrid; fig.18), in contrast to his appearance in the *Vatican Virgil* (Vat. Lat 3225, f. 48v; fig.15), where snakes are only present near the necks of the monster.

Not until the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, does the canine nature of Cerberus finally take precedence over associations with an anthropomorphic demon – in *Dante Urbinate*, f. 15r (fig.19), he is depicted as a dog with three heads – and very similar (with the exception of heads) to a thoroughbred hound from Giovannino de' Grassi's *Model Book* (Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica, MS. VII. 14, f. 17r, before 1398).

A separate problem is the voracity of Cerberus mentioned in the text. "Carnem vorans" ("eater of bodies") he is already named in Servius's *Commentary on Virgil* (Book VI, 395)<sup>37</sup>, which allows

---

<sup>36</sup> Boespflug 1994: pp. 181–240.

<sup>37</sup> Brumble 1998: p. 68.

both Servius himself and Dante's commentators to associate Cerberus with the earth<sup>38</sup>. In miniatures of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries he is depicted either eating limbs or standing on / among dead bodies (often with obvious bite marks) (*Egerton Codex*, f. 12r; *Yates Codex*, f. 8v). Apparently, this refers to a parallel with the image of Lucifer on the frescoes of the Last Judgment, which, for example, in Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel (Padua, c. 1303–1305) is depicted eating sinners and standing on them (mosaic of the dome of the Florence Baptistery, 1270–1300).

Thus, in Dante's text, there is a change in the function of Cerberus, based on the epithet "hungry" taken from the *Aeneid*, and the etymology of his name taken from Servius's commentary on Virgil. From an underground guard dog, he turns into an anthropomorphic personification of the Third Circle – his eternal hunger is likened to the eternal hunger of gluttons. Visually, the miniaturists emphasize, first of all, the gluttony of Cerberus, who can be depicted in the process of eating or among already eaten bodies in exactly the same way as Satan. His three-facedness, which in some cases is likened to the three-facedness of Lucifer or acts as the 'antithesis' of The Holy Trinity.

Description of Plutus in Canto VII Inferno and its visual embodiment in the manuscripts of the "Divine Comedy" of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. (A.Miroshnik, A.Pozhidaeva (ed.))

The Fourth Circle, where misers and spendthrifts are executed is guarded by Plutus, the god of wealth. Dante does not give this hero such a detailed description as for the characters discussed above. The text of the *Divine Comedy* says the following about him: "'Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!'", / cominciò Pluto con la voce chioccia."<sup>39</sup> (*Inferno* VII, 1–2) and further: "Poi si rivolse a quella 'nfiata labbia."<sup>40</sup> (*Inferno* VII, 7). The meeting with the character ends with the following episode: "'Quali dal vento le gonfiate vele / caggiono avvolte, poi che l'alber fiacca, /

---

<sup>38</sup> Op. cit.: p. 68.

<sup>39</sup> "Pape Satan, Pape Satan aleppe!" / so Plutus, with his grating voice, began". Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-7/>

<sup>40</sup> "Then he turned back to Plutus' swollen face." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-7/>

tal cadde a terra la fiera crudele."<sup>41</sup> (*Inferno* VII, 13–15), that is, Dante compares his fall with the fall of the inflated sail. Such an action followed the words of Virgil: "'Non è senza cagion l'andare al cupo: / vuolsi ne l'alto, là dove Michele / fé la vendetta del superbo strupo."<sup>42</sup> (*Inferno* VII, 10–13). Thus, the scene of the meeting of travelers with Plutus is not accompanied by a detailed description of the character, which would allow him to be identified with the mythological hero.

This circumstance could have influenced a number of discrepancies in the ways of depiction. Nevertheless, according to the same logic of association the infernal characters with demons Plutus is most often (with the exception of one manuscript – *Yates Codex*, f.12v) (fig.20) depicted as a demon. In those rare cases when Plutus is represented in his anthropomorphic form, his iconography is also complemented by horns, which probably refers to the ancient iconography of Pan<sup>43</sup>, and by bird paws. Images of the god of wealth in *Chantilly Codex*, f.70v) (fig.21) and *Yates Codex*, f.12v) (fig.20) are enriched with several interesting attributes: the throne (in both manuscripts), which, apparently, is associated with the traditional medieval confusion between Plutus and Pluto, the king of Hades (Pietro Alighieri calls him the son of Saturn and Cybele)<sup>44</sup>, and the episcopal miter and money bag (in *Chantilly Codex*, f.70v; fig.21). The attribute in the form of a bag of money is especially significant, since it points specifically to Plutus as the god of wealth, and actually to the vice that is executed in the Fourth Circle. Having received such an attribute, Plutus turns into the personification of one of the most condemned Christian vices - greed. Characters associated with greed were quite often depicted with purses in their hands (western portal of Sainte-Foy basilica, Conques, 1097-1025). The association between the throne and miter of Plutus and the throne of Pope Boniface VIII (f.33v) (fig.21) depicted in the same manuscript is remarkable and most likely not

---

<sup>41</sup> "As sails inflated by the wind collapse, / entangled in a heap, when the mast cracks, / so that ferocious beast fell to the ground". Translation: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-7/>

<sup>42</sup> "His is no random journey to the deep: / it has been willed on high, where Michael took / revenge upon the arrogant rebellion." Translation: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-7/>

<sup>43</sup> Williams 1992: pp. 9–12.

<sup>44</sup> Brumble 1998: pp. 276–277.

accidental, making it possible to speak about the social and political aspects of the manuscript's iconographic program<sup>45</sup>. Indeed, one of Dante's early commentators, Guido da Pisa, characterizes Plutus as a "bishop of misers", in connection with which S.I. Kozlova speaks of the direct influence of exegesis on the miniatures of the *Chantilly Codex*<sup>46</sup>.

Thus, as in a number of previous cases, the appearance of Plutus, who does not have an iconography, was primarily influenced by the appearance of demons, borrowed from the iconography of the Last Judgment. In *Chantilly Codex*, f.70v, he receives an additional attribute in the form of bags of money, similar to the purses in medieval images personifying greed. Associations with the king of Hades brought in the appearance in two cases of the throne, and in one case, a reference to the bishop.

Description of Phlegyas in Canto VIII Inferno and its visual embodiment in the miniature manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy* of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. (A.Miroshnik, A.Pozhidaeva (ed.))

At the exit from the Fifth circle – the circle of the wrathful – travelers are met by Phlegyas – a mythological character who burned the Temple of Delphi because Apollo killed his daughter (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* (II century), Book II, 26). In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas meets Phlegyas during his descent into Hades: "Phlegyasque miserrimus omnis / admonet, et magna testatur voce per umbras: / 'Discite iustitiam moniti, et non temnere divos.'"<sup>47</sup> (*Aeneid*, Book VI, 618–620). So, the reader learns that the character is doomed to eternal torment in the underworld for his anger. Dante repeats the same motif: "Qual è colui che grande inganno ascolta / che li sia fatto, e poi se ne rammarca, / fecesi Flegiàs ne l'ira accolta."<sup>48</sup> (*Inferno* VIII, 22–24). Accordingly, as in the case of Cerberus and Plutus, Phlegyas, by the similarity of his

---

<sup>45</sup> *Dante Cantica dell'Inferno con commenti di Fra Guidone Pisano*, last access: 06.20.2023, URL: <https://www.dante.unina.it/public/preview/preview/idMs/278132>

<sup>46</sup> Kozlova 2013: p. 186.

<sup>47</sup> "And wretched Phlegyas warns the world with cries / (Could warning make the world more just or wise): / "Learn righteousness, and dread th' avenging deities". Translation: Virgil, *The Aeneid* / trans. by John Dryden, last access 06.18.2023, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.6.vi.html>

<sup>48</sup> "And just as one who hears some great deception / was done to him, and then resents it, so / was Phlegyas when he had to store his anger." Translation: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-8/>

characteristics in Dante's text, turns out to be the personification of those vices that are punished in the circle he protects.

Phlegyas acquires the function of a boatman situationally, since there is a reservoir in the topography – although the original source does not speak of him as a boatman. It would seem that the functional similarity of Phlegyas and Charon should have led to a similar image of them, but this is not entirely true. The similarity between them is preserved only in *Dante Urbinate*, f.20r (fig.22), the authors of which, apparently, turned to ancient samples<sup>49</sup>, which we noted when analyzing Charon, and understood the similarity of the characteristics of both characters. However, we assumed the presence of the same samples in *Egerton Codex*, f.15r(fig.23), and *Yates Codex*, f.14r (fig.24), where Charon is depicted as a human. However, in these manuscripts, as in all others (except *Dante Urbinate*, f.20r; fig.22), Phlegyas is depicted as a demon. Interestingly, the authors of the program and miniaturists did not assume that the iconography assigned to Charon could be mechanically transferred to Phlegyas. Mechanically, another transfer took place – the demonic appearance of Phlegyas. At the same time, iconographically accessible personifications of Anger are not used in any of the cases known to us, therefore, the association of Phlegyas with a certain vice is fixed only at the verbal level. Thus, it can be stated that the absence of distinct associations and the sparseness of the description in the text is guaranteed to bring to life the most universal image – the demonic one.

Description of the Three Furies in Canto IX of *Inferno* and its visual embodiment in the manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy* of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. (A.Miroshnik, A.Pozhidaeva (ed.))

Above the towers of Dis, which leads to the Sixth Circle, three Furies fly: Tisiphone ("avenging the murder"), Megaera ("hater") and Allecto ("irrepressible"). In ancient Greek mythology (Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, 458 BC) they are the goddesses of revenge and damnation, which is also indicated in the *Aeneid* (Book IV, 610). Dante, however, describes them vividly: "tre furie infernal di sangue tinte, / che membra feminine avieno e atto, / e con idre verdissime eran

---

<sup>49</sup> Miss, Brieger, Singleton 1969: pp. 32–80.

cinte; / serpentelli e ceraste avien per crine, / onde le fiere tempie erano avvinte."<sup>50</sup> (*Inferno* IX, 38–42) and further: "Con l'unghie si fendea ciascuna il petto; / battiensi a palme e gridavan sì alto, / ch'ì mi strinsi al poeta per sospetto."<sup>51</sup> (*Inferno* IX, 49–51).

Despite all the ferocity of the Furies, in the systematization of Dante, they guard the Sixth Circle, where heretics are executed. Apparently, such an association originates from the commentary of Bernardus Silvestris (ca. 1085–ca. 1160) – the theologian of the Chartres school– on a poem by Virgil<sup>52</sup>. He identifies (following Fabius Planciades Fulgentius and Maurus Servius Honoratus<sup>53</sup>) the three Furies with specific actions: Allecto is associated with evil thoughts ("prava cogitatio"), Tisiphone with malicious speeches ("sermo scilicet malus") and Megaera with objectionable deeds ("mala operatio")<sup>54</sup>. Subsequently, the first commentators on Dante's text will associate the selected characteristics with three steps leading, firstly, to mortal sin, and, secondly, to the denial of Christian tenets of faith and, accordingly, to heresy<sup>55</sup>.

The iconography of the Furies in the manuscripts generally corresponds to their description in the text itself. The model, apparently, was in the iconography of the Gorgon Medusa, well known by that time. It is no coincidence that the Furies look like her, because further in the text they call on her (*Inferno*, IX, 52–54). Furies are described and depicted in a similar way to Medusa, whose images were quite widely known not only from ancient Roman floor mosaics (for example, Roman mosaic, 100 BC, The Getty Museum, Los Angeles), but also entered the Old Testament iconography (see, for example, the personification of the Abyss in the scene of the First Day of Creation in the ivory from Montecassino, XI century, The Bode Museum,

---

<sup>50</sup> "Stood three infernal Furies flecked with blood, / who had the limbs of women and their ways / but wore, as girdles, snakes of deepest green; / small serpents and horned vipers formed their hairs, / and these were used to bind their bestial temples." Translation: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-9/>

<sup>51</sup> "Each Fury tore her breast with taloned nails; / each, with her palms, beat on herself and wailed / so loud that I, in fear, drew near the poet." Translation: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-9/>

<sup>52</sup> Cornish 2010: p. 429.

<sup>53</sup> Brumble 1998: p. 131.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. P. 429.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. P. 429. See also: Mansfield 1970: pp. 143–160.

Berlin)<sup>56</sup>. The miniaturists relied on iconography known to them. The motif of torn clothes and a scratched chest was also known – one can assume that they appealed to the early iconography of the Massacre of the Innocents, where mothers are visualized in a similar way (see, for example, the *The Gospels of Otto III*, c. 1000, Munich, The Bavarian State Library, f. 30v, fig.25), or that more likely, to the personifications of Wrath (Ira), like Giotto's fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel. The miniaturists needed only to repeat such an image three times. The only exception is *Budapest Codex*, f.22r (fig.26), where the Furies are depicted not as demonic creatures, but as red naked female figures (as sinners tormented in Hell are usually represented in this manuscript)<sup>57</sup>.

Thus, in most cases, miniaturists have quite specific samples for depicting the Furies – they borrow their appearance from the images of the Gorgon Medusa. However, in this ready-made scheme, they impose details that originate from the text and also have visual patterns – in particular, the motif of tearing clothes in anger, which is directly related to the personification of sin.

Description of the Minotaur in Canto XII Inferno and its visual embodiment in the manuscripts of the "Divine Comedy" of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. (A.Miroshnik, A.Pozhidaeva (ed.))

The Minotaur is a mythological animal with the head of a bull and the body of a man. He was born as a result of contact between Pasiphae – the wife of Minos – and a bull, and was hidden by Minos himself in a labyrinth on the island of Crete (Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library*, Book IV, 61:1 and 77:1). In the *Aeneid*, the appearance of this character is barely described – Virgil characterizes him as "the lower part a beast, a man above." ("mixtumque genus prolesque biformis")<sup>58</sup> (*Aeneid*, Book VI, 37 (25)). However, a more attentive description of the Minotaur is contained in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with whose works Dante may have been familiar<sup>59</sup>. Ovid

---

<sup>56</sup> Kessler 1966: pp. 67–95. See also: Pozhidaeva 2021: pp. 386–388.

<sup>57</sup> Draskóczy 2020: pp. 85–100.

<sup>58</sup> Translation: Virgil, *The Aeneid* / trans. by John Dryden, last access 06.18.2023, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.6.vi.html>

<sup>59</sup> Diskin 2014: pp. 174–186.

describes this hero as "the monster of a human-beast" ("monstri novitate biformis")<sup>60</sup> (*Metamorphoses*, VIII, 156) and "the shame" ("pudorem")<sup>61</sup> (*Metamorphoses*, VIII, 157), without specifying which of the parts belonged to a person, and which to an animal. Dante quotes Ovid almost verbatim also calling the Minotaur "the infamy of Crete" ("l'infamia di Creti")<sup>62</sup> (*Inferno* XII, 12). Plutarch quotes from the lost tragedy of Euripides: "and that this Minotaur was (as Euripides hath it) – "A mingled form where two strange shapes combined, / And different natures, bull and man, were joined.""<sup>63</sup> . The Italian poet supplements the description of the mythological bull with a characteristic emphasizing of his malice in every possible way his malice and propensity for violence: "e quando vide noi, sé stesso morse, / sì come quei cui l'ira dentro fiacca."<sup>64</sup> (*Inferno* XII, 14–15) and "Qual è quel toro che si slaccia in quella / c'ha ricevuto già 'l colpo mortale, / che gir non sa, ma qua e là saltella, / vid'io lo Minotauro far cotale."<sup>65</sup> (*Inferno* XII, 22–25). It seems that in the text of the poem itself there is no exact description of the appearance of the Minotaur, however, the comparison with the bull (*Inferno* XII, 22) makes early commentators assume that Dante's mythological character has the head of a man and the body of a bull, because, if he were the last, it would not it would be necessary to make a comparison<sup>66</sup>. It was the mixomorphism of the Minotaur that gave commentators the opportunity to consider him the personification of the "bestial in man"<sup>67</sup>.

In illustrating this canto, the miniaturists are guided, on the one hand, by the text. On the other hand, they turn to the prevailing mid- 14<sup>th</sup> century tradition to depict the Minotaur to the waist

---

<sup>60</sup> Translation: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* / trans. by Sir Samuel Garth, John Dryden, et al, last access: 06.20.2023, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.8.eighth.html>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-12/>

<sup>63</sup> Plutarch, *Theseus* / trans. by John Dryden, last access: 06.20.2023, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/theseus.html>

<sup>64</sup> "and, catching sight of us, he bit himself / like one whom fury devastates within." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-12/>

<sup>65</sup> "Just as the bull that breaks loose from its halter / the moment it receives the fatal stroke, / and cannot run but plunges back and forth, / so did I see the Minotaur respond." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-12/>

<sup>66</sup> Botterill 1998: pp. 60–62.

<sup>67</sup> Guido da Pisa, *Super Comediam Dantis*: 220. Cit. by: Brumble 1998: p. 224.

– a man, and below – a bull, that is, in fact, like a centaur<sup>68</sup>. It is noteworthy that in Book III of the *Bibliotheca* by Pseudo-Apollodorus, the Minotaur is described as a young man with the head of a bull and the body of a man<sup>69</sup>, which is confirmed by the monuments of Greek antiquity (Roman copy of a Greek sculptural group depicting the Minotaur and Theseus, original: 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, The National Archaeological Museum, Athens). However, commentators on the text of the *Divine Comedy*, like Dante himself, do not explain exactly how the Minotaur looked – everyone points to the duality of this image, ignoring which of the parts was human and which was bovine.

In medieval iconography the images of the Minotaur and the centaur are mixed in such a way that it is possible to identify them only by the croup – horse (centaurs) or bull (Minotaur)<sup>70</sup>. The Italian researcher Alessandra Forte, in her article *La Rappresentazione del Minotauro Dantesco nei Manoscritti Trecenteschi della Commedia tra Commento Scritto e Commento Figurato*<sup>71</sup> (2015) traces such iconography to images of labyrinths in French manuscripts of the 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. (Paris, The National French Library, MS.Lat. 12999, f.1v, 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, fig.27), where the Minotaur could be depicted both as a demon and as a creature with a bull or horse croup and a human upper body. She explains such a mixture of images by the fact that the images of centaur-archers were known to medieval miniaturists from Romanesque sculpture<sup>72</sup>. However, there are very few versions of medieval images of the Minotaur with a bull's head and a human body (London, The British Library, MS. Add MS 19669, f. 96v, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, fig.28). It seems more natural that the miniaturists turn to the iconography of the Minotaur-Centaur, or simply a centaur, well known to them.

However, in two early manuscripts from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century we can see the gradual development of type. So, in *Budapest Codex*, f.26r (fig.29). The Minotaur is depicted as a man with a bull's head – apparently, the authors of the iconographic program may have had

---

<sup>68</sup> Forte 2015: pp. 39–41.

<sup>69</sup> "He had the face of a bull, but the rest of him was human." Cit. by: Apollodorus, *The Library* / trans. by James George Frazer, last access: 06.20.2023, URL: <https://www.theoi.com/Text/Apollodorus3.html>

<sup>70</sup> Forte 2015: pp.39–41.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Pp. 37–58.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. P. 41.

examples of monuments with a less common iconography of this character. However, in *Egerton Codex*, f.21v (fig.30) the mythological character receives the head of a man, and the body becomes completely bullish.

In addition to the centaur scheme, the Minotaur can also be stylized under the appearance of Pan (see *Naples Codex*, f.28v; fig.31). In both versions, his upper limbs are human, and his lower limbs (2 or 4) are animal. It is important to make two points here. Firstly, according to the assumptions of some researchers (Botterill S.<sup>73</sup>, Forte A.<sup>74</sup>), such an iconography of the Minotaur made it possible to more clearly indicate his malice through visual means – the human was mixed with the animal in such a way that the animal's irrational energy suppressed the rational human, as a result of which violence was born. Secondly, the union of the human and the animal indicated the irrational energy and, accordingly, the cruelty of the character, which became identical to the cruelty of the violent souls of the Seventh Circle.

Thus, when depicting the Minotaur, whose appearance is not described by Dante in the text, miniaturists were guided by earlier iconographic samples. Three possible versions of the image are developed, successively replacing each other: a bull with a human body (ancient sources); a bull with a human face (images of labyrinths in French manuscripts); centaur (Romanesque sculpture) or Pan.

Description of Geryon in Canto XVII Inferno and its visual embodiment in the 14th-15th manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy*. (A.Pozhidaeva)

The guardian of the Eighth Circle is the monster Geryon, who combined the features of various animals: "La faccia sua era faccia d' uom giusto, / tanto benigna avea di fuor la pelle, / e d'un serpente tutto l'altro fusto."<sup>75</sup> (*Inferno* XVII, 10–12). His paws are "with hair up to the armpits"

---

<sup>73</sup> Botterill 1998: pp. 60–76.

<sup>74</sup> Forte 2015: pp. 37–58.

<sup>75</sup> "The face he wore was that of a just man, / so gracious was his features' outer semblance; / and all his trunk, the body of a serpent". Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-17/>

("avea pilose insin l'ascelle.")<sup>76</sup> (*Inferno* XVII, 13); its back, belly and sides are covered with flowery patterns (*Inferno* XVII, 14–15), and its tail ends in "a tip just like a scorpion" ("ch'a guisa di scorpion la punta armava")<sup>77</sup> (*Inferno* XVII, 27). Thus, Geryon's face resembles a man, his limbs resemble a lion, his body is like the body of a leopard (or a pattern on a Turkish carpet<sup>78</sup>), and his tail is like that of a scorpion. In ancient sources, the descriptions of Geryon are strikingly different from the description proposed by Dante. So, Hesiod in *Theogony* indicates that Geryon had three heads (*Theogony*, 281–282); and in the *Geryoneis* (c. VI century BC) Stesichorus (c. 630—550 BC) says that he was also winged<sup>79</sup>. Virgil in the *Aeneid* describes the character as a three-body character (*Aeneid*, Book VI, 202–203). However, Dante's description makes Geryon more similar to the images of Manticore in Medieval bestiaries (see, for example, Oxford, The Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 764, f. 25r, ca. 1225–1250, fig.32)<sup>80</sup>. The monster has the body of a lion and the head of a man, which makes it very similar to Geryon in the *Divine Comedy*. In particular, Dante could see its image in the *Tesoretto* from the workshop of his teacher Brunetto Latini<sup>81</sup> (see, for example, Brunetto Latini, *Tesoretto*, Saint-Petersburg, The Russian National Library, Fr. F. v. III, f.4, beginning of the 14th century), However, the Italian poet gives Geryon a characteristic that was not known to medieval miniaturists – he describes him as spotty. The fact is that the spotted pattern of his skin, compared with the fabric of Arachne and oriental ornament, could be perceived as a reference to the stable association of the intricate pattern with deceit<sup>82</sup>. The spotted skin of Geryon, then, is associated with the vice that is punished in the Eighth Circle<sup>83</sup>.

---

<sup>76</sup> "pilose insin l'ascelle" Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-17/>

<sup>77</sup> Original text: "ch' a guisa di scorpion la punta armava." Translation: Dante Aligheri, *The Divine Comedy* / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, last access: 06.18.2023, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-17/>

<sup>78</sup> Porcari 2018: pp. 4–23.

<sup>79</sup> Robertson 1969: pp. 207–221.

<sup>80</sup> Granacki, last access: 06.21.2023, URL: <https://sites.duke.edu/danteslibrary/brunetto-latini-tresor/>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Cirulli 2015: p.21.

<sup>83</sup> Porcari 2010: pp.435–437.

It is noteworthy, however, that the miniaturists almost never depict Geryon as a Manticore, although his description is quite consistent with the character from the bestiaries. Closest to the Manticore is a miniature of the *Budapest Codex*, f.35r (fig.33) – here, however, Geryon is depicted not red, but brown or green, with scales like a lizard, but with wooly paws and the claws of a predator (apparently, the decision of the torso was influenced by the line "the composition was serpentine") in a monastic hood. This is not the only time that the clergy will be ridiculed in this manuscript – for example, in the illustrations to Canto VII, either misers or spendthrifts are depicted in episcopal tiaras. So, in the image of a wonderful creature, as in the case of Plutus, social criticism is also projected, pointing to the deceit that the monks cover up with sweet speeches. This is somewhat similar to the *drôlerie* in Gothic manuscripts, where various mixomorphic characters with animal bodies and human heads often appear in episcopal tiaras or with monastic tonsure (see, for example, the *Maastricht Hourbook*, London, Brit. bibl., Stowe 17, f.131r; fig.34).

Depictions of Geryon at *Egerton Codex*, f.31v (fig.35) and *Chantilly Codex*, f.123r (fig.36) are quite similar. So, in both manuscripts, the character has a human head and body, partly reminiscent of the body of the Locust from the text of the *Revelation of John the Apostle*<sup>84</sup>. Its images were known from early illustrations of the *Revelation of John the Apostle* (Rev. 9:3–4) – for example, from the French Apocalypse (Manchester, The Manchester University Library, MS Latin 19, f. 7r, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, fig.37). At the same time, the character retains wooly paws, reminiscent of the paws of the 'forest man' in Gothic manuscripts, which once again convinces the viewer that the image of the monster is made up of quotes dating back to several sources. By the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, images of Geryon became closer to the text – for example, in the *Paris Codex*, f.50v and in *Yates Codex*, f.30v (fig.38), the "serpentine composition" and majesty are emphasized as well as clarity of face (it is interesting that in the first case he is a handsome old man, in the second – a pretty young man). The same image of Geryon we can find at *Morgan Codex*, f.27r (fig. 39). The situation in *Dante Urbinate* f.46r (fig.40) is fundamentally changing in the direction of image's antiquation. In *Dante Urbinate* Geryon is depicted as a man above the waist, and below as a sea creature with horse legs, which

---

<sup>84</sup> Cirulli 2015: p.20.

somewhat resembles the iconography of the ichthyocentaurs, well known to Andrea Mantegna, a contemporary of the Ferrara miniaturists (The Battle of the Sea Gods, 1470).

So, it makes sense to recognize the iconography of Dante's Geryon as the most complex and rich in various kinds of associations – under the influence of different passages of the text, which gives a very accurate and detailed description of the mixomorphic creature, the miniaturist turns to familiar, but apparently different visual images (manticore, locust, forest man, ichthyocentaurs), habitual patterns of social satire (*Budapest Codex*) or, on the contrary, strives to follow the textual description exactly (*Morgan Codex, Yates Codex*), in which for the first time in our review he quite succeeds.

#### Conclusion(A.Pozhidaeva)

So, having considered the features of the visualization of mythological characters, many of which in Dante's text replace the personifications of vices, we tried to show that in most cases miniaturists prefer to use already familiar iconographic schemes that little or completely do not correspond to the textual description of the character. In the absence of a graphic tradition contemporary to authors, they can turn to different kinds of habitual and familiar images, which leads at the first stage of illustrating the *Comedy* in the second quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to a preference for the standard appearance of mythological heroes as demons. It is noteworthy that in those cases when illustrators turn to fairly obvious iconographic patterns (images of the Furies), they can supplement them with familiar details (open chest) originating from other sources, combining several motifs in one iconographic scheme. It is important to note that the guardians of the hellish circles iconographically in most cases are in no way connected with the personifications known in the traditional series of contemporary artistic production. This gives us the opportunity to assume that the power and expressiveness of the text of the *Comedy* awakens to life an independent associative series, drawing images from other, less obvious sources. The presence of a detailed description of the character, akin to the description of Geryon, makes it possible to create an image exactly following the text.

Thus, the uniqueness and unprecedentedness of the text to be illustrated gives us the opportunity to judge the visual outlook and associative range of the miniaturist and/or the author of the program, which changes in the strongest way from the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and guides each of the guardians of the circles through a long series of guises – from a banal demonic appearance through that of a character of a Gothic drôlerie or a medieval Bestiary to a completely recognizable hero of Greco-Roman mythology.

#### Primary Sources

1. Apollodorus, *The Library*, Book III / trans. by James George Frazer, URL: <https://www.theoi.com/Text/Apollodorus3.html>
2. Dante Aliegheri, *The Divine Comedy*, Inferno / trans. by Theodolinda Barolini, URL: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/>
3. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* / trans. by Sir Samuel Garth, John Dryden, et al, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.8.eighth.html>
4. Plutarch, Theseus / trans. by John Dryden, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/theseus.html>
5. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book VI / trans. by John Dryden, URL: <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.6.vi.html>

#### List of Literature

1. Auerbach E., *Figurative Texts Illustrating Certain Passages of Dante's Commedia*, "Speculum" 21/4 (1946): 474–489.
2. Austin H.D., *The Arrangement of Dante's Purgatorial Reliefs*, "PMLA" 47/1 (1932): 1–9.
3. Austin H. D., *Three Dante Notes*, "Italica" 13/1 (1936): 1–5.
4. Barolini T., *Minos's Tail: The Labor of Devising Hell (Inferno 5.1–24)*, "Romanic Review" 87/4 (1996): 437–454.
5. Boespflug F., *Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident de l'époque carolingienne au IVe Concile du Latran*, "Cahiers de civilisation médiévale" 147 (1994): 181–240.

6. Botterill S., *The Form of Dante's Minotaur*, "Forum Italicum: A Journal of Italian Studies" 22/1 (1988): 60–76.
7. Brieger P. H., Miss M., Singleton Ch., *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, Princeton, 1969.
8. Brumble H., *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings*, Milton Park, 1998.
9. Cirulli M. *La figura di Gerione: nuove prospettive nella critica dantesca*, 2015.
10. Cornish A. *Furies*, *The Dante Encyclopedia* (ed. by R. Lansing), London, 2010.
11. Delcorno K., *Dante e l'exemplum medievale*, "Lettere Italiane " 35/1 (1983): 3–28.
12. Draskóczy E., *Representation of the Damned and the Infernal Guardians in Codex Italicus 1*, Pisa, 2020.
13. Eisner M., *The Materiality of the Text and Manuscript Culture*, Oxford, 2021, "The Oxford Handbook of Dante": pp. 1–15.
14. Forte A., *La Rappresentazione del Minotauro Dantesco nei Manoscritti Trecenteschi della Commedia tra Commento Scritto e Commento Figurato*, Ravenna 2015, "Rassegna Dantesca": 37–58.
15. Fugelso K., *Engaging the Viewer: Reading Structures and Narrative Strategies in Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, PhD. Diss, Columbia University 1999.
16. Gillerman D. H., *Trecento Illustrators of the "Divine Comedy"*, "Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society" 118 (2000): 129–165.
17. Gurevich A., *Kul'tura i obshestvo srednevekovoy Evropy glazami sovremennikov*, Moscow, 1989.
18. Hollander J., *The Poetic Ekphrasis*, "Word and Image" 4 (1988): 209–219.
19. Hollander J., *Dante's Use of Aeneid in Inferno I and II*, "Comparative Literature " 20/2 (1968): 142–156.
20. Kessler H.L., *An Eleventh-century Ivory Plaque from South Italy and the Cassinese Revival*, "Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen" 8/1 (1966): 67–95.
21. Kozlova S., *"Ut pictura poesis": literatura ot Danre do Ariosto v izobrazitel'nom iskusstve italyanskogo Vozrozhdeniya*, Moscow, 2021.
22. Le Goff J., *The Birth of Purgatory*, Chicago, 1984.

23. Owen R., *Dante's Reception by 14th and 15th century Illustrators of the Commedia*, "Reading Medieval Studies" XXVII (2001): 163–225.
24. Panofsky E., *Etudes on Iconology: Humanistic Themes in Renaissance Art*, 1939.
25. Papillo P. J. *Illuminating Comedy: Artistic Strategy and Rhetoric in Pierpont Morgana Library's MS. M. 676 and Botticelli's Dante*, PhD. Diss, Columbia University 2003.
26. Porcari C., *Minotaurs & Geryons: The Symbolic Monsters of Violence and Fraud in the Sources, in the Dante's Lines of and in Their Literary or Visual Comments: Lecture Paper*, Calgary, 2018.
27. Pozhidaeva A., *Sotvorenje mira v ikonographii srednevekovogo Zapada*, Moscow, 2021.
28. Sez nec J., *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, Princeton, 1995.
29. Terzoli M. A., *Visibile Parlare: ecfra si e scrittura nella "Commedia"*, Berlin 2016 (Dante und die bildenden Künste): 23–48.
30. Ulivi F., *Dante e l'interpretazione figurativa*, "Convivum 34 " (1966): 269–292.
31. Volkmann L. *Bildliche Darstellungen zu Dante's Divina Commedia bis zum Ausgang der Renaissance*, Leipzig, 1892.
32. Williams E., *Speak of the Devil: a Brief Look at the History and Origins of Iconography of the Devil from Antiquity to Renaissance*, Carson City, 2004.