The usual image of hell on misericords — and also see on Gothic tympana — is the Mouth of the Leviathan. This monster-mouth, usually with sharp teeth, emerges on an armrest or choir seat from an invisible monster-fish or a crocodile (Fig. 1). The mouth is wide open, sometimes empty, but at other times harboring one or more humans.
We rarely get a glimpse of the interior of hell. One misericord at Champeaux (Seine et Marne) shows a pair of winged devils who stand in a boiling pot and greet a newcomer to hell. A Belgian misericord shows a husband wheeling his wife to a small building. A window at the side shows a grinning devil standing in flames (Fig. 2).

A number of paintings and frescoes both in northern and southern Europe show a far greater view of hell than we see on misericords. The Van Eyck diptych at the Metropolitan Museum of Art shows the crucifixion on Earth and the Last Judgement in Heaven and Hell. The winged Saint Michael thrusts his sword into hell where sinners are tortured by a variety of devils scattered around. The Campo Santo in Pisa also takes the viewer on a tour of hell with Satan consuming his sinners (Figs. 3 and 4). Paintings at this time showed a chaotic hell with punishment not specific to the crime.
Fig. 3  Satan Consumes Sinners  
Pisa: Campo Santo

Fig. 4  Satan Consumes Sinners  
Pisa: Campo Santo
During the Middle Ages a number of visions of hell were recounted and recorded. There were visions, among others, of the Irish knight Tondal, of Owen, of Alberic and of Lazarus. The visions of Tondal were the most popular. Some 250 manuscripts still exist, only one of these, now at the Getty Museum, is illuminated.1 Simon Marmion, the greatest of miniaturists, illustrated the journey through Hell of Tondal and his guardian angel with eleven illuminations. On a page of the Très Riches Heures an image of Satan is chained to a grill, spewing souls from his mouth and dumping them into the fire. This image is derived directly from the visions of Tondal.

The visions of Lazarus, from a pseudo-apocryphal book of the Bible, were introduced into France in a French Shepherd’s calendar of 1493.2 Many editions followed and were later translated into English. Lazarus, at the command of Christ, recounts his experiences during the three days he spent in hell before he was resurrected. This hell was divided into seven parts, one for each of the seven deadly sins. Each sin in the visions of Lazarus has a specific brutal punishment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sin</th>
<th>Punishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>Sinners are tied to wheels with spikes and rammed by devils with metal hooks and spears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envy</td>
<td>Sinners are immersed to their navel in an icy river and icy winds blow over them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrath</td>
<td>Sinners are chained to tables and butchered with kitchen and field implements - spears, axes and knives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloth</td>
<td>Sinners are bitten by snakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avarice</td>
<td>Sinners are boiled in pots of molten lead.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Gluttony: Sinners are assigned to a table set in a stinking river where they are forcefed toads and other venomous animals and drink putrid water.

Lust: Sinners are tossed into pots set in fiery pits.

Each of these tortures takes place in a different part of hell: in a river, in a large field, in a hall or in a workshop filled with tables.

Louis d’Amboise, bishop of Albi, had helped to govern Lombardy following the conquest of Milan by the French. When he ordered frescoes for the cathedral of Albi, he ordered a Last Judgment popular in Italy — which did more than show the face of the Leviathan, it showed hell divided into seven parts — derived from the visions of Lazarus.³

Shortly after the frescoes of Albi were completed, the bishop’s brother, Cardinal Georges d’Amboise, ordered choir stalls for his summer palace at Gaillon in Normandy.⁴ While the misericords on these stalls show little of hell — except for a concert of satyrs on a misericord, — they have marquetry panels — the first in France — on the partitions between the stalls. Some of these panels show the type of hell portrayed in the frescoes of Albi and in the woodblocks of the Shepherd’s Calendar. There are scenes of pride (Fig. 5), envy (Fig. 6), wrath (Fig. 7), lust (Fig. 8), and gluttony (Fig. 9).

The Proud: Nude men and women are tied onto two wheels covered with many spikes. A winged red devil grabs one sinner by the throat and prepares to strike his head with a rod.

The Envious: Four nude figures stand to their thighs in icy water. A few dismembered heads and legs float on the ice. Each figure extends his or her arms as if to fend off the icy wind blowing from


⁴ A complete list of expenses, names and duties of artists who worked at Gaillon may be found in Deville, Collection de Documents inédits: Comptes de dépenses de la construction du Château de Gaillon. (Bulletin de la Société d’histoire de l’art francas, 1958).
the top left corner. This head is the only invention of the marquetry artist; it is not in the original woodcuts of the calendar.

Fig. 5
Pride
Gaillon: Marquetry

Fig. 6
Envy
Gaillon: Marquetry
The Wrathful: Four nude figures, possibly all women, are strapped to tables. A winged red devil steps on one of the figures and aims a long spear at her throat. A brown ape-like figure, probably an assistant of the red devil, spears the throat of another woman. Another spear, aimed by an unseen devil, hits the thigh of a third sinner. A figure in the background appears to be entering this room in hell as he is speared in the back.
The Lustful: Three large tubs rest on lengths of wood, certainly on fire. They are filled with nude figures who gesture wildly and try to stand. The tubs are before a dark tunnel and several devils, armed with pitchforks, are apparently pushing the tubs into the tunnels. Several devils stand at the top of the tunnel and aim their pitchforks.

The Gluttonous: Two women stand by a long wooden table, each accompanied by a devil who is forcefeeding her. One figure lies under the table, possibly trying to hide. A devil brings a plate of food to him, certainly filled with toads and other venomous items. A wheel, possibly a waterwheel, is at one side to set the scene in a river.
The missing sins, avarice and sloth, would have filled some of the now blank partitions on the south stalls which have lost their marquetry. We know from the woodcuts of the Shepherd’s Calendar that Avarice would have shown pots of boiling metal with devils standing on the rims and pushing the sinners down into the pots. The scene of Sloth would have shown figures trying to flee from all kinds of serpents which were biting them.

There are about 50 marquetry panels on the Gaillon choir stalls, twenty of which are now missing. The Hell scenes probably occupied fourteen of these panels, two for each of the deadly sins. Other marquetry panels on these stalls show other scenes derived from the Shepherd’s Calendar: the zodiac and influences of the planets on human lives. Parts of these sets are also missing but can be reconstructed from the calendar.

After the Revolution, the ensemble from Gaillon was removed to safety in Paris by Alexandre Lenoir and later installed by Viollet-le-Duc in the Basilica of Saint-Denis, where it remains today.
The only medieval choir stalls in which we see an architectural plan of hell and its tortures is on the marquetry panels, inspired by the woodcuts from the Shepherd’s Calendar, on the Choir Stalls of the Château of Gaillon. These images illustrate the visions of Lazarus. Images of hell on other misericords are mainly limited to the mouth of the Leviathan.

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