OUTCASTS

PREJUDICE & PERSECUTION IN THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

Medieval manuscripts preserve stories of romance, faith, and knowledge, but their luxurious illuminations can reveal hidden prejudices as well. Typically created for the privileged classes, such books nevertheless provide glimpses of the marginalized and powerless, reflecting their tenuous places in society. Attitudes toward Jews and Muslims, the poor, those perceived as sexual or gender deviants, and the peoples beyond European borders can be discerned through caricature and polemical imagery, as well as through marks of erasure and censorship.

As repositories of history and memory, museums reveal much about our shared past, but all too often the stories told from luxury art objects focus on the elite. This exhibition examines the "out-groups" living within western Europe through case studies of works drawn from the Getty's collection. Medieval society was far more diverse than is commonly understood, but diversity did not necessarily engender tolerance. Life presented significant obstacles for those who were not fully-abled, white, wealthy, Christian, heterosexual, cisgender males. For today's viewer, the vivid images and pervasive subtexts in illuminated manuscripts can serve as stark reminders of the power of rhetoric and the danger of prejudice.

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Christ in Majesty; The Crucifixion

Hildesheim, probably 1170s

ARTIST **Unknown**

Stammheim Missal (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 64 (97.MG.21), fols. 85v–86

A masterpiece of Romanesque painting, this manuscript, with its gilded pages and geometric symmetry, celebrates Christian salvation history. At the same time, it reveals the institutionalized anti-Semitism underlying Christian rhetoric about the old law and the new. Ecclesia, the personification of the Christian Church, is seen at Christ's right, while the Jewish Synagoga appears on his left. Often represented as a blindfolded figure, here Synagoga points at Christ, glaring. She holds a banderole (representing Old Testament law) that proclaims "cursed be he who hangs on the tree." Below, two personifications echo and amplify the antithetical positions of these two figures. In a roundel below Ecclesia, the fair-skinned Life gazes calmly across the composition at Death, who resembles caricatures of Jews with hooked noses and swarthy complexions in other twelfth-century images.

The Monstrous Peoples

Probably Thérouanne, fourth quarter of the 13th century (after 1277)

ARTIST **Unknown**

The Wonders of the World (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig XV 4 (83.MR.174), fols. 118v–119

After describing the physical traits and habits of animals and drawing moral lessons from them, the compiler of this encyclopedic text included a section on the "Wonders of the World." A series of images and short captions depict the so-called "monstrous races," peoples imagined to be living at the far reaches of the world. The writer distinguished between *hominum* (human/people) and gens (tribe/people), whose lack of clothing and misshapen or exaggerated physical features in effect created a category of subhumans or non-humans. Inscriptions added throughout these pages indicate geographic origins for such beings in Africa or somewhere beyond India—places that were in fact inaccessible or entirely unknown to most Europeans at the time.

The Battle of Liegnitz and Scenes from the Life of St. Hedwig

Silesia (Poland), 1353

ARTIST **Unknown**

Life of the Blessed Hedwig (text in German)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126), fols. 11v–12

The gritty realities of life in the Middle Ages, among them perpetual warfare and routine threats of violence, fanned the flames of xenophobia. One of the first historical events recorded in the biography of Saint Hedwig, a Silesian noblewoman, is the invasion of Poland by the Tartars and the Mongol armies of Genghis Khan (about 1162–1227). At left, the Golden Horde (Mongol army) besieges the city of Liegnitz (Legnica, Poland), defended by an army of Poles, Czechs, and Germans under the command of Heinrich II, Hedwig's husband. When Heinrich is decapitated, below, the bloodshed intensifies, and his head is presented on a pike at top right. The hellmouth at lower left shows a demon capturing the souls of the slain Mongols, consigning them to eternal damnation.

Roussillon Going to Martel's Aid

Bruges, about 1467–72

ARTIST **Loyset Liédet and Pol Fruit**

Leaf from *The History of Charles Martel* (text in French)

Events from the past could be leveraged as powerful propaganda in the present. Made after Constantinople, the capital of eastern Christendom, fell to the Ottomans, this manuscript narrates the feats of Charles Martel, an eighth-century French leader who prevented the advancement of Moorish armies from the Iberian Peninsula into Francia (France). The text refers to the Moors as Saracens, a pejorative term for North African Muslims. The book's patrons, the Burgundian dukes Philip the Good (1396–1467) and his son Charles the Bold (1433–1477), commissioned a range of illuminated manuscripts with Crusading narratives during this time of heightened fear and aggression.

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig XIII 6 (83.MP.149), leaf 6

Saint Martin Dividing His Cloak

Ghent and Antwerp, 1469

ARTIST **Lieven van Lathem**

Prayer Book of Charles the Bold (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 37 (89.ML.35), fols. 34v–35

Saint Martin of Tours (316–397) embodied the Christian "Works of Mercy," which included clothing the poor and caring for the disabled. Martin, a Roman soldier, cut a portion of his cloak to clothe a beggar. The image at the bottom of the page, in contrast, features a mock joust between two peasants with baskets on their heads, mounted on rams. The artist created a joke at the expense of the poor, who here serve as simple sources of amusement. In contrast to Saint Martin's charity, the patron of this manuscript, Duke Charles the Bold (1433–1477), was known for wearing lavish garments made from cloth-of-gold silk. He incurred large debts, and his dealings with foreign cloth merchants as well as the Medici Bank, among others, led to bankruptcy.

A Massacre of Family Members

France, about 1460–70

ARTIST **Master of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini**

AUTHOR Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, Letter to Johann von Eich and *Historia de Duobos Amantibus* (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 68 (2001.45), fols. 20v–21

This bloody scene portrays the aftermath of an ill-advised quest for alliance or power. With its gory welter of bodies, the image serves as a reminder of the inherent dangers of regime change. Writing more than a decade before he became Pope Pius II, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405–1464) presents frank but philosophical ideas about the vicissitudes of power among political factions at European courts and reveals pervasive biases toward neighboring principalities in the Mediterranean. Aeneas also bemoans the time he wasted in idle flattery and in navigating both local and foreign customs while serving at the court of Emperor Frederick III (1415–1493), who was easily influenced by his counselors.

King Haldin Accusing the Sultan's Daughter Gracienne of Dishonorable Behavior

Belgium, 1464

ARTIST **Lieven van Lathem**

Romance of Gillion de Trazegnies (text in French)

Western medieval manuscripts offer few images of Muslim women, and it is perhaps not surprising that the notable exception presented here gives form to the trope of the Christian convert. In a palatial throne room meant to evoke Cairo in Egypt, a Muslim courtier maligns the chastity of the sultan's daughter, Gracienne; she kneels at left next to Gillion, a Christian knight who has fallen in love with her. Turbans and exotic headgear identify the figures of the Sultan's court, who otherwise resemble inhabitants of the Burgundian Netherlands, where this manuscript was made. Gillion's Mediterranean journey and Gracienne's conversion to Christianity likely appealed to the manuscript's patron, a courtier to Duke Philip the Good (ruled 1419–67). Philip was committed to defending Christian lands in the Levant against the Ottoman Turks.

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 111 (2013.46), fols. 150v–151

Bagoe Pleads on Behalf of Nabarzanes

Lille and Bruges, about 1470–75

ARTIST **Master of the *Jardin de vertueuse consolation* and assistant**

Book of the Deeds of Alexander the Great (text in French)

Some medieval writers and artists altered historical content in their works to align it with the prevailing morals of the day. Alexander the Great's lovers included the young man Hephaistion and the eunuch Bagoas, but in one medieval account Bagoas was recast as a beautiful woman, called Bagoe, in order to "avoid a bad example," according to the text. In the illumination, Bagoe wears luxurious flowing garments like those of the spear-carrying Amazon women in the background, who were renowned for their military prowess and heightened sexual drive. The literary and artistic regendering of Bagoas/Bagoe reveals the predominant prejudice against same-sex attraction and, by analogy with the Amazons, the pervasive wariness toward powerful women.

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig XV 8 (83.MR.178), fols. 133v–134

The Embassy of the Duke of Brabant before the King of France and the Duke of Berry

Bruges, about 1480–83

ARTIST **Master of the Getty Froissart**

AUTHOR Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, book 3 (text in French)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig XIII 7 (83.MP.150), fols. 272v–273

Rumor and hearsay shape historical interpretation and scholarship. Embellishing his account of political negotiations at the French court, historian Jean Froissart (1337–1405) shared a defamatory anecdote: he wrote that Jean, Duke of Berry (1340–1416), was infatuated with a boy at court who specialized in manufacturing knitted undergarments. The artist depicted the duke, at far right, placing his hand on the shoulder of the youth, whose short tunic and hose reveal his buttocks, as was fashionable at the time. Froissart's "outing" of this French ruler exemplifies a frequent rhetorical tactic for undermining a person's moral and spiritual reputation. Such allegations fueled interpretations by later art historians of latent homosexual content in illuminated manuscripts commissioned by the duke.

The Death of Brunhilde, Queen of France

Paris, about 1413–15

ARTIST **Boucicaut Master**

AUTHOR Giovanni Boccaccio, *Fates of Illustrious Men and Women* (text in French)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 63 (96.MR.17), fols. 281v–282

The Merovingian queen Brunhilde, here shown dragged by a horse, suffers a brutal death. Boccaccio's fourteenth-century tales—lurid stories with a moralizing twist—featured individuals who had fallen from lofty positions of power. Brunhilde, a historical figure who led armies and ruled over kingdoms, fell victim to the misogyny of later medieval authors who cast her as the archetypal "nasty woman." Variations of this story described her as ruthless and vengeful, characterizations also applied at the time to Saracens (a pejorative term for Muslims). This parallel may explain the turbaned hybrid figures in the margins, which often served as a space for commentary on the larger picture. The "Saracen" in medieval art became a catchall category of people to be feared.

The Adoration of the Magi

Provence, about 1480–90

ARTIST **Georges Trubert**

Book of hours (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 48 (93.ML.6), fols. 58v–59

The Magi were stargazers who brought precious gifts to the Christ Child. The illuminator Georges Trubert followed a late-medieval tradition of symbolically depicting each Magus as a ruler from one of the continents known to Europeans: the kneeling figure as Europe and the standing kings as Asia and Africa (identified by their turbans, used stereotypically in art to identify Muslims, Jews, or peoples of the eastern and southern Mediterranean and beyond). The late fifteenth-century black African Magus is a paradoxical figure. His presence reveals the racial diversity in Europe at a time when ecumenical church councils welcomed delegates from Ethiopia to Florence and Rome. At the same time, however, Europeans began to engage in the brutal African slave trade.

Initial *Q*: David Before Saul

Possibly Noyon, after 1205

ARTIST **Master of the Ingeborg Psalter**

Psalter (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 66 (99.MK.48), fols. 54v–55

In a jealous rage, King Saul draws a sword on the young David. His melancholic temperament is conveyed not only through his actions but also by the dark-skinned demon who whispers in his ear, urging him on to violence. Color conveyed a range of meanings in medieval art. Blackness at times signified race and ethnicity, as seen in the image of the black Magus nearby, but could also symbolize the absence of light (and thus, of God). As such, demons were often rendered in shades of black or dark browns and grays. In this miniature, color appears to have been used in both ways: the bearded demon resembles caricatured representations of Africans, Jews, and Muslims found elsewhere in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, a period of extreme intolerance and violence.

Scenes from the Martyrdom of Saint Robert of Bury

East Anglia, England, about 1480–90

ARTIST **Unknown**

Illustrated *Vita Christi*, with devotional supplements (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 101 (2008.3), fols. 43v–44

Blood libel is the incendiary claim that Jews killed Christian children for use in rituals that often mocked the Crucifixion. This manuscript provides the only remaining medieval image of Robert of Bury, an obscure child saint said to have been so murdered. The scenes at the upper left show a woman (possibly an accomplice) hiding his body in a well and, at right, an archer discovering the corpse. The establishment of Robert's cult appears to have been politically motivated. When two candidates vied for the seat of Abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, the ultimate victor, Samson, campaigned on the claim that his opponent allowed the town's Jewish moneylenders access to the abbey church. Under Abbot Samson, Robert's vita was written and a shrine erected for his veneration.

Initial *Q*: Christ before Pilate

Possibly Bruges, mid-13th century

ARTIST **Unknown**

Psalter (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 14 (85.MK.239), fols. 63v–64

Psalm 51, beginning "Why dost thou glory in malice," is illustrated with an image of Christ, who has been led by his Jewish captors before the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate. The Psalter (taken from the book of Psalms in the Christian Old Testament and originally from the Hebrew Bible) was the preeminent personal prayer book of the high Middle Ages. It is perhaps ironic that Psalters contain some of the most anti-Semitic and polemical imagery found in medieval manuscripts. The foremost captor's misshapen and exaggerated features exemplify the way that caricature was used to vilify the Jews. The Jewish priests are distinguished by their conical headdress. Although the Jewish hat was likely an artistic convention, the fourth Lateran council of 1215 did issue a decree ordering Jews to wear badges.

Initial *A*: Two Jews in Conversation; Initial *Q*: Two Soldiers Leading Two Moors before a King

Huesca (Spain), about 1290–1310

ARTIST **Unknown**

Feudal Customs of Aragon (text in Navarro-Aragonese)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig XIV 6 (83.MQ.165), fols. 243v–244

The Islamic world stretched as far west as the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal). At the time of this manuscript's creation, Christians and Muslims had battled for control of the region for nearly seven hundred years. Feudal laws regulated many of the daily activities of Jews and Muslims living in Christian-ruled territories.

Perhaps reflecting the region's history of multiculturalism, this manuscript does not contain the negative caricatures often employed by medieval artists. Its content, however, serves as a reminder that out-groups living within Christian society were subject to strict regulation. Because Christians were largely forbidden to practice moneylending, they relied on the Jewish community for this essential service. Jewish merchants, herders, and craftspeople also played a vital role in the economy of this region, yet their business dealings were tightly controlled. The harsh text at left (here referring to the "avarice" of Jews) dictates where Jewish merchants were permitted to conduct business. The statute on the opposite page legislates the movements of enslaved "Moors" (a medieval catchall term for Muslims and black Africans) living in Christian lands. The law forbids Jews and Christians to return these slaves to their homeland.

July Calendar with a Man and Woman Reaping and Zodiacal Sign of Leo

Paris, about 1440–50

ARTIST **Workshop of the Bedford Master**

Book of Hours (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig IX 6 (83.ML.102), fols. 6v–7

Peasants, unlike many of the marginalized groups represented in this exhibition, comprised the vast majority of the population of western Europe in the Middle Ages. Traditionally, medieval society was thought to be divided into three orders: those who prayed, those who fought, and those who worked. Because peasants were depicted in books commissioned by the clergy or nobility, images of "those who worked" tended to legitimize their exploitation as an undercompensated labor force. At the bottom of this calendar page for the harvest month of July, a cheerful couple gathers wheat. Their brightly colored clothing enhances the beauty of the illumination but bears little resemblance to the realities of dress in late-medieval France, where peasants wore cheap, undyed wool in shades of brown and gray.

Initial *B*: David Playing the Harp

Paris, about 1320–25

ARTIST **Unknown**

Breviary (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig IX 2 (83.ML.98), fols. 6v–7

The hierarchies of social class are visualized on this page through the pairing of biblical scenes. At the bottom of the page, the rich man Dives dines at a bountiful banquet but selfishly denies Lazarus, a poor beggar, a few scraps of food. Here, dogs lick the sores on Lazarus's body. This New Testament parable, in which the rich man is punished with damnation for his lack of charity, corresponds thematically with the text of Psalm 1, attributed to King David, who is shown within an initial *B*: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful."

Initial *D*: A Nun Feeding a Leper in Bed

Engelberg, Switzerland, about 1275–1300

ARTIST **Unknown**

Psalter (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig VIII 3 (83.MK.94), fols. 42v–43

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Taken from the Gospel of Matthew, Christ's words about charity are written in Latin above this scene of a nun feeding a leper in a hospital. Even in the Middle Ages, medical care was available to those with preexisting conditions and terminal illnesses, though treatment was rarely provided by physicians. It was clerics who were tasked with ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of the sick. Meals and medicine were communally provided after admission to a hospital, but some of the poorest members of society were compelled to raise funds for their own care. The stigma attached to diseases such as leprosy, syphilis, or the plague, however, cut across all social classes.

Abraham and Hagar Having Intercourse

Regensburg, about 1400–1410

ARTIST **Unknown**

AUTHOR Rudolf von Ems

World Chronicle (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. 33 (88.MP.70), fols. 28v–29

The Bible contains numerous stories of societally sanctioned concubinage. Hagar, an Egyptian slave, was given to her mistress's husband, Abraham, in order to bear him an heir. In this illumination, the two were shown in the midst of the sex act, but at some point in the past a reader obliterated the figures by rubbing or scraping. The manuscript features many depictions of couples engaged in intercourse that have been similarly censored (scenes include an orgy and a violent sexual assault). These erasures suggest the power of images to elicit moral judgments, in particular of erotic encounters with people deemed foreign or "other."

Initial *E*: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

Cologne, about 1450

ARTIST **Circle of Stefan Lochner**

Bible (text in Latin)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig I 13 (83.MA.62), fols. 103v–104

The Queen of Sheba, one of the most powerful female protagonists of the Bible, offered gifts of precious metals and spices to King Solomon, who was famed for his wisdom. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke report that she came from the "uttermost parts of the earth" to question the ruler. Medieval interpreters often identified her as African, usually Ethiopian, but she was frequently "whitewashed"—that is, represented as a white European queen, as in this manuscript. Images of the queen as a black woman (see the reproduction at right) functioned less as accurate representations of race than as propaganda intended to prove the universality of Christian belief.

The Queen of Sheba before King Solomon, 1130/50–1205. Detail of the Verduner altarpiece in Klosterneuburg, Austria, by Nicholas of Verdun. Image: Hans A. Rosbach (CC BY-SA 3.0), via Wikimedia Commons

Epilogue

The manuscripts in this case fall outside of the geographic and chronological parameters of this exhibition, and in many ways their stories are less about exclusion than forced inclusion. The histories they reveal, however, demonstrate that prejudice and persecution were not simply medieval, western European problems; they were, and continue to be, human problems. George Santayana's words, often invoked, are given fresh urgency when these objects are considered in light of recent history: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Silk Doublure

New Julfa, 1637–38

ARTIST **Malnazar and Aghap'ir**

Bible (text in Armenian)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig I 14 (83.MA.63), cover.c

This Bible was made for a community of Armenian Christians who were forcibly removed from the Ottoman-held city of Julfa and resettled on the outskirts of Isfahan, the capital of of Persia under Shah Abbas I (reigned 1588–1629). Three thousand Armenians were subjected to mass deportation, and Julfa was burned to the ground to prevent their return. Exploiting the specialized skills and trade networks of the Armenian silk weavers and merchants, Shah Abbas conscripted the weavers to produce high-quality silk for his court, and entirely preempted Ottoman control of this lucrative industry. The inner covers of this New Testament manuscript retain their original patterned-silk linings, tangible reminders of the trade that led to the forced migration of an entire population.

Tupac Inca Yupanqui

Southern Andes, completed in 1616

ARTIST **Unknown**

AUTHOR Martín de Murúa, *General History of Peru* (text in Spanish)

The J. Paul Getty Museum

Ms. Ludwig XIII 16 (83.MP.159), fols. 47v–48

This manuscript provides a rare view into the Andean past. As the first illustrated account of Inca and Spanish colonial Peru, written just over a century after European contact, it is a record of Inca kingship. The ruler Tupac Inca Yupanqui wears traditional dress, at left, while the facing page has visible marks of censorship. When the text arrived in Spain, members of the Inquisition redacted all accounts of failed missionary efforts in the Viceroyalty of Peru. This chapter also describes the silver mines of La Plata, Bolivia, which conquistadores plundered to fuel imperial ambitions as well as the entire Spanish economy. A repository of cultural memory, the book is also an artifact of an era that led to the destruction of a people and way of life.

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