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## **'Fro Paris to Ingland'? The danse macabre in text and image in late-medieval England**

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### **Citation**

Oosterwijk, S. (2009, June 25). *'Fro Paris to Ingland'? The danse macabre in text and image in late-medieval England*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13873>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## CHAPTER 1

# Of Corpses, Constables and Kings: The *Danse Macabre* in Late Medieval and Renaissance Culture

SOPHIE OOSTERWIJK

*The origins of the danse macabre, or Dance of Death, are still obscure, but the popularity of this theme in the late Middle Ages and beyond is undeniable. From the first half of the 15th century, it spread rapidly through European art, literature and drama. Visual examples are found in murals, stained-glass windows, illuminated manuscripts, early printed books, and sculpture. It continued to enjoy great popularity amongst artists and patrons long after the medieval period. Perhaps the most famous danse macabre is the series of woodcuts by Hans Holbein the Younger, published in 1538, inspired by medieval examples but characterised very much by a Renaissance approach. Centuries later the danse macabre inspired composers such as Franz Schubert, Franz Liszt and Camille Saint-Saëns, the film director Ingmar Bergman, and even the animator Walt Disney.*

### THE EMERGENCE OF THE DANSE MACABRE

DESPITE the popularity it once enjoyed here, the *danse macabre* seems to be regarded in Britain nowadays as rather a European affair or, more specifically, something for scholars on the Continent to occupy themselves with. Whereas there are thriving societies devoted to the study of this theme in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France and Italy, there is no British counterpart, nor has there been an English monograph for over half a century.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, Britain tends to be virtually ignored in continental discussions of the *danse macabre*, despite the early date of the English literary version by John Lydgate.<sup>2</sup> As a result, there is now in Britain a fairly limited understanding of what the *danse* actually represented, or what (if anything) Britain contributed to this theme. When pressed, most people are likely to associate the term *danse macabre* either with the music of the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns, who conjured up a vision of dancing skeletons fleeing back to their graves only at the break of day in his 1874 symphonic poem *La Danse Macabre*, or with Walt Disney's first Silly Symphony animation *The Skeleton Dance* of 1929, which presented a similar scene, albeit with different music. The fact that this musical version was composed nearly five hundred years after the first mention of the *danse*, highlights its enduring popularity. However, the theme has undergone many changes over the centuries, and the original *danse macabre* was a far more serious and complicated affair.

The term *danse macabre* implies both dancing and music, and these were originally crucial ingredients. Of course, there is a firm link between music and death that dates

back to Antiquity. Music often played a role in funeral rites, and musical instruments have been found in ancient tombs, presumably for use or entertainment in the afterlife.<sup>3</sup> Tales were also told of creatures who used music to lure the living to their deaths, from the sirens whom Odysseus successfully resisted, to the more modern legends of the Pied Piper and the Lorelei.<sup>4</sup> The skeleton itself is an obvious emblem of death, but the musical skeleton can already be observed in ancient art, a striking example being a number of such figures on two silver *modiolus* cups found in the Boscoreale treasure near Pompeii and probably datable between 100 BC and the 1st century AD.<sup>5</sup> Another famous example of a stucco relief with dancing skeletons was discovered in a tomb at Cumae in 1809.<sup>6</sup> Yet the musical or dancing nature of these animated skeletal figures served a different purpose in Graeco-Roman art, as they must be interpreted within the context of other such carved or bronze figures depicted as attending or serving at a banquet in parody of the living; some appear to have been actually used at banquets as a reminder of the fact that all earthy pleasures are but short-lived, while others can be found in funerary art.<sup>7</sup> The nature of these skeletal figures is thus moralising: they do not *personify* Death, nor do they threaten the living. Intriguing though these classical examples are, any direct link with the medieval *danse macabre* is highly unlikely, as the skeleton fell out of favour in Early Christian art, only to reappear in a different context in the Middle Ages.

Oddly, the very meaning of the word ‘macabre’ is unclear. The earliest known use of this term occurs in Jehan Le Fèvre’s 1376 poem *Respit de la Mort*, which contains the lines:

*Je fistz de macabree la dance  
Qui toutes gens mène à la tresse  
Et à la fosse les adresse  
Qui est leur deraine maison . . .*<sup>8</sup>

I made/did the dance of Macabree  
who leads all people to the dance  
and who addresses them at the grave  
that is their last abode . . .

It remains uncertain whether Le Fèvre was referring to a theme already known at the time, or whether he himself wrote an earlier *danse macabre* poem that has since been lost; the answer to that question, and the meaning of the word ‘macabree’, depends on how one interprets the first line and especially the word ‘fistz’.<sup>9</sup> Of course, there was an earlier medieval theme with obvious ‘macabre’ overtones: the tale of the Three Living and the Three Dead.<sup>10</sup> In this story, three proud young noblemen — sometimes presented as kings — are out hunting when they meet three corpses, who warn them against the vanity of all human endeavour. The theme is obvious: *memento mori* — remember that you must die! The late medieval preoccupation with ‘the macabre’ has often been viewed in the light of the recurring plague epidemics, but long before the Black Death first arrived in Europe, artists already depicted the encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead in murals and manuscript illuminations. The theme first appeared in French poetry in the 13th century, but it is based on a much older oriental tale. In art, the original confrontation appears peaceful, though obviously frightening; only later do the Three Dead adopt a more menacing stance, at times even threatening the Three Living with spades, scythes, darts or spears. In England the theme proved quite popular from the 14th century on, whereas most French wall-paintings date from the 15th century. Surviving English murals can be found in churches across the country, including the chapel of St Nicholas at Haddon Hall (Fig. 1), but also at Longthorpe Tower near Peterborough.<sup>11</sup>

One famous English example of the Three Living and the Three Dead can be found in the early-14th-century Psalter of Robert de Lisle (British Library, MS Arundel 83,

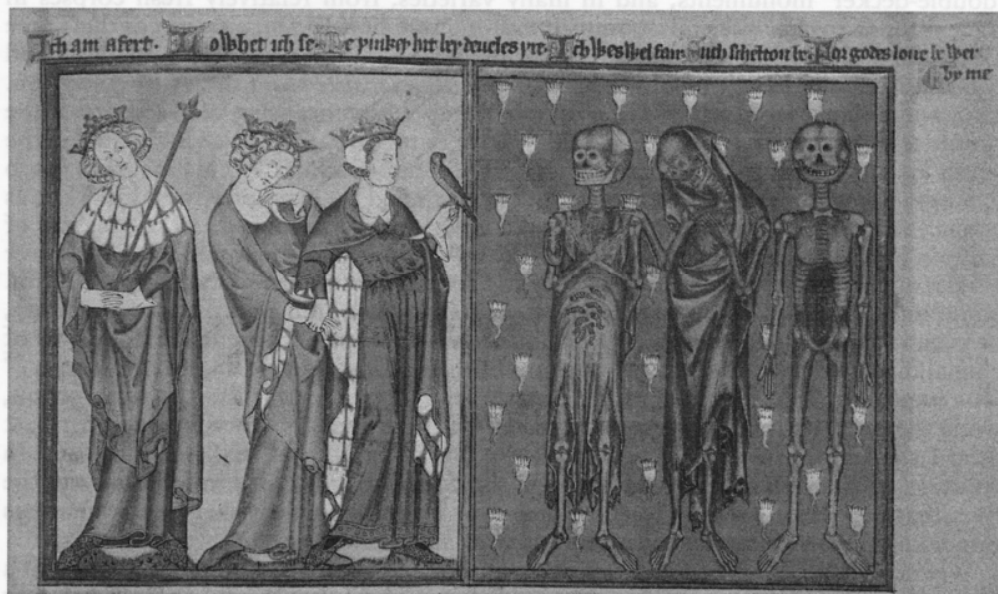


FIG. 1. The Three Dead, mural painted in the 1420s or '30s, Haddon Hall chapel, Derbyshire

Author

FIG. 2. The Three Living and the Three Dead, c. 1310, from the Psalter of Robert de Lisle (London, British Library, MS Arundel 83, pt. II, f. 127<sup>v</sup>)

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pt II, fol. 127).<sup>12</sup> Here, a French poem with Latin headers is accompanied by a miniature of three startled kings opposite three decaying corpses (Fig. 2). Each of the six characters has his own short line in Middle English, starting with the Three Living on the left:

*Ich am afert.  
Lo whet ich se.  
Me thinketh hit beth deueles thre.*

I am afraid.  
Look what I see.  
I believe these are three devils.

*Ich wes wel fair.  
Such scheltou be.  
For godes loue be wer by me*

I was once quite fair.  
Thus shall you be.  
For God's love, be warned by me.

This dialogue is continued in the poem itself, which is a shortened version of a French poem of the 13th century. The third corpse in particular paints a telling picture of his earlier existence:

*leo fu de mon lynage chief.  
Princes reys et conustables.  
Beals et riches ioyanz mes tables.  
Ore su si hidous et si nuz.  
Ke moy uer ne deigne nuls.*

I was the chief of my lineage.  
Princes, kings and constables,  
fair and rich enjoyed my tables.  
But now I am so hideous and naked  
that even the worms scorn me.

The remark about princes, kings and constables almost hints at the theme of the *danse macabre*, in which a skeletal figure forces people from all ranks of society to take part in his dance. However, this by itself should not be regarded as an early reference to the *danse macabre*, for medieval authors had a fondness for listing ranks and characters, especially if they were alliterative as well.<sup>13</sup>

Within the context of the medieval preoccupation with death and the macabre, the theme of the Three Living and the Three Dead was followed in the later 14th century by the cadaver or *transi* tomb. The cadaver effigy can be found either on its own or in 'double-decker' monuments, and in many varieties, from relatively fresh corpses in their shrouds to near-skeletal or even vermin-infested human remains, just as the Three Dead often show different stages of decomposition; similar variations of dead and decomposing figures can be observed in the *danse macabre* from the 15th century on. One well-documented example of a cadaver tomb with moralising verses aimed at the beholder is the monument to the merchant John Baret (d. 1467), which is situated in the south aisle of St Mary's church at Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk).<sup>14</sup> This macabre tomb iconography also appealed to the clergy, as suggested by examples found in various cathedrals, such as the chantry at Lincoln of Richard Fleming (d. 1431), bishop of Lincoln and subsequently archbishop of York (Fig. 3).<sup>15</sup> The ideas underlying cadaver effigies appear to have changed over time and are too complex to discuss here at length. Some authors have interpreted these monuments as signs of religious piety and humility, or even as deliberate anti-decorum or anti-tombs compared to the idealised norms of effigial display, while others have emphasised their moralising message to the viewer.<sup>16</sup> One important issue here is that the cadaver effigy looks forward to the resurrection, when the dead body will rise to be reunited with the soul, as described in Job 19:26: 'And I shall be clothed again with my skin: and in my flesh I shall see my God.' In contrast, as we shall see, the characters in the *danse macabre* tend to look back at the lives that they have lived up to the moment of death, with their skeletal companions reminding them of their mistakes and sins that may have cost them their salvation.

Whence the very idea of the *danse macabre* came, if not from Antiquity, is also still a matter for debate: it may stem from an old folklore belief that the dead may leave their

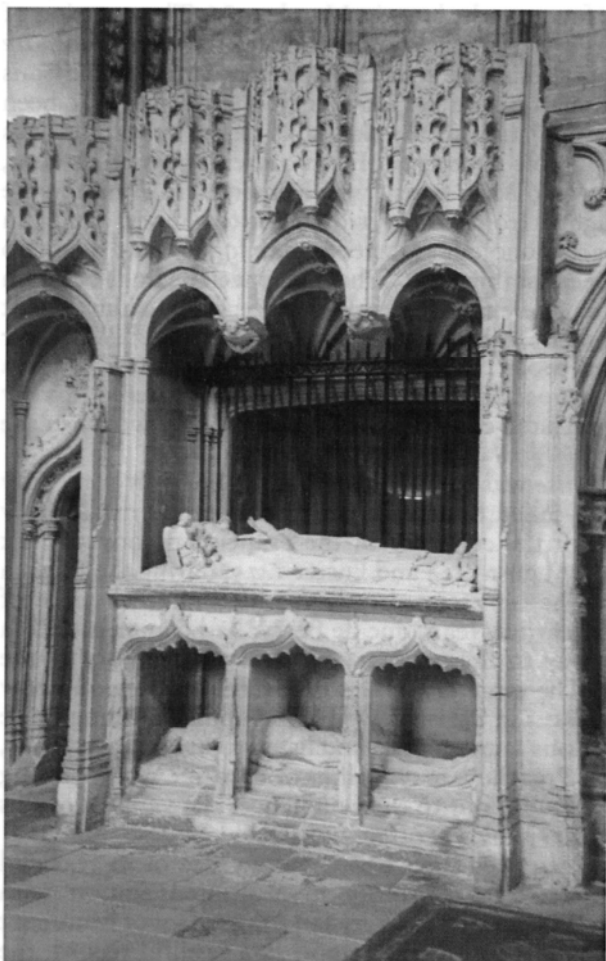


FIG. 3. Cadaver monument of Richard Fleming (d. 1431) against the north wall of the choir of Lincoln Cathedral

Author

graves to roam or dance at night,<sup>17</sup> and thus have moved upwards in a different form into the realm of literature and art, or it may have been inspired somehow by liturgical or other processions, such as those by the flagellants in the 14th century. Some scholars have suggested that the *danse* may have developed from the type of masque or musical performance that was popular throughout the medieval period, and there are indeed a few records of such performances, albeit that all but one postdate Jean le Fèvre's poem.<sup>18</sup> The one possible and intriguing exception is a performance at Jedburgh in October 1285, a description of which was quoted by Clark from the *Scottichronicon* by the Aberdeen chronicler John of Fordun (d. c. 1384).<sup>19</sup> The event is said to have taken place at the wedding celebrations of Alexander III of Scotland and Yolande de Dreux, when a musical procession was brought to an abrupt end by a phantom-like character gliding like a shade amongst those present before vanishing from sight, thereby causing music and song to cease and the dancers to freeze, much to everyone's dismay. Contemporaries clearly considered the event all the more memorable because of the

unexpected death of the king only a few months later in March 1286. The question of whether this performance at Jedburgh was really related to the later *danse macabre* remains to be answered, and one must resist the temptation of drawing comparisons with the use of skeletal figures at Roman banquets. Obviously, there must have been visual precursors that influenced the depiction of the skeletons in the *danse*, but it is futile to try and pinpoint any indisputable prototype. From a literary point of view, mention should be made of the Latin *Vado Mori* poem, which emerged in France in the 13th century and in which different figures from society, from pope to pauper, complain that they are about to die; yet these are monologues instead of dialogues, and again no direct link with the *danse* has so far been established.<sup>20</sup> There may well be links between drama and the *danse macabre*, but as one expert recently declared, any claims about the origins of the *danse* remain hypothetical through lack of firm evidence.<sup>21</sup> Whatever its origins, the *danse macabre* was to become a major theme in the 15th century at a time when the late medieval preoccupation with death was also catered for by manuscript copies and subsequently printed editions of other moralising works in the *Ars Moriendi* vein.

The earliest known monumental *danse* was to be found in Paris, but only some fifty years after Le Fèvre's poem.<sup>22</sup> The so-called Bourgeois de Paris recorded in his diary that the famous mural on the walls of the cemetery of the Franciscan convent Aux Saints Innocents was painted between August 1424 and Easter 1425, during the English occupation of the French capital.<sup>23</sup> The cemetery already featured another piece of macabre decoration: only a few years earlier, Jean, duc de Berry, had commissioned a sculpted tympanum above the doorway to the cemetery illustrating the story of the Three Living and the Three Dead.<sup>24</sup> The cemetery at Les Innocents was undoubtedly one of the most sought-after burial places in Paris, as well as a popular meeting place where one could stroll around the various market stalls and listen to open-air sermons, or pick up a prostitute (or a client).<sup>25</sup> Preachers may well have used the wall-painting and its surroundings as a visual aid to point out to their audiences the vanities of this earthly life, and the fact that death is inevitable yet often unexpected.

The mural in Paris was destroyed many centuries ago,<sup>26</sup> but an idea of its text and overall composition has been preserved for posterity in a printed edition with woodblock illustrations first published in 1485 by the Parisian printer Guyot Marchant (Fig. 4). In as far as this printed edition is to be relied upon as a faithful record, the mural probably comprised some thirty characters who each held a dialogue with Death, or possibly their own dead counterpart. Marchant's original texts refer to '*le mort*' (the dead person) rather than to '*la mort*' for Death itself, which leaves it unclear whether the Parisian mural showed a dance of the living with the dead, or one in which Death was presented as the overall orchestrator; Marchant's subsequent use of '*la mort*' in the *Grant danse macabre des femmes* of 1491 further obscures the issue. (The same problem applies to the German term *Totentanz*, which literally means 'dance of the dead'.)<sup>27</sup> The victims in Marchant's 1485 edition are all male, and they belong to all ranks of society from the very highest to the lowliest: the pope, emperor, king and cardinal, but also the burgher, scholar, usurer, labourer, hermit, and even the infant in his cradle. Printing a book version of the Parisian mural forced Marchant to introduce one important change: in contrast to the mural, which depicted a continuous chain of living and dead figures, Marchant's edition just showed two pairs per page, usually a juxtaposition of one religious and one lay character. The woodcut illustrations present Death (or the dead) as a putrid corpse, either naked or half-covered by a shroud, sometimes even worm-infested, and often holding a typical attribute: a large dart, a

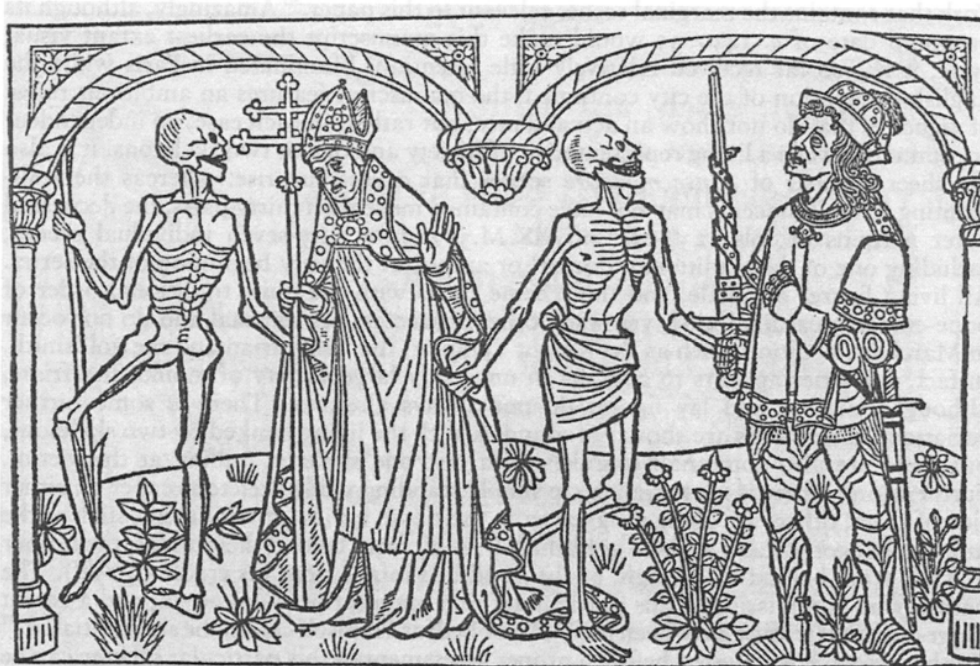


FIG. 4. Death, the Patriarch and the Constable, woodcut from Guyot Marchant's printed *Danse macabre*, first published in Paris, 1485

spade, a coffin, or a scythe.<sup>28</sup> The *danse* contains a moralising prologue and epilogue by the *acteur* or author, which reinforce the overall message: Death will come to both young and old, rich and poor, so it is better to eschew earthly pleasures and focus on good deeds in order to attain heaven.

Nobody has yet been able to propose a satisfactory explanation for the five decades of apparent silence between the mention of a dance 'de macabree' in Jehan Le Fèvre's 1376 poem and the painting of a *danse macabre* mural at Les Innocents, which is generally regarded as so sophisticated that it cannot have been an early prototype. The French text of the mural is often attributed to Jean Gerson, chancellor of the university of Paris, but it is yet possible that it was inspired by an earlier Latin poem on the *danse macabre* by an unknown author. However, no such prototype is known today, and earlier theories about a supposed mid-14th-century textual genesis are now considered highly conjectural.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the origins may have been, the mural in Paris seems to have formed the start of the *danse*'s real advance across medieval Europe.

#### THE SPREAD OF THE DANSE MACABRE

WITHIN a decade of the completion of the Parisian mural, the Bedford Master and his workshop appear to have produced an extensively decorated book of hours that includes, amongst other themes, a *danse macabre* in its margins. The manuscript survives in two parts, but it is the first part in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New

York that contains the marginal scenes relevant to this paper.<sup>30</sup> Amazingly, although its proposed date of c. 1430–35 would make this manuscript the earliest extant visual cycle, it has so far received relatively little attention. Illuminated in Paris while the English occupation of the city continued, the manuscript features an ambitious range of vignettes that do not show an actual dance, but rather, in each case, an independent encounter between a living representative of society and one or two skeletons. It is also the sheer number of *danse macabre* scenes that causes surprise: whereas the wall-painting at Les Innocents may not have contained more than thirty pairs, the decorated outer margins of fols 123<sup>r</sup>–151<sup>r</sup> of MS M.359 show fifty-seven individual scenes, including one of the traditional ‘doctor’ or author at the very beginning of the series. All living figures are male, and the scheme starts with the quite traditional order of pope-emperor-cardinal-king, yet many other characters are unusual and do not occur in Marchant’s edition, such as the Knight Templar, the Trinitarian and the goldsmith. In fact, the series appears to contain an unusually large variety of monks and friars, although religious and lay figures do not always alternate. There is some further variation: some scenes are shown as roundels with the living flanked by two skeletons, but there are also some half-roundels with just one skeleton pulling at the victim. Furthermore, whereas most figures are simply standing while skeletons caper on either side of them, others are being dragged from their own typical environment, such as the money-changer (f. 144<sup>r</sup>) and the goldsmith (f. 145<sup>r</sup>) from behind their tables, the farmer (f. 146<sup>v</sup>) from behind his plough, or the swaddled infant from his cradle (f. 151<sup>r</sup>). The patron who commissioned this particularly rich manuscript is unknown, and a recent suggestion that it must have been the Duke of Bedford himself cannot be substantiated.<sup>31</sup> Further research is required before a proper assessment of this particular scheme can be published.

Even without MS M.359 and its proposed date of c. 1430–35, it is obvious that the *danse* soon exerted a strong influence on the arts and on literature. There are other pre-Marchant manuscripts that purport to be copies of the poem accompanying the wall-painting at Les Innocents, while it has also been argued that several poems by François Villon (1431–after early 1463) drew some of their inspiration from the Parisian mural, with which the poet must have been familiar.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, for every example of *danse macabre* iconography that does survive, there must have been several that have since been lost or destroyed. One intriguing case is the altarpiece of the Life of St Bertin painted between 1455 and 1459 by Simon Marmion for the abbey of St Bertin at St Omer, which features in the background of two of the panels now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin a *danse macabre* wall-painting in a cloister with accompanying verses underneath the figures of the dead and the living (Fig. 5).<sup>33</sup> Whether the wall-painting in the St Bertin altarpiece was based on an existing scheme that the artist had actually seen, is a question that cannot be answered. None the less, it is a typical example of a *danse macabre* mural with verses and skeletal figures paired with male representatives of society, several of whom can be identified, and it must have been a familiar enough theme for the artist to include it in a commissioned altarpiece. Marmion had previously been active in Amiens, where the cathedral is believed to have had its own mural, albeit not until later; apparently, sources testify to the inclusion of female figures at Amiens, which would have been highly unusual in a French scheme before the end of the 15th century.<sup>34</sup> Marmion completed the St Bertin altarpiece while resident in Valenciennes, where he died in 1489.

Meanwhile, it was an English visitor to Paris who helped the *danse macabre* cross the Channel. John Lydgate, a monk and poet from Bury St Edmunds, composed the





FIG. 5. A *danse macabre* wall-painting in a cloister in the background of one of the panels from the altarpiece of St. Bertin by Simon Marmion, painted between 1455 and 1459 for the abbey of St Bertin at St Omer, now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin

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first Middle-English version of the Parisian poem before 1430, possibly while he was still in Paris. In his introduction, Lydgate referred his readers to 'the exawmple whiche that at Parise I fownde depicte ones on a walle', but his concluding 'envoye' explains that his is clearly a relatively free translation:<sup>35</sup>

*Owte of the freysshe I drowe hit of entent  
Not worde be worde but folwyng the substaunce*

There are a number of remarkable differences between Lydgate's poem, which survives in two distinct versions, and the record of the French mural that has come down to us through Guyot Marchant's 1485 edition. For example, Lydgate originally followed the order and range of the Parisian characters in his earlier version, the six known manuscripts of which constitute Group A, but in a subsequent revised and expanded version (B) he added a number of female characters, which vary per manuscript version: the empress, the 'lady of great estate' (also sometimes described as the princess), the abbess, and the *gentilwoman amorous* (also described as the young gentlewoman).<sup>36</sup> No women appear in Marchant's all-male version of 1485, which has always been regarded as an indication that they were absent in the Parisian mural, too. Other textual similarities with the German *Totentanz* tradition may suggest that Lydgate was familiar with a possible Latin prototype underlying both French and German *danse macabre* versions, but this remains hypothesis.<sup>37</sup>

Lydgate's poem obviously made an impression back home in England, for in 1430 a request was made that his verses should be incorporated into a newly commissioned



Dance of Death scheme in the medieval cloisters of Pardon Churchyard at Old St Paul's Cathedral in London. The patron responsible for this *danse* was the wealthy London town clerk John Carpenter (1371/2–1442), a close friend of the famous Lord Mayor Richard (Dick) Whittington and also of Reginald Pecock, who was himself a scholar and author as well as chaplain to Henry VI in the 1430s before being elected bishop of St Asaph in 1444.<sup>38</sup> Carpenter's new *danse macabre* scheme in London was probably painted onto wooden panels rather than onto the walls of the cloisters. Just like the cemetery of Les Innocents in Paris, the cemetery of Old St Paul's was a 'pardon churchyard' and thus very popular. The paintings in London were destroyed when the cloisters were demolished in 1549, as recorded by John Stow in 1598.<sup>39</sup> However, the programme in London became so well known that *danse macabre* schemes elsewhere in England were often described as the 'Daunce of Poulys', or dance of [St] Paul's.<sup>40</sup> Its fame is vividly illustrated by the 1513 will of Thomas Cooke Esq., which stipulated that a brass near his chantry chapel in the parish church of St Laurence in Ludlow was to feature, besides images of himself and his wife Isabel, a third figure 'after the mortal after the daunce of powles', holding the text:

Man behold so as I am now, so shalt thou be  
Gold and silver shall make no plea  
This daunce to defende, but follow me<sup>41</sup>

This brass image of a Death-like figure, the reference to the uselessness of gold and silver, and its proximity to Cooke's chantry chapel provide an interesting comparison with two early-16th-century painted panels of Death and a young gallant on the stone screen of Robert Markham's chantry chapel in the church of St Mary Magdalene at Newark-on Trent (Notts.), which show the elegant youth vainly dipping his hand into his purse as Death holds out a flower to him with his right hand in a parody of courtship, while ominously pointing to the earth below with his left.<sup>42</sup> Yet the *danse* was not only found in a cemetery or tomb context. Murals were painted in other parts of churches, such as in the nave or choir, or near the church door, and the theme also existed in other media. We know that, beside other *danse macabre* wall-paintings outside London, Britain once boasted examples of the theme in stained glass, sculptural schemes, stained and painted cloths, and possibly also tapestry.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, most of these have been lost over the centuries. Only the north wall of the Guild Chapel in Stratford-upon-Avon still retains a complete medieval *danse macabre* mural with accompanying verses, as recorded by John Stow in 1576, but this scheme has remained hidden from view behind oak panelling since the early 1950s (Fig. 6), and one can only speculate about its present condition.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, it is likely that the Guild Chapel scheme at Stratford was financed with a bequest in the will of Sir Hugh Clopton, a former Lord Mayor of London, who retired to Stratford and lived in the vicinity of the chapel until his death in 1496; Clopton would obviously have been familiar with the famous *danse macabre* scheme at Old St Paul's Cathedral in London.

Despite the loss of these known examples, there remains sufficient evidence to attest to the theme's former popularity in the British Isles. Apart from the fairly large number of surviving manuscript versions of Lydgate's poem, there are examples of the theme in late medieval art to be found across the country, such as a large series of sculpted pairs of c. 1460 across the ribbed vault of the Lady Chapel in Rosslyn Chapel, Scotland (Fig. 7a, b); one remaining scene of Death and the Bishop in a stained-glass panel of c. 1500 in the north aisle of St Andrew's Church at Norwich; four *danse macabre* pairs on the late medieval painted screen of c. 1500 at Hexham Priory in Northumberland (Fig. 8);



FIG. 6. *Danse macabre* wall-painting in the Guild Chapel at Stratford-upon-Avon: reconstruction water-colour by William Puddephat

*Photo reproduced with kind permission from The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust*

and the two painted panels at Newark mentioned earlier.<sup>45</sup> There is also still a misericord in St George's Chapel, Windsor, which was carved between 1477 and 1483 with one central scene of Death capturing a rich man, flanked by two supporters showing Death paired with a labourer and (possibly) a gardener; three more 15th-century misericords with *danse macabre* supporters flanking scenes from the Seven Acts of Mercy at St Michael's church, Coventry, were destroyed in World War II.<sup>46</sup> The diversity of media in which British artists depicted the *danse macabre* in the second half of the 15th century is quite striking. The theme also inspired other authors, such as the Scottish poets William Dunbar and Robert Henryson, and references to the *danse* have been identified in two of the Chester Cycle plays.<sup>47</sup> From the late 15th century on, the *danse* also came to influence tomb iconography, both in its use of dialogue between Death and the viewer on the 1481 brass of John Rudyng at Biggleswade (Beds.), and in the ironical depiction of Death simultaneously despatching both the park-keeper James Gray and his prey on his 1591 brass at Hunsdon (Herts.).<sup>48</sup>

The theme also spread rapidly across France. Wall-paintings, or fragments of such schemes, can still be found in the churches of Kermaria and Kernascléden (Fig. 9) in Brittany, and in the abbey church at La Chaise-Dieu in Auvergne, but we know that there were once more such murals, some with and some without accompanying texts.<sup>49</sup> One may also find the *danse macabre* combined with the tale of the Three Living and the Three Dead, as in the village church at Meslay-le-Grenet near Chartres.<sup>50</sup> By serving as models, illustrated editions by Guyot Marchant and other publishers helped the *danse* to spread even further; the wall-painting of c. 1500 in the nave of the church at

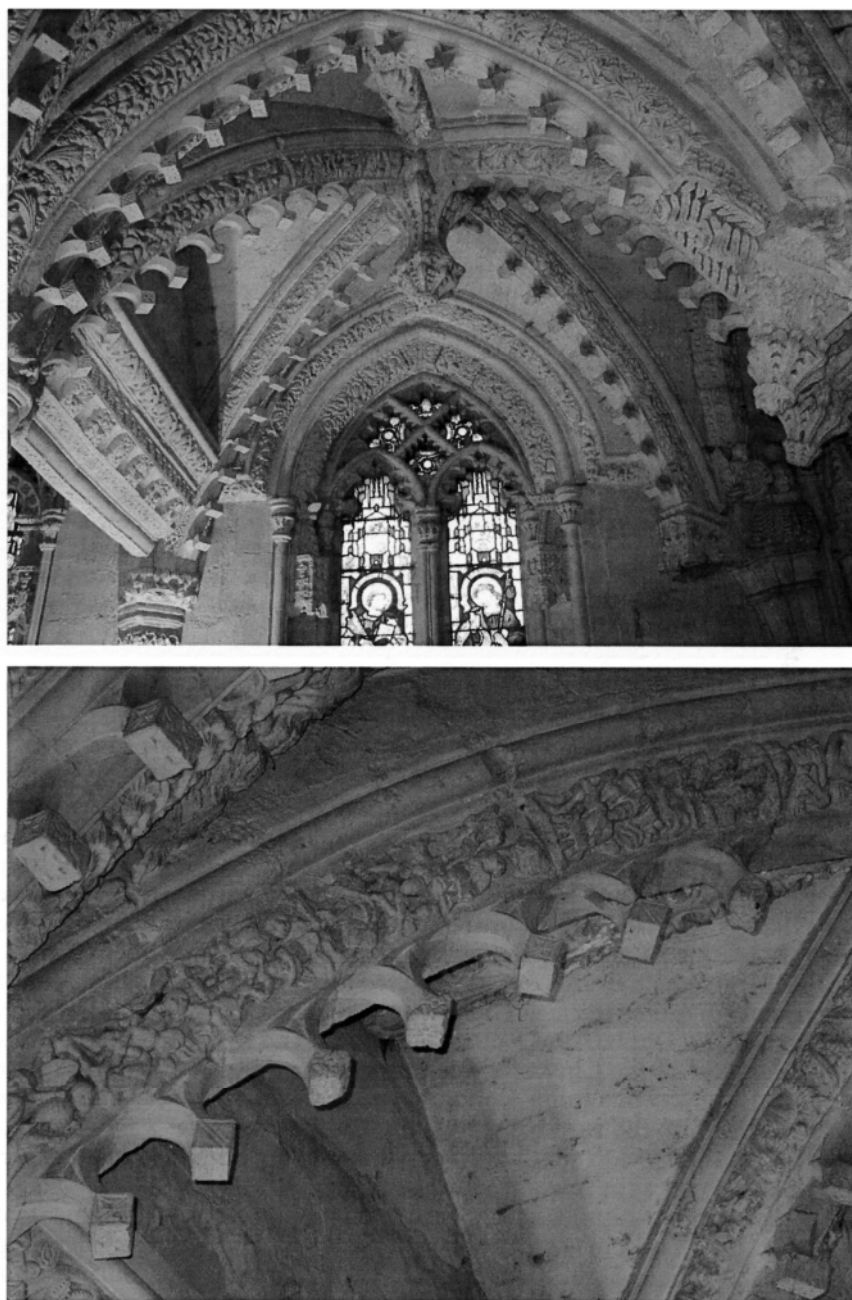


FIG. 7. *Danse macabre* carvings, mid- to late 15th century, Rosslyn Chapel: a, View of the vault of the Lady Chapel; b, Detail of the *danse macabre* carvings on the rib springing from the north-west corner of the vault

*Mr Stuart Beattie, Project Director, Rosslyn Chapel*



FIG. 8. Death and the King, panel from the medieval panelled screen of c. 1500 in the priory church at Hexham, Northumberland

Photo: Ian Roper, reproduced by kind permission of Professor Jane H. M. Taylor

La Ferté-Loupière is quite clearly based on Marchant's woodcuts and also features the Three Living and the Three Dead.<sup>51</sup>

Outside France and England, there was a distinct German *danse macabre* or *Totentanz* tradition, which may be based on an originally Latin prototype. A Latin-German version survives in a manuscript with texts compiled in Augsburg between 1443 and 1447 for Margaret of Savoy; although this does not feature illustrations or a proper dialogue between Death and his victim, it contains a scribal reference to what may have been an earlier *Totentanz* version in an illustrated codex.<sup>52</sup> A faded set of wall-paintings can still be seen just inside the west entrance of the Marienkirche in Berlin, and there were once other schemes in Lübeck, Ulm, and even two in Basel where Holbein is known to have lived and worked in the 1510s and '20s. Unfortunately, these latter four have all been destroyed, but some further offshoots are still extant in Metnitz (Carithia), Beram and Hrastovlje (both in Istria).<sup>53</sup> The *danse macabre* also reached other parts of Europe. In modern-day Italy, there remain several macabre wall-paintings, for example, in Clusone (Bergamo) and Carisolo (Trento), although Italian artists appear to have preferred a variation on the theme, usually known as the *Trionfi*



FIG. 9. Death and the Cardinal, mid- to late 15th century, fragment of a *danse macabre* mural in the south transept of the church at Kernasclédén (Brittany)

Author

*de la morte*.<sup>54</sup> In what is now Spain, a mural of eight dancing dead figures probably dating from the 16th century can still be found in the Capilla del Santo Cristo at Javier (Navarra), and there is also the *Danza general de la muerte*, a 15th-century poem containing a dialogue between Death and originally thirty-three characters.<sup>55</sup> The *danse macabre* also made its way to Denmark, as one can still see in the church at Nørre Alslev with its mural of c. 1480.<sup>56</sup> Only the Netherlands and Belgium now have little left to offer, although a sculpted *danse macabre* from the mid-15th century can still be observed on the south wall of the nave of the church of Notre-Dame du Sablon in Brussels; the cemetery chapel of Saint André in Binche also retains two wooden sculptures of 1537 showing Death with the emperor and Death with the pope, and there may once have been a *danse macabre* at Ypres, if a Dutch proverb can be relied upon as evidence.<sup>57</sup> One curious survival is the ensemble of two wooden figures of Death pursuing a youth of c. 1580 in the Noordbrabants Museum in 's-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc), which once formed part of the famous late medieval mechanical clock of the Last Judgement in the cathedral of St John in that city.<sup>58</sup>

The *danse macabre* was to become a popular subject for printmakers and publishers, especially on the Continent. Guyot Marchant was not alone in recognising its commercial scope, for other French printers soon followed his example. Nor was



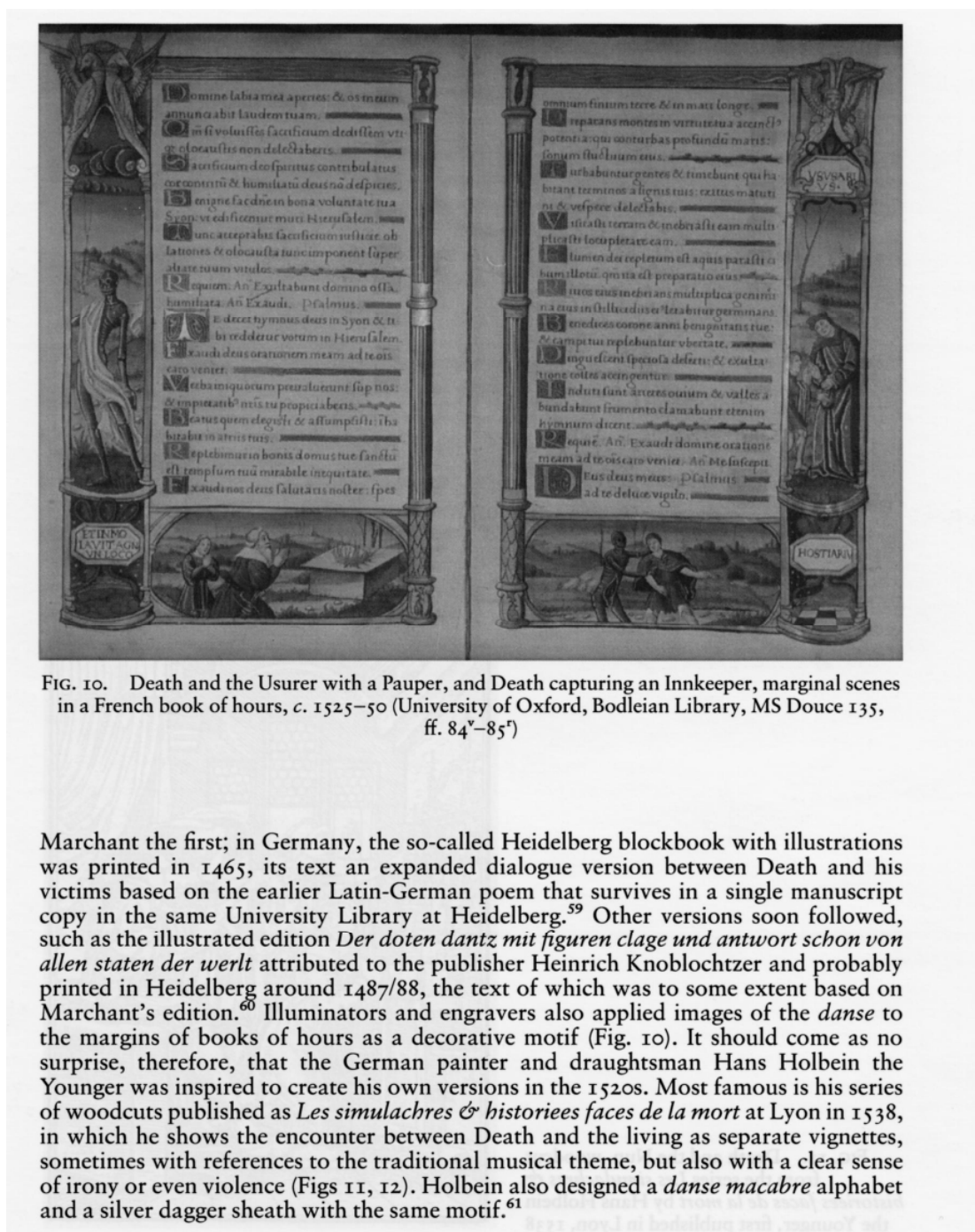


FIG. 10. Death and the Usurer with a Pauper, and Death capturing an Innkeeper, marginal scenes in a French book of hours, c. 1525–50 (University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 135, ff. 84<sup>v</sup>–85<sup>r</sup>)

Marchant the first; in Germany, the so-called Heidelberg blockbook with illustrations was printed in 1465, its text an expanded dialogue version between Death and his victims based on the earlier Latin-German poem that survives in a single manuscript copy in the same University Library at Heidelberg.<sup>59</sup> Other versions soon followed, such as the illustrated edition *Der doten dantz mit figuren clage und antwort schon von allen staten der werlt* attributed to the publisher Heinrich Knoblochtzter and probably printed in Heidelberg around 1487/88, the text of which was to some extent based on Marchant's edition.<sup>60</sup> Illuminators and engravers also applied images of the *danse* to the margins of books of hours as a decorative motif (Fig. 10). It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the German painter and draughtsman Hans Holbein the Younger was inspired to create his own versions in the 1520s. Most famous is his series of woodcuts published as *Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort* at Lyon in 1538, in which he shows the encounter between Death and the living as separate vignettes, sometimes with references to the traditional musical theme, but also with a clear sense of irony or even violence (Figs 11, 12). Holbein also designed a *danse macabre* alphabet and a silver dagger sheath with the same motif.<sup>61</sup>





FIG. 11. Death and the Empress, woodcut from the series *Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort* by Hans Holbein the Younger, first published in Lyon, 1538



FIG. 12. Death and the Nun, woodcut from the series *Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort* by Hans Holbein the Younger, first published in Lyon, 1538

FROM the start, the medieval *danse macabre* incorporated people from all walks of life, although they were mostly male; only Lydgate and some of the German versions also included a handful of women, such as the empress and the noblewoman. Touchingly life-like are the Latin-German manuscript text and the Heidelberg blockbook, which not only feature the infant calling in vain for help from his mother, but also the mother herself mourning the fact that both she and her son are forced to join Death's dance.<sup>62</sup> If one can trust the evidence of Matthäus Merian's 1621 engravings, the famous lost *Totentanz* mural of c. 1440 on the cemetery wall of the Dominican convent at Basel also included the mother, whose whole family is taken by Death: both her husband and her infant in its cradle.<sup>63</sup>

The crucial message of the *danse* is that everyone must die; Death makes no distinction between rich or poor, young or old. This is emphasised in the final words of the infant in the versions of Marchant, Lydgate and Knoblochtzer, respectively:

... Aussi tost meurt ieusne que vieux  
 ... As sone dyeth a yonge man as an olde.  
 ... As woill stirbet das iunge als das alde.<sup>64</sup>

It is the actual moment of death that is often emphasised, rather than the hereafter. Death is merely an intermediary, and not a messenger from either heaven or hell; God will decide the ultimate fate of each mortal, whereas Death is merely responsible for delivering the fatal summons. This is confirmed by Death himself to the 'Amme' or nurse in the 1520 printed Lübecker *Totentanz*, when he tells her that he takes 'Olth, junck, quaden unde ock de besten'; God 'wyl yslyken recht na den werken lonen' (God will reward each justly according to their deeds).<sup>65</sup> The theme fits in well with the 15th-century obsession with the process of dying, as we know it from such late medieval morality plays as *Everyman* and *The Castle of Perseverance*, or the popular *Ars Moriendi* texts that offered instructions on how to die a 'good death'.<sup>66</sup>

Many participants of the *danse* prove through their final speeches that they are ill prepared for Death, who usually arrives as an unwelcome spectre. Some resign themselves to their inescapable fate, like the infant in his cradle. Others show not merely surprise but even indignation, sometimes because their social positions forbid them to take part in such an uncivilised dance, as the king exclaims in Marchant's edition: 'Je nay point apris a danser / A danse et note si sauuage' (I have never learnt such a wild dance with such savage music).<sup>67</sup> His reaction is somewhat understandable: Death is invariably shown playing the types of musical instruments more suitable for entertaining the lower classes than for court dances, and his accompanying capers are anything but elegant. Various high-ranking figures in the 1465 Heidelberg blockbook complain about this final indignity that they are forced to suffer, an example being the bishop who bitterly remarks how he is being dragged along 'als eynen affen', like a performing monkey.<sup>68</sup> In general, Death seems to enjoy such reactions and he mocks his victims mercilessly in return. Thus, the cook in the Heidelberg blockbook is urged to 'heat up' the sluggards amongst his fellow-dancers with a spicy pepper sauce.<sup>69</sup> It is one of many examples of Death's little ironies. In the Knoblochtzer edition of c. 1487/88, Death invites a young man to apply his fancy manners and paces in this final *danse*, while the cardinal is told that his red hat and gown no longer impress anyone.<sup>70</sup> Death's grinning skull and his preposterous capers reaffirm his cruel mockery in the various medieval depictions of the *danse*.



FIG. 13. Death and the Bishop, c. 1487/88, from the woodcut edition *Der doten dantz mit figuren clage und antwort schon von allen staten der werlt* attributed to Heinrich Knoblochtzter

There is unmistakable social criticism in the *danse macabre*. The mightiest on earth are usually the first to encounter Death: the pope tends to open the procedures, forced to submit to the *danse* despite his dignity. The emperor and the king follow. Together with the cardinal, they form the four sole survivors on the Hexham screen (Fig. 8). Death often criticises his victims for their former ways of life. In Knoblochtzter's edition, the count is reminded of how notoriously arrogant he always was in his treatment of both the clergy and the laity; on the other hand, the artisan should have devoted more time to his soul's salvation instead of spending all day and night on his craft.<sup>71</sup> Unable to escape Death, many of the dying themselves lament their former sins. Knoblochtzter's bishop recognises too late that he will have to face the consequences of the many taxes he used to levy, and of his cruel oppression of the poor (Fig. 13).<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the duke acknowledges that he would have served God better in poverty, and the abbot also admits that he probably would have lived a more pious life if only he had remained a poor monk.<sup>73</sup>

Were ich eyn armer monch gewesen  
Got gedienet myt syngen vnd myt lesen  
Vnd hette myn sele woill bewart  
Frolich fur ich diße leste fart

Had I been a poor monk,  
and served God with singing and with reading  
and carefully guarded my soul,  
then I would have cheerfully made this final journey.

The 'amptgheselle' or young journeyman from Flanders in the 1520 Lübecker *Totentanz* edition, meanwhile, is equally unprepared for Death's summons, exclaiming that he would much rather accompany his mates to the pub, 'To der wyttlen Ulen efte to deme Roden Hanen' (to The White Owl or to The Red Cock).<sup>74</sup> *Plus ça change* . . .

Yet money and covetousness perhaps constitute the main root of all evil, according to the *danse macabre*; this certainly seems to be the message of the misericord at Windsor, the painted panels at Newark, and the lost brass of Thomas Cooke at

Ludlow, as mentioned earlier. One of the most despised characters in the Middle Ages was the usurer, who is told in Knoblochtzer's edition that he has wilfully squandered his salvation for gold and silver — a poor exchange! In his desperation, the usurer offers to build churches and return his ill-gotten wealth, if only he might have a little more time to show his remorse, but it is too late.<sup>75</sup> And there is the rub, for Death always arrives unexpectedly in the *danse macabre*, before his victim has another chance to do penance for his sins or gain absolution at the last minute. Dying a sudden death without receiving the last sacraments was every medieval person's nightmare — one that only St Christopher might protect one against. Marchant and Lydgate both present the usurer as being upbraided not only by Death, but also by a pauper who reminds him that usury is a grave sin that will cost him dear.<sup>76</sup> It is quite in character that the money which the usurer manages to slip into the pauper's hand at the last minute is intended as a loan, rather than as alms (compare Fig. 10).

Yet perhaps the most cynical picture of contemporary life can be found in Holbein's woodcut series, which was designed in the mid-1520s during the artist's stay in Basel, a city that once housed two famous *danse macabre* murals.<sup>77</sup> With this series, first published in 1538 with numerous new editions thereafter, we have obviously entered the Renaissance. Holbein does not present the theme as a continuous chain of dancers, but as a series of independent scenes in which Death surprises one victim after another; sometimes quite subtly, but often in a very violent manner. Wearing a cardinal's head, he hides behind other dignitaries while approaching the pope, and in another scene he acts as a cup-bearer to the king (a portrait of King Francis I of France). Other victims, however, are simply dragged off: the monk, the abbess, and the fat abbot. The nun is another target of Holbein's irony: kneeling in her cell before a small altar, she ogles the handsome young man playing a lute while seated on her bed. Her thoughts are clearly fixed on earthly pleasures, and she is blind to the fact that Death is about to snuff her candle (Fig. 12). The withered pendulous breasts that Death displays both here and in Holbein's woodcut of the empress (Fig. 11) emphasise once more the folly of female vanity.<sup>78</sup>

Whilst there were a few female characters both in Lydgate's poem and in various German *Totentanz* versions, the French *danse macabre* was originally an all-male affair. However, the success of his 1485 edition probably encouraged Guyot Marchant to add a special female *danse* to his 1486 edition, followed by a fully illustrated new edition in 1491.<sup>79</sup> The text of the *Danse macabre des Femmes* is usually attributed to the poet Martial d'Auvergne; the earliest known manuscript is dated 1482.<sup>80</sup>

Compared to the all-male version, the author of the *Danse macabre des Femmes* clearly faced a much more difficult task trying to find a sufficient number of female characters. After all, there were far fewer female professions than male. Consequently, many figures in the female *danse* simply mirror their male counterparts or otherwise derive their status from their husbands: thus, the queen, the duchess, and the wives of the knight and the squire.<sup>81</sup> Marital status is another distinguishing factor in the female *danse*, resulting in such types as the virgin, the bride, the newly-wedded wife, the pregnant wife, the spoilt housewife, the old spinster, and the widow. The most striking omission is, oddly enough, the mother, who does occur in the German tradition but not in Lydgate's version, either. The infant was apparently regarded as male by default, for the youngest participant in the female *danse* is the *jeune fille* or little girl.<sup>82</sup>

Despite these limitations and a degree of stereotyping, the chosen professions paint a fascinating picture of medieval womanhood. Besides women in service, such as the wetnurse and the chambermaid, the female *danse* also presents us with a range of



FIG. 14. Death, the Bigot and the Fool, woodcut from Guyot Marchant's 1491 edition of the *Grant danse macabre des femmes*

independent businesswomen, including a landlady and two types of tradeswomen: the *marchande* and the *revenderesse*. A very unusual type is Margot, the *sotte* or female fool with her fool's cap and staff, who ends Death's procession of female characters (Fig. 14). Inevitably, there are also a number of negative stereotypes, such as the prostitute and the witch. They all have to join the *danse*, headed by the queen. The wetnurse dies together with her infant charge, both falling victim to an 'espidimie' (probably bubonic plague).<sup>83</sup>

Perhaps the best-known character in the *Danse macabre des Femmes* is the little girl, whom the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga cited as one of the most touching examples of medieval childhood:<sup>84</sup>

*Ha a ma mere ie suis happee  
Vecy la mort qui me transporte  
Pour dieu quon garde ma poupee  
Mes cinq pierres ma belle cotte*

Oh, help, mother, I have been caught,  
see how Death is taking me away.  
For God's sake, take good care of my doll,  
my five stones, my pretty dress.

The girl's words may seem touchingly childlike, but it is not unlikely that there is a sting in the tail. Whilst it is quite natural for a small child to worry about her beloved toys, her concern for her pretty clothes is one of those typical traits of female vanity that medieval (male) authors enjoyed citing to criticise women, and the author of the *Danse macabre des Femmes* is no exception, as we shall see.

It is true that many (but not all) women in the *Danse macabre des femmes* are characterised as frivolous and vain: the duchess who thinks of little but her wealth and jewellery; the socialising *regente* who specialises in feasts and dancing; the abbess who



hates to leave her silver and gold cross to her successor; the *bourgeoise* or townswoman lamenting her pretty clothes and accessories; or the squire's wife who regrets not being able to wear her green dress on New Year's Day.<sup>85</sup> Quite appositely, Death reminds the latter: 'Par habit mainte femme peche' (many a woman commits sin by her dress). The wife of the knight is ordered by Death to strip quickly to take part in his *danse*; after all, the dead were buried simply in a shroud in the Middle Ages, as burial scenes in medieval art often illustrate. Yet in this instance, Death's words also carry strong sexual overtones, as well as a pun on the fact that the hunting-mad lady has now become the hunted herself.<sup>86</sup>

A few women are treated with a little more consideration. The prioress and the *cordeliere* (Poor Clare) are treated respectfully in view of their religious virtues, with only the slightest question about their true devotion; the *bigote* or religious hypocrite, on the other hand, is mocked for her sham behaviour (Fig. 14).<sup>87</sup> The young virgin, whom Death addresses as 'doulce fille et belle pucelle' (sweet girl and pretty maiden), is offered the comfort that 'virginité plaist bien a dieu' (virginity pleases God).<sup>88</sup> Likewise, the pregnant woman is advised not to worry, because God has good reasons for everything; Death may even show some consideration for her condition in his words 'Allons pas a pas bellement' (let us go nicely, step by step).<sup>89</sup> Quite poignant is the fact that the dying pregnant woman commends both her soul and her unborn child to God; the ultimate fate of unbaptised children — both born and unborn — was still a matter of great concern and dispute.<sup>90</sup>

Few of the women express any concern for their husbands, in the way the male author presents them, although admittedly none of their male counterparts seem to worry about their wives, either. The *femme mignote* or spoilt wife remembers her husband mainly for his material success in providing her with rings and dresses, whereas the shepherdess has more sentimental regrets about having to leave her lover behind, together with the pretty fields and flowers.<sup>91</sup> There are also vociferous complaints from the chambermaid, whose mistress had promised to marry her off with a dowry, but it would appear to be the marital status she craves as a just reward for her services, rather than any particular husband.<sup>92</sup> The widow alone is anxious about her young children, who will be left orphans by now being robbed of both parents; all she can do is hope that God will look after them.<sup>93</sup>

On the whole, it is earthly concerns that occupy most women even on the verge of death, according to the author of the *Danse macabre des Femmes*, and thus the reader knows that their souls' salvation will be in jeopardy. The *marchande* still worries about her shop and the fact that her employees will merely play away time in her absence. Only her final words show an inkling of remorse: 'Avarice decoit les gens' (avarice deceives people) — the warning that so many versions of the *danse* contain.<sup>94</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

It will have become clear that the *danse macabre* was a highly influential theme in late medieval and early Renaissance culture, both for artists and authors as well as for the wider circle of patrons. The famous murals in Paris, London and Basel must have attracted many visitors, while the printing press helped to spread the theme even further. Sir Thomas More referred in one of his works to the famous *danse* at St Paul's Cathedral, which was to be destroyed some fourteen years after his death at the hands of Henry VIII's executioner.<sup>95</sup> More's words clearly suggest that he expected his readers to be familiar with its theme and appearance.



**DOODEN DANS;  
Verbeeldende SCHAATSE RYDERS.**



*Negen-en-twintigste Plaat.  
Courage! saa' de Doot volgt na.  
Hoe ligtlyk waagt men lyf en leven.  
Op 't ys, om kortswyl, zonder noot!  
En dus berint men zig pas even  
Een duym twee drie maar van de Doot.*

FIG. 15. Death and the Skaters, engraving from Salomon van Rusting's book *Het schoutoneel des Doots, of Dooden Dans*, first published in 1707

FIG. 16. Death and the Antiquaries, print designed by Thomas Rowlandson and published by Rudolph Ackermann in 1816 in the series *The English Dance of Death*



Such was the appeal of the *danse macabre* that it remained popular throughout the following centuries, albeit that its style and emphasis changed according to the spirit of the times.<sup>96</sup> One can already detect more than a hint of *double entendre* in Death's words to the wife of the knight in the *Danse macabre des Femmes*, and not long after Death and the Maiden developed into an independent and erotically charged theme that was to inspire artists such as Hans Baldung Grien and, much later, Edvard Munch and the composer Franz Schubert.<sup>97</sup> Nor were *danse macabre* murals a typically medieval phenomenon; new versions were painted Luzern and Bleibach, to name but two, while earlier murals were either restored or completely repainted by later artists, which is what happened in Lübeck.<sup>98</sup> Holbein's series of woodcuts was copied decades later by the painter Rubens,<sup>99</sup> and in 1707 a Dutch physician called Salomon van Rusting published a moralising version entitled *Het schoutoneel des Doots, of Dooden Dans*, which was subsequently translated into German (Fig. 15).<sup>100</sup> Just over a century later, Thomas Rowlandson designed a large series of prints that were published between 1814 and 1816 as *The English Dance of Death*, in which Death preys on people in a contemporary setting, often with tragi-comical results. One example from this series is the print of Death and the Antiquaries, which was published in 1816 (Fig. 16) with the caption 'Death, jealous of his rights, stands sentry / Over this strange, burglarious entry'. It shows a group of scholars around the opened tomb of a king; a macabre scene that may have been inspired by the famous opening of the coffin of Charles I at St George's Chapel, Windsor, in April 1813, when some royal bones were apparently removed. Rowlandson's thoughts on the subject may be gauged from the handwritten text attributed to him on the back of a preparatory drawing for this print in the Huntingdon Library, which shows the background as an open ruin:<sup>101</sup>

... And questionless here in this open Court  
[... ] some men lye enterred  
Loved the Church so well & gave so largely to't  
They thought it should have canopied their bones  
Till Domesday, but all things have their end . . .

Thus, for the body, there may not be eternal rest even after death, but Rowlandson wickedly shows Death preying upon the oblivious antiquaries too focussed on the corpse before them to notice the skeletal threat behind their backs.

Rowlandson, Schubert, Saint-Saëns, Munch, Disney, the Swedish film-director Ingmar Bergman with his 1956 film *Det sjunde inseglet* (The Seventh Seal), and many others — all have been inspired in different ways by an originally medieval theme that continues to fascinate people. The reason is obvious. We may not like it, but we all must face Death sooner or later.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is a revised and expanded version of an article published in the Dutch medieval journal *Madoc* in November 2002; a lecture on the subject was presented to the BAA in London on 8 January 2003. I should like to thank Miss Sally Badham, Dr James Binns, Dr Cecil Clough, Dr Miriam Gill, Mrs Netteke Hillen, Mr Fred Kloppenborg, Mr Reinhard Lamp, Dr Phillip Lindley, Dr Martine Meuwese and Mr Simon Watney for their invaluable help, comments and suggestions.

## NOTES

1. The German Europäische Totentanz-Vereinigung is particularly active with an annual conference and proceedings, a monthly Newsletter entitled *Totentanz Aktuell*, and a homepage at <www.totentanz-online.de>. Francis Douce was one of the earliest scholars in Europe to study the *danse macabre*; he published his findings in *The Dance of Death, exhibited in elegant engravings on wood with a dissertation on the several representations of that subject, but more particularly on those ascribed to Macaber and Hans Holbein* (London 1833); see also *The Douce Legacy: An Exhibition to Commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Bequest of Francis Douce (1757–1834)*, exhibition catalogue (Oxford 1984), esp. 101–07. The 1935 Reginald Taylor Prize Essay was by E. Carleton Williams, 'The Dance of Death in Painting and Sculpture in the Middle Ages', *JBAA*, 3rd ser., 1 (1937), 229–57. The last overall study in English is J. M. Clark, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Glasgow 1950), although there has since also been an English edition of the French *Danse macabre des femmes* in A. T. Harrison ed., with a chapter by S. L. Hindman, *The Danse Macabre of Women: Ms. fr. 995 of the Bibliothèque Nationale* (Kent/London 1994). Short sections on the Dance of Death can also be found in P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London 1996), 153–59, and E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven/London 1992), 303–08. Otherwise, the main literature on the subject is either in German, French or Italian, including Jean Batany's article 'Une image en négatif du fonctionnalisme social: les Danses Macabré', in J. H. M. Taylor ed., *Dies Illa: Death in the Middle Ages*, Proceedings of the 1983 Manchester Colloquium (Liverpool 1984), 15–27.
2. An example of this is a recent article by H. Kokott, 'Todeserleben und Totentänze im Mittelalter', *Der Deutschunterricht*, 1 (2002), 11, which lists Bohemia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland, in addition to the more obvious countries, but fails to mention Great Britain. This all too common omission was acknowledged by H. Schulte Herbrüggen, 'Der Totentanz von Rosslyn (Schottland). Ein Beitrag zu einem neuen Forschungsvorhaben', *Jahrbuch der Universität Düsseldorf 1981–83* (Düsseldorf 1986), 165: 'Während der kontinentaleuropäischer Totentanz durch eine Fülle hervorragender Studien weithin als erforscht gelten darf, herrscht gegenüber dem britischen Totentanz selbst in Fachkreisen verbreitet Unkenntnis.' Herbrüggen himself did devote a number of articles to the *danse macabre* in medieval England, but typically these were all published in German. One recent Italian volume on death (including some essays on the *danse macabre*) has, however, been translated into English: *Humana Fragilitas: The Themes of Death in Europe from the 13th to the 18th Century*, ed. A. Tenenti (Clusone 2002). It contains a chapter on macabre themes and the Dance of Death in England by Maria Ghirardo, but this unfortunately relies heavily on Douce and on Clark's book, and contains several incorrect interpretations and dates.
3. K. Meyer-Baer, *Music of the Spheres and the Dance of Death: Studies in Musical Iconology* (1970, repr. New York 1984), esp. chapter XI, 'Music as a Symbol of Death in Antiquity', 224–41.
4. Meyer-Baer, *Music of the Spheres*, esp. 235–52, 327–33.
5. Meyer-Baer, *Music of the Spheres*, fig. 153; also K. M. D. Dunbabin, 'Sic erimus cuncti . . . The Skeleton in Graeco-Roman Art', *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 101 (1986), 185–255, esp. 224–28 and figs 37–42. I am very grateful to Dr Martin Henig for the reference to Dunbabin's article.
6. Dunbabin, 'Sic erimus cuncti', 190, 239–40 and fig. 49.
7. Dunbabin, 'Sic erimus cuncti', 185–255; also Meyer-Baer, *Music of the Spheres*, 292–93.
8. A. Corvisier, *Les danses macabres* (Paris 1998), 20. There are often small but crucial differences in the ways the first line is quoted in the literature, e.g. 'Je fis de macabre la danse' or 'Je fis de Macabré la danse'. One interpretation, which seems the most likely one, is that Macabré was originally the name of a person. John Lydgate refers in his Middle-English poem to 'Macabrees daunce' and to 'Machabre the doctoure'; see the version in MS Ellesmere 26/A.13 in F. Warren, *The Dance of Death*, Early English Text Society, os 181 (London 1931), l. 24 and stanza LXXXI.
9. See the discussion in Clark, *Dance of Death*, 91, and also H. Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz. Entstehung, Entwicklung, Bedeutung* (1954, revised edn Cologne/Graz 1968), 118–24.
10. A recent book on this theme is *Vifs nous sommes . . . morts nous serons. La Rencontre des trois morts et des trois vifs dans la peinture murale en France*, ed. Groupe de Recherches sur les Peintures Murales (Vendôme 2001). See also H. Utzinger and B. Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres* (1996), 64–72, 301–02, and B. Terrier, 'Le Dict des trois morts et des trois vifs et sa représentation murale dans le centre de France', *Art Sacré* 14: Du gothique flamboyant à l'art de la Renaissance, Cahiers de Rencontre avec le Patrimoine religieux (2001), 128–43, with thanks to Dr Paul Cockerham for alerting me to this article.
11. E. W. Tristram, *English Wall Painting of the Fourteenth Century* (London 1955), 112–14; A. Caiger-Smith, *English Medieval Mural Paintings* (Oxford 1963), 45–49. See also A. Baker, 'The Interpretation and Iconography of the Longthorpe Paintings', *Archaeologia*, 96 (1955), 350–57; E. C. Rouse, *Longthorpe Tower, Cambridgeshire* (1987, reprint London 1998), 4–6; S. C. Hall and L. Jewitt, *Haddon Hall: An Illustrated Guide* (Buxton 1871).
12. L. F. Sandler, *The Psalter of Robert de Lisle in the British Library* (London/Oxford 1983), 42–43.

13. See S. Oosterwijk, 'Lessons in "Hopping": The Dance of Death and the Chester Mystery Cycle', *Comparative Drama*, 36 (2003), 249–87, but esp. 276–77.

14. John Baret, his chantry and his tomb are extensively discussed in G. McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (1989, repr. Chicago/London 1994), 72–79. See also K. Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, California Studies in the History of Art vol. XV (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1973), 91; M. Aston, 'Death', in R. Horrox ed., *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge 1994), esp. 224–27; R. Marks and P. Williamson ed., *Gothic: Art for England 1400–1547*, exhibition catalogue (London 2003), cat. 331.

15. Cohen, *Metamorphosis*, 17–18, 67 (n. 67) and 68, and figs 14–15. It is interesting to note that King Edward IV also originally stipulated a cadaver effigy for his own tomb, although this wish was never fulfilled; see Cohen, *Metamorphosis*, 122.

16. The extensive literature on cadaver tombs includes Cohen, *Metamorphosis*; H. M. Roe, 'Cadaver Effigial Monuments in Ireland', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 99 (1969), 1–19; P. King, 'The Iconography of the "Wakeman Cenotaph" in Tewkesbury Abbey', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 103 (1985), 141–48; E. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (London 1992), esp. 63–66; Binski, *Medieval Death*, 139–52; S. Badham, 'Status and Salvation: The Design of Medieval English Brasses and Incised Slabs', *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society*, 15, pt 5 (1996), 413–65, esp. 454–65. Cadaver monuments are also discussed in C. Platt, *King Death: The Black Death and its Aftermath in Late-Medieval England* (London 1996), ch. 9, 'Architecture and the Arts', esp. 153–60, 163–64, 191.

17. See for possible origins in popular culture, for example, R. Sörries, 'Der monumentale Totentanz', in W. Neumann ed., *Tanz der Toten — Todestanz. Der monumentale Totentanz im deutschsprachigen Raum*, exhibition catalogue Museum für Sepulkralkultur Kassel (Dettelbach 1998), esp. 17–24; C. Mörgeli and U. Wunderlich, 'Tanzende Tote in einer Aargauer Handschrift des 14. Jahrhunderts', in *L'art macabre* 3, ed. U. Wunderlich, *Jahrbuch der Europäischen Totentanz-Vereinigung* (Düsseldorf 2002), 144–62; also K. H. Broekhuijsen, 'The Legend of the Grateful Dead: A Misinterpreted Miniature in the *Très Riches Heures* of Jean de Berry', in 'Als ich can'. *Liber Amicorum in Memory of Professor Dr. Maurits Smeyers*, ed. B. Cardon, J. Van der Stock and D. Vanwijnsberghe (Paris/Louvain/Dudley 2002), 213–30. I am grateful to Dr Martine Meuwese for providing me with a copy of Broekhuijsen's article.

18. Clark, *Dance of Death*, 92–93 mentions a record in the church archives at Caudebec in Normancy of a drama performed in the church in 1393, as well as evidence of performances at Bruges in 1449 and Besançon in 1453; see also Warren, *Dance of Death*, x–xi, and Corvisier, *Les danses macabres*, 23. One much later performance in 1638 in Berne is of interest not only because it is well documented, but also because some of the costumes are preserved in the Historisches Museum; see A. Tamboer, 'Dodendansmaskers en adamskostuum. Een dodendansopvoering in 1638', in *De dodendans in de kunsten*, ed. L. P. Grijp, A. Tamboer and E. Hoek (Utrecht 1989), 33–37, and L. P. Grijp and A. Tamboer, 'Dodendansen in levenden lijve', in *Memento Mori — Dansen met de Dood: De dodendans in boek en prent*, ed. L. Kerssemakers, P. van Pagée and P. Visser (Amsterdam 2000), 48–67.

19. Clark, *Dance of Death*, 93–94. The passage in John of Fordun, *Scotichronicon cum Supplementis ac Continuacione Walteri Boweri, Insulae Sancti Columbae Abbatis*, ed. W. Goodall (Edinburgh 1769), vol. II, lib. X, cap. XL, 128, reads:

Ubi in nuptiis regalibus dum omnia ritè fierent, factum est tale ludi simulacrum per modum processionis inter catervas discumbentium, praecedentibus in arte illa doctis, cum multimodis organis musicis et tragoedicis instrumentis organicis, aliisque post eos vicissim et interpolatim choream militarem pompaticè agentibus, insecutus est unus, de quo penè dubitari potuit utrum homo esset, an phantasma: qui, ut umbra, magis labi videbatur quam pedetentim transire. Quo quasi oculis omnium evanescente, quievit tota illa processio phainatica, melos tepuit, musicum dissolutum est, et chorealis phalanx dirigit citiùs insperato. Risus dolore miscetur, et extrema gaudii luctus occupat, et post tantam gloriam regnum ingloriè ululabat, dum postmodum in brevi seipsum perdidit, et consequenter regem.

I am very grateful to Dr James Binns and Mr Reinhard Lamp for elucidating this rather difficult text for me.

20. Clark, *Dance of Death*, 101–02; Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz*, chapter II, esp. 38–43; Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 60–63; E. P. Hammond, 'Latin Texts of the Dance of Death', *Modern Philology*, 8 (1910–11), 399–410.

21. M. Clausnitzer, H. Freytag and S. Warda, 'Das Redentiner — ein Lübecker Osternspiel. Über das Redentiner Osternspiel von 1464 und den Totentanz der Marienkirche in Lübeck von 1463', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 132:2 (2003), 191–92. Also H. Freytag ed., *Der Totentanz der Marienkirche in Lübeck und der Nikolaikirche in Reval (Tallinn). Edition, Kommentar, Interpretation, Rezeption*, Niederdeutsche Studien, 39 (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 1993), 14ff., 38.

22. There has been some confusion about the much earlier date of 1312 for the Klingenthal mural in Basel, which one finds in Warren, *Dance of Death*, 97, and elsewhere; however, this is based on the misreading of the

date of 1512 commemorating some minor repainting work done to the mural. See R. Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes: die mittelalterlichen Totentänze und ihr Nachleben* (Bern/Munich 1980), 188–89; also Williams, 'The Dance of Death', 249.

23. C. Reynolds, "'Les Angloys, de leur droicte nature, veullent touzjours guerree'": Evidence for Painting in Paris and Normandy, c. 1420–1450', in *Power, Culture, and Religion in France c. 1350–c. 1550*, ed. C. Allmand (Woodbridge 1989), 42–43. Also Warren, *Dance of Death*, x; Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz*, 141–55; Clark, *Dance of Death*, 22–24; Corvisier, *Les danses macabres*, 37–39; Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 167–70; Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 82–83. See also H. Couzy, 'L'Église des Saints-Innocents à Paris', *Bulletin Monumental*, 130, IV (1972), 279–302.

24. M. Camille, *Master of Death: The Lifeless Art of Pierre Remiet, Illuminator* (New Haven/London 1996), 195. See also Clark, *Dance of Death*, 22, and Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 82.

25. See the evocative description of the cemetery in J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (1919, transl. 1924, repr. Harmondsworth 1982), esp. 143–44.

26. Scholars appear to be divided on the date of its destruction; for example, G. Kaiser ed., *Der tanzende Tod: Mittelalterliche Totentänze* (Frankfurt am Main 1983), 71, claims it happened as early as 1529. Instead, Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 83, and Clark, *Dance of Death*, 24, suggest the mural was lost in 1669 when its wall was demolished in order to widen the rue de la Ferronnerie, which Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 167, claims to have happened in 1634. Most sources agree that the cemetery itself was destroyed in 1785; Couzy, 'L'Église des Saints-Innocents', describes the destruction of the church in 1787.

27. The gender of Death and of the dancing skeletons in the *danse macabre* is discussed in, amongst others, Kurtz, *The Dance of Death*, 27–28, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 40, and chapter XIII, 'Sex of Death', 209–13. J. H. M. Taylor, 'Que signifiait danse au quinzième siècle? Danser la Danse macabre', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 18 (1991), n. 24, points out that two BNF manuscript copies claiming to be based on the wall-painting at Les Innocents both use 'le mort'. The theme of the gender of death throughout the ages is discussed in K. S. Guthke, *The Gender of Death: A Cultural History in Art and Literature* (1997, transl. Cambridge 1997), which deals with the personification of Death in ch. 1, and with the Middle Ages especially in ch. 2.

28. Worm-infested figures of Death or the dead can be found in some German versions, e.g. the Knoblochster edition. The scythe was traditionally the attribute of Saturn and of the Greek god Chronos, through whom it became the attribute of Father Time. In post-medieval iconography, Death and Father Time often share the same attributes, including the hour-glass. The spade and the coffin are the types of grave-digger symbols that can be found especially in such late medieval French cemeteries and charnel-houses as the Aître Saint-Maclou in Rouen, which features below a wooden frieze of such symbols the remains of a sculpted *danse macabre* series. Iconographical contamination also saw these same symbols become the attributes of the Three Dead. I am grateful to Mr Simon Watney for sharing some of his ideas about the iconography of Father Time and his attributes with me.

29. See note 21 above. Also compare Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz*, esp. ch. III and his 'reconstruction' of the so-called Würzburg *Totentanz* text, and the comments in Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 276–77 and n. 1.

30. Extensive information on manuscript M.359, including a bibliography, can be found on the CORSAIR website of the Pierpont Morgan Library. The preliminary observations in this paper are based on a study of a microfilm of the manuscript.

31. Camille, *Master of Death*, 159–60 and fig. 114, claims that the manuscript was 'made for the Englishman John, Duke of Bedford, while regent of Paris in the 1420s', which is refuted in the bibliographical entry on the CORSAIR website by the Pierpont Morgan Library.

32. K. Varty, 'Villon's Three *Ballades du Temps Jadis* and the Danse Macabre', in *Littera et Sensus. Essays on Form and Meaning in Medieval French Literature Presented to John Fox*, ed. D. A. Trotter (Exeter 1989), 73–93.

33. Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 166–67 and figs 3, 34, 243; also Clark, *Dance of Death*, 84–85; Varty, 'Villon's Three *Ballades du Temps Jadis*', 78 and pl. 1. According to Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz*, 102, the scheme at Amiens Cathedral was destroyed in 1817.

34. Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 166–67.

35. See Warren, *Dance of Death*, stanzas III en LXXXIV.

36. Warren, *Dance of Death*, xxiv–xxxi. Also F. Kloppenborg, 'Danse macabre de Londres: le commanditaire et son cercle d'amis / The London Dance of Death: The Patron and his Circle of Friends', *Actes du 11e Congrès International d'études sur les Danses macabres et l'art macabre en général* (Meslay-le-Grenet 2003), 9–24.

37. For example, there are strong textual resonances between the verses of Death and the Child in both Lydgate's poem and the Latin-German and Heidelberg blockbook versions. See S. Oosterwijk, "'Muss ich tanzen und kann nit gan?'" Das Kind im mittelalterlichen Totentanz', in U. Wunderlich, *L'art macabre* 3,



162–80; a revised and expanded English version of this paper is due to appear in a volume of essays edited by J. Rosenthal. Further study into possible links between Lydgate's poem and the Latin-German *Totentanz* tradition is required before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

38. Kloppenborg, 'The London Dance of Death', 9–24.

39. J. Stow, *A Survey of London* (London 1598), 264. See also Warren, *Dance of Death*, xxiv; Clark, *Dance of Death*, 11.

40. Warren, *Dance of Death*, xxvii, mentions that two manuscripts in group B of Lydgate's poem are also actually entitled 'The Daunce of Powlys' and 'Daunce of Poules', respectively. See also G. McMurray Gibson, 'East Anglian Drama and the Dance of Death: Some Second Thoughts on the "Dance of Paul's"', *Early Drama, Art, and Music Newsletter*, 5 (Autumn 1982), 1–9.

41. H. T. Weyman, 'Chantry Chapels in Ludlow Church', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 3rd series, IV (1904), 359–60; also Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 304.

42. See M. C. Gill, 'Late Medieval Wall Painting in England: Content and Context (c. 1330–c. 1530)', unpublished PhD thesis (Courtauld Institute 2002), 403, 405 and pl. 6.8. Although the flower could be a mockery of courtship, roses or flowers were often used allegorically as a symbol of transitoriness and the brevity of life. A comparison could be made between the Newark paintings and the late-15th-century painted roodloft in the parish church at Sparham (Norfolk), where an elegantly dressed female skeletal figure holds out a flower to a male corpse, although in this case one cannot describe the pair as a proper *danse macabre* because there are no living figures combined with the dead; see D. Turner, 'Roodloft in Sparham Church, Norfolk', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 26 (1846), 135–36. Mention should also be made of the carved *danse macabre* scene on the chantry chapel of Lord de la Warr (d. 1526) and his wife (d. 1532) in the church of St Mary and St Blaise at Boxgrove (Sussex), but this will be discussed in a future publication of *danse macabre* iconography on tomb monuments based on papers given at conferences at Lübeck and Rouen in 2003, a preliminary version of which appeared as "'The sodeyne vyolence of cruel dethe": Death and *Danse Macabre* Iconography on Tomb Monuments', in the *Actes du Congrès*, 209–22.

43. Clark, *Dance of Death*, 7–21. Stained and painted cloths at Long Melford, Bristol and Salisbury are discussed in F. Kloppenborg, 'Totentänze in der religiösen Gebrauchskunst Englands', in *L'art macabre 1*, ed. U. Wunderlich, *Jahrbuch der Europäischen Totentanz-Vereinigung* (Düsseldorf 2000), 53–67. For Long Melford, see also D. Dymond and C. Paine, *The Spoil of Melford Church: The Reformation in a Suffolk Parish* (Ipswich 1989), 23 and n. 78; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 304. Francis Douce and James Clark both claimed that Henry VIII's inventory in BL MS Harley 1419 listed a *danse macabre* tapestry amongst the 'hangings of Arras' in the Tower, but this 'one pece of Macabrune lyned with canvas' was instead interpreted as referring to Judas Maccabaeus in D. Starkey ed., *The Inventory of King Henry VIII: Society of Antiquaries MS 129 and British Library MS Harley 1419*, vol. 1 (London 1998), 180, item 8995, without further explanation.

44. W. Puddephat, 'The Mural Paintings of the Dance of Death in the Guild Chapel of Stratford-upon-Avon', *Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*, 76 (1958), 29–35; C. Davidson, *The Guild Chapel Wall Paintings at Stratford-upon-Avon* (New York 1988); Gill, 'Late Medieval Wall Painting', 403–04 and pl. 6.9. According to Davidson, p. 11, Stow added a mention of the Stratford scheme in his copy of Leland's *Itinerary*: 'About the body of this chaple was curiously paynted the Daunce of Deathe commonly called the Daunce of Powles, because the same was sometyme there paynted abowte the cloysters on the north-west syd of Powles churches, pulled downe by the Duke of Somarset, *tempore Edward 6.*'

45. For the Rosslyn Chapel carvings, see Herbrüggen, 'Der Totentanz von Rosslyn'. The Norwich panel was illustrated and briefly discussed in R. Marks, *Stained Glass in England during the Middle Ages* (London 1993), 84 and pl. 67, although not identified as a *danse macabre* scene. However, it was clearly part of a larger scheme, as proved by the antiquarian John Kilpatrick who in his Church Notes for St Andrew's church dated September 1712 (now in the Norwich Record Office, NRO, MC 5000/14) described the window as showing the emperor, pope, cardinal, and 'all degrees of professions to carpenter and other mechanical trades', adding that 'ye greater part of ther figures are quite defaced'. I am extremely grateful to Mr Fred Kloppenborg for sharing this information with me.

46. For the Coventry misericords, see M. Dormer Harris, 'The Misericords of Coventry', *Birmingham Archaeological Society Transactions and Proceedings*, 50 (1927), 246–66, but esp. 262–64 and pl. XXXI v–vii. It is highly probable that there were originally seven misericords showing the Acts of Mercy, of which the lost four may also have featured *danse macabre* pairs. The author is preparing a publication on *danse macabre* iconography on medieval misericords and choir-stalls, based on a paper given at the International Misericord Conference held in Sheffield in July 2003.

47. Oosterwijk, 'Lessons in "Hopping"'.

48. See Oosterwijk, "'The sodeyne vyolence'", and also the examples in the author's contributions to the Picture Library of the Monumental Brass Society at <www.mbs-brasses.co.uk>.



49. Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 162–66; see also Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, *passim*. It is impossible to give an accurate number of lost *danse macabre* schemes, as records are sometimes confusing or are simply no longer extant, although there may be good reason to believe that a scheme once existed. See also the example of Ypres in note 57 below, or the case of the St Bertin altarpiece by Simon Marmion discussed earlier.
50. Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 175–76; Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 147–49. The scheme at Meslay-le-Grenet was clearly based on a printed *danse macabre* version.
51. Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 176–77; Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 151. This church also features a painted scene of the Three Living and the Three Dead.
52. Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz*, 44–117; Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, esp. 31–39, 149. For the German *Totentanz*, see Neumann, *Tanz der Toten — Todestanz*; also ‘Ihr müßt alle nach meiner Pfeife tanzen.’ *Totentänze vom 15. bis 20. Jahrhundert aus den Beständen der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel und der Bibliothek Otto Schäfer Schweinfurt*, exhibition catalogue Herzog August Bibliothek nr. 77 (Wiesbaden 2000).
53. Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 191–94 and pl. 2, 97–99, 130, 132; Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 133, 145–46, 167–68.
54. For a recent survey of the theme in Italy, see P. Scaramella, ‘The Italy of Triumphs and of Contrasts’, in Tenenti, *Humana Fragilitas*, 25–98.
55. Clark, *Dance of Death*, 41–59; F. Whyte, *The Dance of Death in Spain and Catalonia* (Baltimore 1931); J. Saugnieux, *Les Danses Macabres de France et d’Espagne et leurs prolongements littéraires* (Lyon 1972); E. Zaira Merlo, ‘Death and Disillusion. An Iconographic and Literary Itinerary in Christian Spain’, in Tenenti, *Humana Fragilitas*, 219–50. For the Javier mural, see Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 222. Of course, Navarra was not yet part of Spain at the time when this mural was painted.
56. N. M. Saxtorph, *Danmarks kalkmalerier* (1997), 159. See also the website of Danish wall-paintings by James Mills at <[www.akademisk.dk/boeger/500-1741-1.html](http://www.akademisk.dk/boeger/500-1741-1.html)> and Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 133–34.
57. D. Th. Enklaar, *De dodendans: Een cultuurhistorische studie* (Amsterdam 1950), 12–13. The sculpted *danse macabre* in the church of Notre-Dame du Sablon in Brussels is discussed in I. Hans-Collas, ‘Les écoinçons sculptés du XVe siècle de l’église Saint-Martin de Hal et de Notre-Dame du Sablon à Bruxelles: les Trois morts et les trois vifs et la Danse macabre’, in *Actes du Congrès*, 325–37, esp. 334–36 and fig. 7. For Binche, see also Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 219. The Dutch expression ‘hij ziet er uit als de dood van Ieperen’ (he looks like Death from Ypres), which is used to describe an extremely thin person, is interpreted by some as a reference to the plague that struck that city. However, a comparison with the German variant ‘he sät üt als de Dod van Lübeck’ suggests that both may refer to *danse macabre* wall-paintings that once existed in both cities. See F. A. Stoett, *Nederlandse spreekwoorden, spreekwijzen, uitdrukkingen en gezegden, naar hun oorsprong en betekenis verklaard* (Zutphen 1915), part 1, 155 and notes.
58. A. Lehr, ‘Het Oordeelspel in de Sint-Jan’, in *In Buscoducis. Kunst uit de Bourgondische tijd te ’s-Hertogenbosch. De cultuur van late middeleeuwen en renaissance. Wetenschappelijke Bijdragen*, ed. A. M. Koldewey (Maarssen 1990), 403–10 and pl. 6. The Last Judgement clock is usually dated around 1513, which would make the two sculptures a later addition. There are currently plans to reconstruct the whole clock. Another painted *danse macabre* scheme of c. 1630 occurs on the cathedral organ. See also C. Peeters, *De Sint Janskathedraal te ’s-Hertogenbosch* (The Hague 1985), 363, 366. I am grateful to Mr Fred Kloppenborg for this second example.
59. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 276–329. See also Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 152–53, 189–91 and pls 100–25, 127.
60. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 108–93, and also the facsimile edition with transcriptions by M. Lemmer, *Der Heidelberg Totentanz von 1485* (Frankfurt am Main/Leipzig 1991). Although the Knoblochtzer text seems to echo Marchant’s in many places, e.g. in the words of the infant, there are distinct differences in the order and choice of characters between both versions, most notably the inclusion of three female types: the nun, the *bürgerin*, and the maiden.
61. Copies after Holbein’s *Totentanz* alphabet and woodcut series were published in Douce, *Holbein’s Dance of Death*. See also W. L. Gundersheimer, *The Dance of Death by Hans Holbein the Younger: A Complete Facsimile of the Original 1538 edition of Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort* (New York 1971). For the dagger sheath, see C. Mechel, *Der Todtentanz oder Triumph des Todes von Hans Holbein mit 48 getreu nach den Original-Holzschnitten in kupfer gestochenen Blättern* (Uttweil am Bodensee 1839), no. 48.
62. Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz*, 317, 323; Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 37–38; Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 326–29.
63. This ‘Großbaseler Totentanz’, as opposed to the somewhat later ‘Kleinbaseler Totentanz’ in Klingenthal, is usually regarded as a commemoration of the major outbreak of the plague in the city in 1439; only a few

fragments of the mural are still preserved in the Historical Museum at Basel. See Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 194–97, and Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 183–88 and pl. 133. The lost Klingenthal mural featured the infant and the mother separately, in accordance with the ‘Oberdeutsche’ tradition of the Latin-German and Heidelberger blockbook text versions.

64. For Death and the infant, see Oosterwijk, ‘Muss ich tanzen und kann nit gan?’, and also ‘*Litel enfaunt that were but late borne*’: *The Image of the Infant in Medieval Culture in North-Western Europe* (in progress), ch. 5.

65. T. Sodmann ed., *Dodendantz Lübeck 1520: Faksimileausgabe mit Textabdruck, Glossar und einem Nachwort* (Vreden/Bredervoort 2001), facsimile and transcription, 18–19; Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 159–60; Clark, *Dance of Death*, 82–83. Two other, much longer illustrated versions were published in Lübeck in 1489 and 1496. See also ‘*Ihr müßt alle nach meiner Pfeife tanzen*’, cat. 17–18, 20.

66. P. S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus 1987), esp. chs II–V; M. C. O’Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars Moriendi* (New York, 1942, repr. 1966); also Marks and Williamson, *Gothic: Art for England 1400–1547*, cat. 341.

67. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 78.

68. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 294.

69. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 320.

70. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 156, 118; Lemmer, *Der Heidelberger Totentanz*, 8, 27, 50–52, 76.

71. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 140, 154; Lemmer, *Der Heidelberger Totentanz*, 19, 26, 66, 75–76.

72. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 120; Lemmer, *Der Heidelberger Totentanz*, 9, 52–53.

73. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 130, 138; Lemmer, *Der Heidelberger Totentanz*, 14, 18, 58–60, 64. The abbot’s words actually echo the sentiments expressed by the bishop, who also regrets not having remained a poor monk all his life.

74. Sodmann, *Dodendantz Lübeck 1520*, facsimile and transcription, 18.

75. Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 150; Lemmer, *Der Heidelberger Totentanz*, 24, 72.

76. This group is unusual in having three characters rather than the usual two of Death and his victim; the pauper serves both as a chorus and as a foil for the usurer. Instead, the Knoblochitzer edition shows just the usurer, still clutching a bag of money while casting a mournful look towards his treasure chest.

77. Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 183–89; Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 194–275; Utzinger and Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres*, 120–22, 129. See also the facsimile edition by Gundesheimer, *The Dance of Death by Hans Holbein the Younger*.

78. Holbein also shows Death with ragged long hair when confronting the duchess, just as Death adopts other attributes appropriate to each of his victims, perhaps indicating that this skeletal figure is not so much Death himself but everyone’s dead counterpart, after all. However, Death also sports breasts when claiming the nobleman in the Heidelberg blockbook, while the priest in Niklaus Manuel’s lost mural of c. 1516–20 in the Dominican cemetery in Berne is dragged off by a long-haired Death with breasts, if we can trust the 1649 water-colour copy by Albrecht Kauw; see Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 215–18 and pl. 182. The woodcut of dancing skeletons near the end of Hartmann Schedel’s 1493 *Nuremberg Chronicle* also features on the far right a putrid long-haired corpse with one remaining breast; see J. Tomaschek, ‘Der Tod, die Welt(zeit)alter und die letzten Dinge. Bemerkungen zum “Tanz der Skelette” in Hartmann Schedels *Weltchronik* von 1493’, in *Den Tod tanzen?*, ed. R. Hausner and W. Schwab, Tagungsband des Totentanzkongresses Stift Admont 2001, Im Kontext: Beiträge zu Religion, Philosophie und Kultur, 19, (Salzburg 2002), 229–49. Although the *danse macabre* may originally have been a dance of the dead and the living, it seems that some artists became confused about the nature of the dancing corpse and identified him as Death instead.

79. A discussion of different *danse macabre* editions by Marchant and other French printers can be found in Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 171–75, 177, 179–83. Of course, Holbein’s famous woodcut series was published in Lyon.

80. Harrison, *The Danse Macabre of Women*, 1; S. F. Wemple and D. A. Kaiser, ‘Death’s dance of women’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 12 (1986), 333–43. The excerpts quoted here are based on MS fr. 995, as illustrated in Harrison’s facsimile edition; Harrison’s own transcriptions are far from accurate. For a later edition printed in Paris c. 1525–32, see P. Layet, ‘La Danse macabre des Femmes’, in ‘*Ihr müßt alle nach meiner Pfeife tanzen*’, 35–41.

81. Compare the words of the ‘Lady of gret astate’ in Lydgate’s A version: ‘For there [n]is quene / Countesse ne duchesse [. . .] That she of dethe / mote dethes trace sewe’; see Warren, *Dance of Death*, stanza XXV, ll. 196, 198.

82. Of course, the infant is also a common figure in the popular medieval theme of the Ages of Man, in which all characters are traditionally male. See also Oosterwijk, ‘“Muss ich tanzen und kann nit gan?”’.

83. The wetnurse complains of a swelling (*boce*) between her arms; see Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 91, and compare Marchant’s text, *ibid.*, 36. The word *boce* can refer specifically to a swelling caused by the bubonic plague.

84. Huizinga, *Waning of the Middle Ages*, 145. For the little girl's words, see Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 107, albeit that the transcription here does not wholly follow the version offered by Harrison.
85. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 55, 57, 61, 69, and 63. The squire's wife's obsession with fashion is also evident from her regret about the cloth that she had bought at the *lendit* or annual June fair at Saint-Denis, and that she intended to dye scarlet.
86. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 59.
87. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 65, 87, 121.
88. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 77.
89. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 83.
90. G. G. Coulton, *Infant Perdition in the Middle Ages*, *Medieval Studies*, 16 (Taunton 1922); C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066–1550* (London 1997), 127–28. The debate about the fate of unbaptised children in the early modern period is discussed in J. Wilson, 'Dead Fruit: The Commemoration of Still-Born and Unbaptised Children in Early Modern England', *Church Monuments*, XVII (2002), 89–106.
91. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 115, 93.
92. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 117.
93. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 71.
94. Harrison, *Danse macabre of Women*, 73.
95. Clark, *Dance of Death*, 12–13.
96. Warren, *Dance of Death*, Appendix IV, 100–07, speaks of a 'degeneration', but there is no denying that in England from the late 16th century onward the Dance of Death became a subject for broadsheets and 'ditties'. As England was a relative latecomer in the art of printing, its publishers seem to have missed the heyday of the *danse macabre*, only catching up when the theme was already somewhat on the wane, although the allegorical figure of Death still continued to feature on tomb monuments.
97. This development can be observed in Albrecht Kauw's copy of Niklaus Manuel's destroyed *danse macabre* mural of c. 1516–20 at Berne, where Death embraces the maiden in an overtly sexual manner; see also Kaiser, *Der tanzende Tod*, 17–21 and figs 2–8; L. P. Grijp, 'De dood en het meisje. Eros en Thanatos in het lied', in Grijp, Hoek and Tamboer, *De dodendans in de kunsten*, 64–73; J. Wirth, *La jeune fille et la mort. Recherches sur les thèmes macabres dans l'art germanique de la renaissance* (Geneva 1979).
98. See Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 220–23, 224–25. The Lübeck Totentanz was originally painted in the 1460s in egg tempera onto canvas, rather than onto the wall; they are attributed to Bernt Notke and were 'restored' first in 1588, with a new copy made subsequently in 1700/01. See also Clark, *Dance of Death*, 78–82; Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 154–56; H. Freytag, B. Schulte and H. Vogeler, 'Der Totentanz der Marienkirche in Lübeck von 1463 und seine Weiterwirkung bis in die Gegenwart', in 'Ihr müßt alle nach meiner Pfeife tanzen', 83–135. The main study on the Lübeck Totentanz is Freytag, *Totentanz der Marienkirche in Lübeck*. The paintings were destroyed in March 1942 during the British air raids on the city. On 3 May 2003, a modern version by the Austrian artist Herwig Zens was inaugurated in the same location in the *Beichtkapelle* in the Marienkirche; see H. Zens, *Der neue Lübecker Totentanz* (Vienna 2003), with contributions by, among others, H. Freytag and H. Vogeler.
99. K. L. Belkin and C. Depauw ed., *Images of Death: Rubens Copies Holbein* (Antwerp 2000), published on the occasion of the exhibition 'Rubens, Holbein and the Dance of Death: On the Acquisition of a Sketchbook' held in the Rubenshuis, Antwerp.
100. M. Peereboom, 'Dansen met de dood', in Kerssemakers, Van Pagée and Visser, *Memento Mori*, 23–26.
101. See R. R. Wark, *Rowlandson's Drawings for The English Dance of Death* (San Marino 1966), no. 69.

## CORRIGENDA

Since publication of this article I have discovered that Les Saints Innocents in Paris was not a Franciscan convent, as claimed on p. 66 and in some of the *danse macabre* literature: this error has been rectified in chapter 2. My translation of the verses from Jehan le Fèvre's poem *Respit de la Mort* on p. 62 also needs amending to read as follows:

Je fis de Macabré la dance  
qui toutes gens maine a sa tresche  
et a la fosse les adresche,  
qui est leur derraine maison

*I made the dance of Macabré  
who leads all people in his train  
and directs them to the grave,  
which is their last abode.*

Note 48 should read:

See S. Oosterwijk, "'The sodeyne vyolence of cruel dethe': Death and *danse macabre* iconography on tomb monuments', *Actes du 11e Congrès International d'études sur les Danses macabres et l'art macabre en général* (Meslay-le-Grenet, 2003), 209–22, and also the examples ...