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

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CHAPTER 4

COMPARATIVE *drama*

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Lessons in “Hopping”: The Dance of Death and the Chester Mystery Cycle

SOPHIE OOSTERWIJK

The plays in the Chester mystery cycle may paint a vivid picture of religious belief on the eve of the Reformation, but they also contain many echoes of contemporary social customs as well as borrowings from other sources, both textual and visual.¹ Over the years, research into medieval drama has not just focused on the play texts themselves but also has taken into account the art of the period for visual parallels to the plays. W. L. Hildburgh and M. D. Anderson are but two in a long line of authors to draw valuable comparisons between medieval art and drama.² Similarly, Sally-Beth MacLean’s *Chester Art* is among the early contributions to the Early Drama, Art, and Music series to list extant and lost art relevant to the study of early drama in the area.³ The problem facing researchers is to identify such influences when the original sources have failed to survive. While many medieval texts have undoubtedly been lost to us over the centuries, the extent of the destruction of medieval art

through iconoclasm at the time of the Reformation and again under Oliver Cromwell may well be far greater.⁴ Inevitably, therefore, comparisons between the extant word and image are badly hampered in that they can only be based on what has actually survived or on other evidence of what once existed. Drama texts can be crucial in helping us obtain a better understanding of the imagery with which late-medieval viewers must once have been familiar but which has since been lost. One famous theme was the *danse macabre*, or Dance of Death, which was the subject of many examples in the visual arts across late-medieval Europe, although few appear to survive in Britain. In two of the Chester plays, however, it may be possible to detect references to this theme that would attest to its former popularity.

Play 10 of the Chester mystery cycle, in which the Goldsmiths (and possibly the Masons) enacted the Massacre of the Holy Innocents, presents viewers with a scene of brutal murder that is made even more horrific by an exceedingly cruel joke. The scene takes place after Herod has sent his soldiers to Bethlehem to slaughter "all knave-children within two yeere / and on daye ould" (179–80) in an attempt to kill the newborn Christ. The soldiers first demur slightly at the king's command, which they deem unfit for "knightes of great degree" (160), but it is the very extent of the killing that reconciles them to the task. Although not explicitly mentioned here, the total number of Innocents slain was traditionally held to be 144,000.⁵ Primus Miles soon exults in the prospect of killing "[t]hese congeons in there clowtes" (209), as the infants are at one point described. At the start of the killing spree by Herod's soldiers, Secundus Miles, whose name is tellingly given as Lancherdeepe (58, 85), addresses the first Bethlehem mother thus:

Dame, thy sonne, in good faye,
hee must of me learne a playe:
hee must hopp, or I goe awaye,
upon my speare ende.

(10.321–24)

The threat of making this mother's son "hop" on the end of his spear would seem to describe simply a favorite mode of slaughtering the infants in Massacre scenes, as confirmed by the subsequent stage direction: "Tunc Miles trasfodiet primum puerum et super lancea accipiet"

(344 *s.d.*). However, the joke about teaching his infant victims to “hopp” clearly proves irresistible to the second soldier, for he repeats it to Secunda Mulier prior to despatching yet another Innocent:

Dame, shewe thou me thy child there;
 hee must hopp uppon my speare.
 And hit any pintell beare,
 I must teach him a playe. *penis*

(10.361–64)

The women try to ward off the soldiers with all their might, yet the outcome is the same, as the stage direction bears out: “Tunc Secundus Miles transfodiet secundum puerum” (376 *s.d.*). Both infants thus die impaled upon the soldiers’ spears.⁶

In themselves, the lines appear simply to agree with the quite common iconography of the Massacre in medieval art. All too often one may see Herod’s soldiers holding aloft an Innocent transfixed on a sword or spear.⁷ Even the Chester soldier’s crude reference to the gender of his intended victim has at least one blatant visual counterpart in the early-fourteenth-century mural on the north wall of the chancel at St. Mary’s Church in Chalgrove, Oxfordshire (fig. 1). Still visible here is the outline of the lower part of a naked Innocent in red ochre, his genitals prominently displayed between his sprawling legs.⁸ This scene also includes a soldier presenting to Herod the dripping corpse of an Innocent impaled on a spear. The blood pouring from the body of this skewered Innocent now has acquired a blackish color due to red lead alteration; the deliberate and copious use of a more vivid red pigment to represent blood would have emphasized the goriness of the event for the viewer.⁹

Yet it is the repeated joke about “teaching an infant to hop” that is particularly striking in the Chester play. The very fact that it is made twice suggests that it had important resonances for the playwright—and presumably also for his audiences. The quip may actually be related to the way in which infants were perceived in medieval culture, for the Innocents were supposed to be mere babies who might not even have been weaned.¹⁰ It was, of course, a universally recognized truth in the Middle Ages that infants under the age of two would as yet be incapable of walking or talking properly, if at all. This characteristic nature of the Innocents is confirmed in yet another Massacre play, the Coventry Pageant of

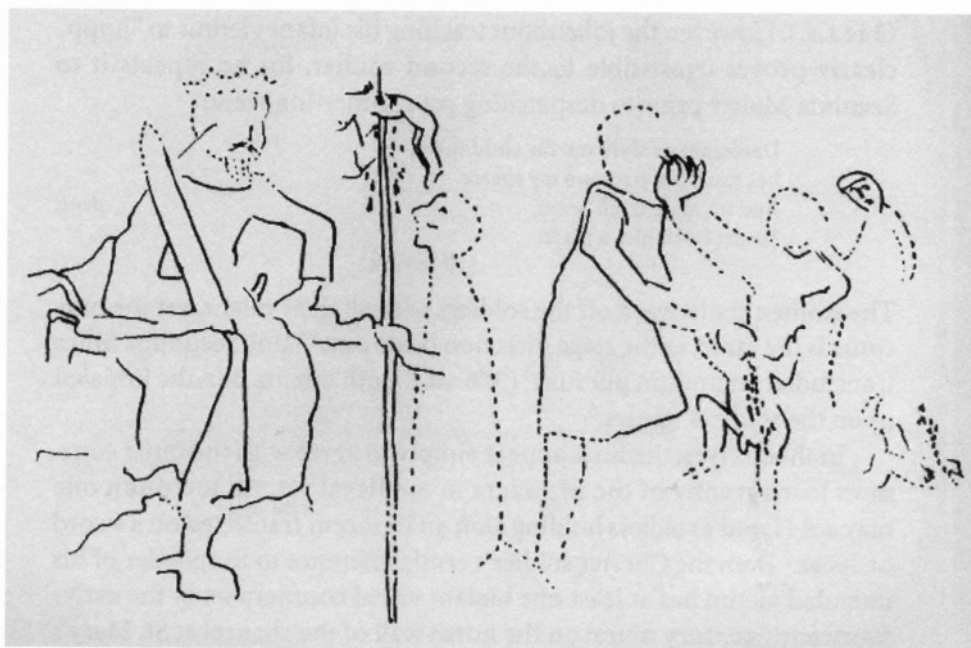


Fig. 1. Massacre of the Innocents: detail of an early-fourteenth-century mural on the north wall of the chancel at St. Mary's Church in Chalgrove, Oxfordshire (Tracing: author).

the Shearmen and Taylors, where the first mother protests in vain at lines 797–800:

For a sympull slaghtur yt were to sloo,
Or to wyrke soche a chylde woo
Þat can noder speyke nor goo
Nor neuer harme did.¹¹

In depictions of the Ages of Man, the first age of *infantia* is often represented by an infant lying in a cradle, occasionally followed by the slightly later stage of the toddler who is still learning to walk.¹² However, the Chester soldier takes this image one step further: he offers to teach the infants a “play,” viz. to “hopp” on his spear. As we shall see, this repeated line seems to contain an echo of the words of Death to the infant in English and Continental versions of the Dance of Death.

The *danse macabre* was a very popular theme throughout late-medieval Europe. It presents Death appearing unexpectedly to summon

both the mighty and the low to take part in his dance; each victim in turn is forced to acknowledge that death is grim but inevitable. The infant was a regular participant in the *danse macabre* from the earliest known examples onward. Perhaps this is not surprising if one considers the infant's common appearance in depictions of the Ages of Man, the high rate of infant mortality, and the ubiquitous Massacre scenes in medieval art and drama that presented viewers with a horrifying spectacle of infant death. However, the infant is unusual among Death's dancers not only because he holds no social status of his own (unlike the other participants from all ranks of society) but also because he is characterized as one who cannot yet walk, let alone dance. His helplessness is emphasized in the earliest known French printed edition of the *danse macabre*, published in 1485 by Guyot Marchant, which was based on the famous mural of 1424–25 on the cemetery walls of the Franciscan convent Aux SS. Innocents in Paris. The woodcut illustration in Marchant's version shows the infant in a cradle, while the dialogue between Death and his victim runs as follows:

Le mort

Petit enfant na gueres ne:
 Au monde auras peu de plaisance
 A la danse seras mene
 Comme autres, car mort a puissance
 Seur tous: du iour de la naissance
 Conuient chascun a mort offrir:
 Fol est qui nen a congnoissance.
 Qui plus vit plus a a souffrir

(Little infant barely born,
 you will find little pleasure in this world.
 You will be led to the dance,
 like the others, for Death has power
 over all: from the day of one's birth

Everyone is subject to Death.
 A fool is he who does not know this.
 He who lives longest will suffer the more.

Lenfant

A. a. a. ie ne scay parler
 Enfant suis: iay la langue mue.
 Hier nasquis huy men fault aler
 Je ne fais quentree et yssue
 Rien nay meffait. mais de peur sue
 Prendre en gre me fault cest le mieulx
 Lordonnance dieu ne se mue.
 Aussi tost meurt ieusne que vieux¹³

A, a, a, I know not how to talk.
 I am an infant: my tongue is mute.
 Born yesterday, today I have to go.
 I only make my entrance and my exit.
 I have done no wrong, and yet I
 sweat for fear.

I must comply willingly, that is best.
 God's decree does not change.
 The young die as soon as the old.)

The original French poet, who may have been Jean Gerson and who concentrated on the newborn's characteristic inability to talk, based the

infant's response on the biblical text in Jeremiah: "et dixi a a a Domine Deus ecce nescio loqui quia puer ego sum" (1:6).¹⁴ Marchant's first offering of 1485 was clearly a success, so a year later he published a new edition that included an all female *danse macabre*, its text usually ascribed to the poet Martial d'Auvergne. Further versions by other printers soon followed. The theme also became a beloved decorative motif in both printed and manuscript versions of books of hours. The wider range of printed *danse macabre* editions helped to popularize the theme while also providing models for new murals.¹⁵

It was the Parisian wall painting, which he must have seen during his stay in the city in 1426, that inspired the poet John Lydgate from Bury St. Edmunds to produce a Middle English "translation" in the early 1430s of which two distinct versions exist.¹⁶ Lydgate's text was included in a famous series of Dance of Death paintings in the cloister at Old St. Paul's Cathedral in London; before this scheme was destroyed in 1549, it was vividly described by Sir Thomas More in his work *The Four Last Things*.¹⁷ Because of this famous scheme at St. Paul's, the *danse macabre* came generally to be known in England as the "dance of Paul's," and it inspired further (mostly lost) depictions of the same theme up and down the country.¹⁸ Lydgate's poem was not a literal translation, but it largely followed the French model, even copying the infant's tentative first utterings:

Deth to the Chylde

Litel Enfaunt / that were but late borne
Shape yn this worlde / to haue no plesaunce
Thow moste with other / that gon here to forne
Be lad yn haste / be fatal ordynaunce
Lerne of newe / to go on my daunce
Ther mai non age / a-scape yn sothe ther fro
Late eueri wight / haue this yn remembraunce

Who lengest leueth / most shal suffre wo.

The Chylde answereth

A a a / a worde I can not speke
I am so 3onge / I was bore 3isterdai
Dethe is so hasti / on me to be wreke
And liste no lenger / to make no delai
I cam but now / and now I go my wai
Of me no more / no tale shal be tolde
The wille of god / no man with-stonde
mai

As sone dyeth / a 3onge man as an
olde.¹⁹

Concerning Lydgate's translation, Philippa Tristram has commented that "Death's words to the Child, and the Child's reply, are so touched with tenderness that they merit full quotation.... To those neither humble nor proud, Death adopts an appropriate aspect."²⁰ Yet is there any tender-

ness in summoning a newborn baby to a dance when he cannot even walk?

In fact, there is a new element in Death's words to the child in Lydgate's text that cannot be traced back to the Parisian version: "Lerne of newe to go on my daunce." Whereas the French version focuses on the newborn's inability to speak, Lydgate's words seem to echo a different German tradition that addresses the infant's other natural characteristic: the inability to walk. The result is a morbid joke by Death at the infant's expense which first appears in the oldest surviving Latin-German text (Heidelberg Universitätsbibliothek, Codex pal. germ. 314, fols. 79–80^v).²¹ This manuscript version, which does not contain illuminations, was copied in Augsburg between 1443 and 1447. It contains the following lines:

Puer in cunabulo
O cara mater, me vir a te trahit ater.
Debeo saltare, qui nunquam scivi meare.

Daz Kint
O wê, liebiu muoter mîn,
ein swarzer man ziuht mich dahin.
Wie wiltu mich alsô verlân?
Muoz ich tanzen und kan nit gân?²²

(Child in the cradle:
O dear mother, a black man pulls me away from you.
I must now dance, who never learnt to walk.

The child:
Oh alas, my dear mother,
a black man pulls me away.
How will you abandon me thus?
Must I dance when I cannot walk?)

Both the Latin and German verses conjure up the plight of a helpless infant who has not learned to walk and yet is forced to dance. The theme was expanded in the earliest known printed version of the German *Totentanz*, published with illustrations in Basel around 1465 and now usually referred to as the Heidelberg blockbook because of the unique surviving copy in the Universitätsbibliothek at Heidelberg (Cod. pal. germ. 438).²³ Although based on the Latin-German manuscript version, the added speech by Death results in an actual dialogue between the two figures:

(Death)

Kreuch her an du must hy tanzen lern
 Weyne adir lache ich hore dich gern
 Hettistu den totten yn dem munde
 Is hilft dich nicht an desir stunde

(Crawl this way, you must learn to dance here.
 Weep or laugh, I gladly hear you.
 Even if you have the breast in your mouth,
 It will not help you in this hour.

(Infant)

Awe liebe muter meyn
 Eyn swarzer man zeut mich do hyn
 Wy wiltu mich nw vorlan
 Nw mus ich tanzen vnd kan noch
 nicht gan²⁴

Ah alas, my dear mother,
 a black man pulls me away.
 How will you abandon me now?
 Now must I dance when I cannot
 walk.)

It is clear that the “black man” and the joke of the Latin-German text have been retained, but Death adds to the grim picture with his insistence that the child must dance, regardless of his condition; even if he must *crawl* his way to the dance. One curious anomaly is that whereas the Latin-German manuscript text specifically refers to a “puer in cunabulo” (child in the cradle), the blockbook illustration instead shows Death grasping a nude male infant by his chubby arm.²⁵ Incidentally, the infant’s plea to his mother does not go unheard, yet she is equally helpless; the subsequent verses reveal her to be Death’s next victim.²⁶ The image of a naked standing infant, rather than a baby in a cradle, can also be found in a later *Totentanz* version of c.1488, first printed probably in Heidelberg by Heinrich Knoblochtzter (fig. 2); the accompanying text with its description of the child being unable to speak is, however, clearly derived from Guyot Marchant’s printed edition of the French *danse macabre*.²⁷ There were at least two later editions of this *Totentanz* version printed in Mainz (1492) and Munich (c.1520). A fittingly grim touch in the Knoblochtzter woodcut is that Death is shown wielding a whirligig, the archetypal toddler’s toy in medieval art; it is not unusual to find Death appropriating an attribute typical to his victim in mockery.²⁸

The question is whether Lydgate knew an even earlier, now lost Latin or German *Totentanz* version with a similar emphasis on the infant’s inability to walk when he added his line “*Lerne of newe to go on my daunce*” (italics mine). Such a suggestion would not only contradict Lydgate’s explicit references to the Paris mural as his source but also raise serious questions about the origins and dating of the European *danse macabre* tradition, yet the shared “learning” motif remains intriguing.²⁹ However,

for the purpose of the present study we must look at the situation around the time of the Chester cycle as we now know it—that is, the early sixteenth century. To understand the cultural context properly, we must study what evidence survives of the visual as well as the textual tradition. Although some might claim that the *danse macabre* was never as popular in England as it was on the Continent, at least twelve manuscripts of Lydgate's English poem are known to have survived in addition to a



Fig. 2. Death and the infant, from an illustrated German Totentanz edition entitled *Der doten dantz mit figuren clage und antwort schon von allen staten der werlt*, first printed by Heinrich Knobloch in Heidelberg, c.1488 (Photo: Europäische Totentanz-Vereinigung).

printed version published by Richard Tottel in 1554 as an appendix to a folio edition of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*; one author has claimed that, at an even earlier date, in 1521, the Parisian printer Johan Bignon produced an English edition of the *Hore beate marie virginis ad vsum Sarum* for the London bookseller Richard Fakes that included at the end five leaves with ten Dance of Death woodcuts and accompanying verses by Lydgate.³⁰ Furthermore, an illustrated broadsheet entitled "The Daunce and Song of Death" was published by John Awdeley in 1569, and a Dance of Death woodcut with letterpress verses below was printed around 1580; in addition, woodcut illustrations featuring *danse macabre* scenes can be found in English editions of the popular *Kalender of Sheperdes* and in other books of hours printed abroad from the early sixteenth century on, as well as in John Day's *Christian Prayers and Meditations* of 1569.³¹ These printed examples suggest that the *danse macabre* must have been a much more widespread visual theme in Britain by the middle of the sixteenth century than has previously been thought.

The scheme at Old St. Paul's must have been sufficiently famous across the country to have provided the generic name by which the Dance of Death became also known in this country.³² Nonetheless, so little visual evidence remains here that England tends to be almost completely ignored in Continental discussions of the *danse macabre* in spite of the early date of Lydgate's literary contribution.³³ In England the only surviving medieval Dance of Death wall painting, which almost certainly included the infant, has been hidden behind wooden paneling in the Guild Chapel at Stratford-upon-Avon since the early 1950s.³⁴ Still extant is part of a painted *danse macabre* scheme of c.1500 on the medieval paneled rood screen in the priory church at Hexham, Northumberland, that features a pope, an emperor, a king, and a cardinal, each paired with a figure of Death (fig. 3).³⁵ Other surviving examples include two early-sixteenth-century painted figures of Death and a young gallant in the parish church at Newark-on-Trent in Nottinghamshire; three misericords in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and three more misericords at Coventry Cathedral (lost in World War II); a stained glass panel of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century that shows Death with a bishop in the north aisle of St. Andrew's church at Norwich; and a series of carvings of c.1460 decorating the vault ribs in the retrochoir of Rosslyn Chapel, Scotland.³⁶



Fig. 3. Two panels from the medieval paneled rood screen of c.1500 in the priory church at Hexham, Northumberland, showing Death and the emperor and Death and the pope (Photo: R.J.L. Smith of Much Wenlock).

However, there were once other schemes of the Dance of Death in different media, which *may* include a tapestry belonging to Henry VIII in the Tower of London.³⁷ In a recent article, Fred Kloppenborg has discussed three more examples: a set of three “stained or painted” cloths once hanging before the rood loft in Holy Trinity church at Long Melford, as listed in an inventory of 1529; a painting of the late fifteenth century, possibly also on cloth, in St. Edmund’s Church, Salisbury; and another set of painted cloths with a “Dawnse of Powlys” hanging in the parish church of All Saints in Bristol, as mentioned regularly in the church book accounts from 1449 onward.³⁸ The Bristol accounts show that the cloths there were displayed twice a year on the feasts of All Hallows (1 November) and St.

James the Greater (25 July), with money being paid out for hanging them, taking them down again, and rolling them up; it is important to note that St. James shared his feast day with St. Christopher, the patron saint of travelers and protector against sudden death.³⁹ Kloppenborg is probably not unduly optimistic when suggesting that further study of parish records may well reveal more such "Dance of Paul's" examples in England in addition to known but lost murals.

Unfortunately, there is currently no known evidence for a medieval *danse macabre* scheme in the Chester area, although it is not inconceivable that one of the city's churches once housed a mural or cloth hanging with which locals would have been familiar. Whatever the case, the printing press would have helped to make the Dance of Death a far more familiar theme by the time the Chester Massacre play was written. We do know that there was a Corpus Christi procession at Chester by 1398 and a Corpus Christi play as early as 1422, but it is important to realize that the extant Chester mystery cycle is of a much later date.⁴⁰ Research has shown the surviving texts to have been the result of extensive revision and addition in the first half of the sixteenth century, and, since the cycle continued to be performed until 1575, one author was prompted to describe the extant Chester plays as a Tudor cycle.⁴¹ As mentioned earlier, Lydgate's *Dance of Death* was printed by Richard Tottel in 1554, and earlier readers could have encountered the theme among the decorated borders in books of hours or in printed editions of the *Kalender of Sheparden*.⁴² Of course, foreign printed editions of the *danse macabre* would also have made their way across the Channel, and these would have included copies of the famous woodcut series by Henry VIII's court painter Hans Holbein the Younger which he had designed around 1526 and which was first printed as *Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort* at Lyon in 1538.

Moreover, by the sixteenth century the *danse macabre* had also made an impact on tomb iconography.⁴³ The first known example of a tomb monument with a *danse macabre* motif occurs at Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, in the brass of John Rudyng, archdeacon of Bedford (d. 1481), which shows Death armed with an array of spears beside the lost figure of the deceased (fig. 4, 5). Significant also is the epitaph, which contains a dialogue in Latin verse between the reader and Mors, who is clearly labeled as such in the left margin, below the actual figure of Death. In this

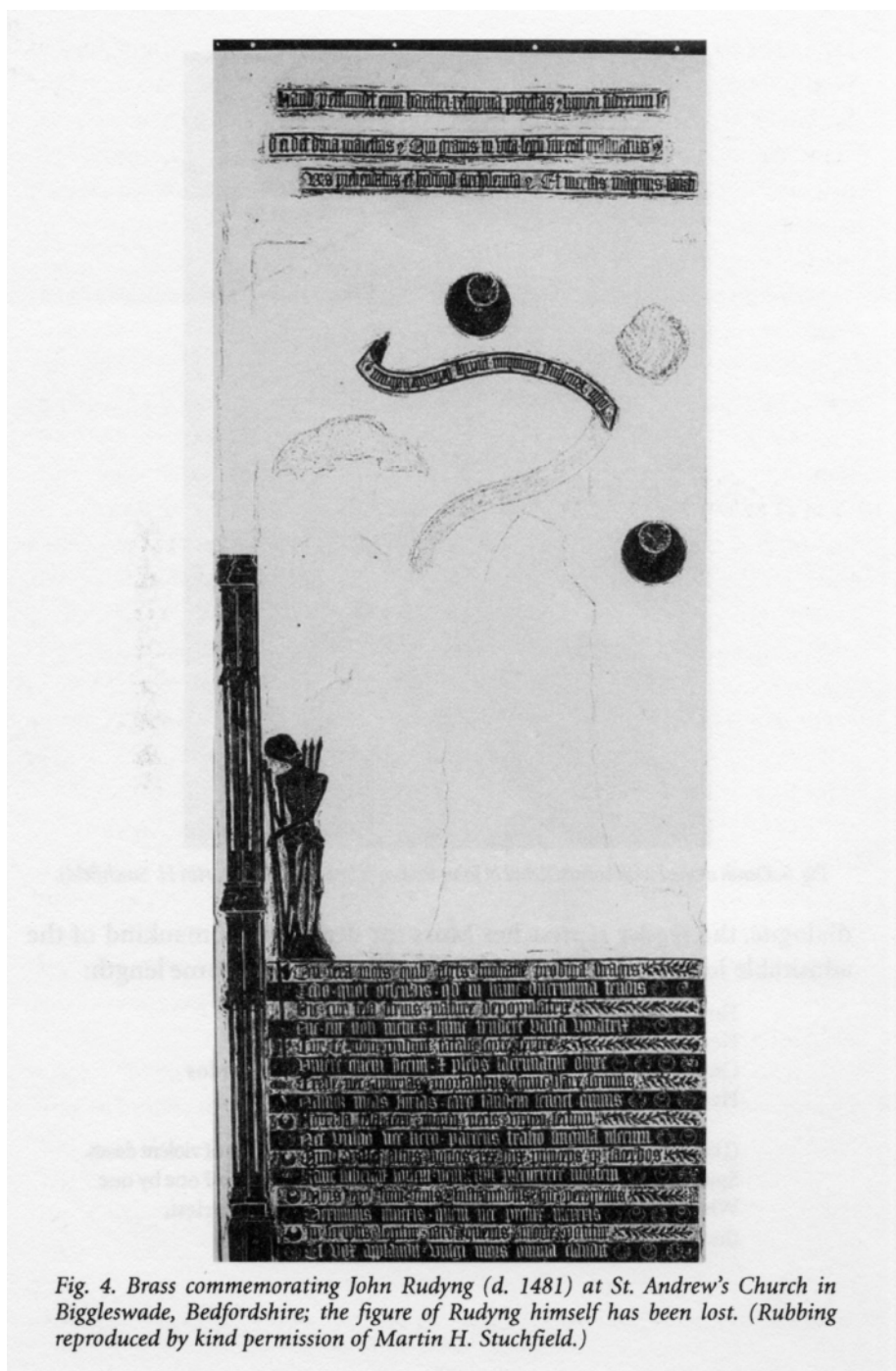


Fig. 4. Brass commemorating John Rudyng (d. 1481) at St. Andrew's Church in Biggleswade, Bedfordshire; the figure of Rudyng himself has been lost. (Rubbing reproduced by kind permission of Martin H. Stuchfield.)

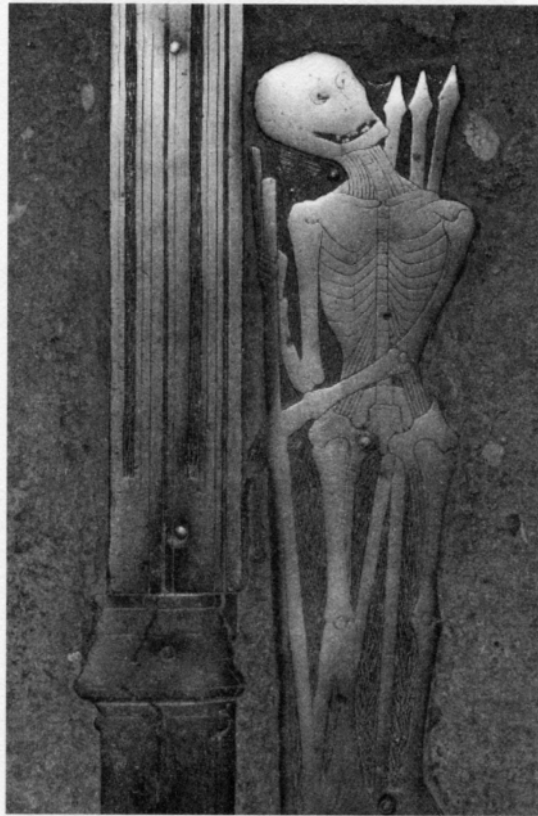


Fig. 5. Death armed with spears: detail of John Rudyng's brass (Photo: Martin H. Stuchfield).

dialogue, the reader reproaches Mors for depriving humankind of the admirable John Rudyng, but Mors defends himself at some length:

Horrida tela fero morsu . necis vrgeo seclum
 Nec vulgo nec hero . parcens traho singula mecum
 Quid valet altus honos . rex . dux . princeps . que sacerdos
 Hanc subeunt sortem . nequeunt precurrere mortem...

(I carry grim weapons, I harass the world hard with the bite of violent death.
 Sparing neither the masses nor the master, I carry them off one by one.
 What use is high honor then? King, duke, prince, and priest,
 they all suffer this fate, they cannot outrun Death.)⁴⁴

A rather different type of memorial survives in the church at Stanford-on-Avon in Northamptonshire, where the local vicar Henry Williams had indicated in his will of 5 April 1500 his desire to be commemorated in "smalle quarells" of glass showing "my ymage knelying in ytt and the ymage of deth shotyng at me."⁴⁵ The little scene is reminiscent of Lazarus's words in the N-Town play: "Whan deth on me hath shet his dart ..." (25.63). Death also could once be observed stabbing Thomas Annott with his arrow on the lost 1577 brass at Lowestoft, Suffolk, as recorded in an 1817 engraving by John Sell Cotman.⁴⁶ Park-keeper James Gray's 1591 brass at Hunsdon, Hertfordshire, depicts a morbidly ironic scene of Death striking a double blow with his arrows at both deer and hunter. A late-sixteenth-century monument to a member of the Foljambe family at Chesterfield is interesting in featuring not only Death armed with a spade and a large arrow but also two figures representing infancy and old age on either side of him.⁴⁷ The popularity of this *danse macabre* iconography in tomb sculpture continued well after the sixteenth century and culminated in Roubiliac's 1761 monument to Lady Elizabeth Nightingale at Westminster Abbey.

Whereas Williams and others adhered to the image of Death using arrows to shoot or stab his victims, Rudyng's Death is unmistakably armed with an array of spears. Medieval iconography can be confusing, with artists seemingly uncertain as to whether Death should despatch his victims by shooting at them with arrows or transfixing them with a spear; it is not uncommon to find Death using an over-large arrow as a stabbing weapon. Admittedly, Continental artists tended to show Death with an often over-large dart or arrow, yet this could sometimes be mistaken for a spear; French medieval murals may show one or more of the Three Dead wielding an elongated dart or a spear against the Three Living.⁴⁸ In English medieval wall paintings of the Seven Deadly Sins, Death sometimes uses a spear against the allegorical figure of Pride; for example, a fifteenth-century mural between the spandrels of the arches of the north wall of the nave at Raunds Church, Northamptonshire, shows the skeletal figure of Death immediately above the arch on the left where he is piercing the tall female figure of Pride with a very long spear.⁴⁹ Death also wields a spear in the deathbed scene in the early-fifteenth-century



Fig. 6. Death wielding a spear in the deathbed scene in the early-fifteenth-century *Pricke of Conscience* window in the church of All Saints North Street, York (Photo: Allan B. Barton).

Pricke of Conscience window in All Saints North Street in York (fig. 6) and in an illuminated English manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Douce 322, fol. 19^v) of the mid-fifteenth century that contains a collection of religious verse and prose, including two texts by Lydgate and a treatise on “the crafte of Dying” (fig. 7).⁵⁰ Here Death in the accompanying dialogue text *Orilogium sapientie* exhorts the reader:

¶ But that ye now in thys world leuyng. ¶ afore be redy or I my belle ryng.
 ¶ My drede full spere full sharpe y grounde.
 ¶ Doth yow now lo here thys manate.
 ¶ armour ys noon. that may withstande hys wounde.
 ¶ Ne whom I merke. ther ys non other grace.
 ¶ To fynde respite of day oure ne space.

Chaucer chose the spear as Death’s weapon when describing him in the *Pardoner’s Tale* as a “privee thief”: “And with his spere he smoot his

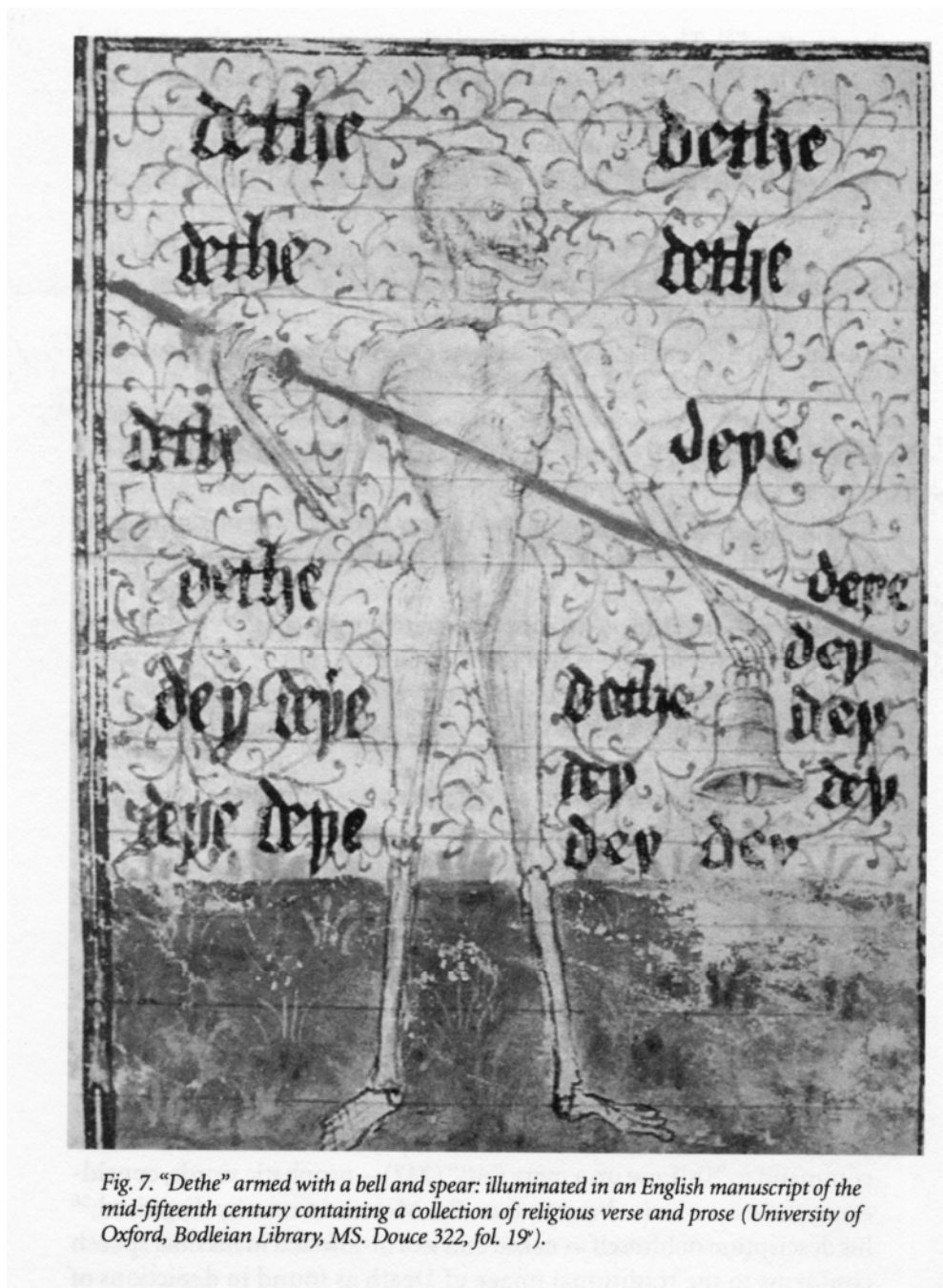


Fig. 7. "Dethe" armed with a bell and spear: illuminated in an English manuscript of the mid-fifteenth century containing a collection of religious verse and prose (University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Douce 322, fol. 19^r).

herte atwo.”⁵¹ The spear is particularly prominent in the so-called Carthusian Miscellany (British Library MS. Add. 37,049), a religious miscellany produced in northern England in the first half of the fifteenth century that contains multiple illustrations of Death wielding a spear as opposed to just a few instances where he is armed with arrows (fig. 8).⁵² In the morality play *The Castle of Perseverance* of the same period, Mors uses a lance to strike his deadly blow at Humanum Genus, as the latter exclaims: “Deth hathe lacchyd me wyth hys launce!”⁵³ In Holbein’s 1538 woodcut series, Death relinquishes his musical approach to transfix the knight with his own lance, which leaves the victim twitching desperately in his final agony as if in a parody of Death’s usual dance (fig. 9).

The spear is thus a weapon often given to Death as his attribute, especially in English culture, and also as used by Herod’s soldiers in the Chester Massacre play. From a theatrical point of view, shaking a puppet impaled on a spear would have been a very effective way of enacting the Massacre of the Innocents onstage, and this device was used in mystery plays elsewhere.⁵⁴ In the N-Town play, the first soldier presents an impaled Innocent to Herod with the words “Upon my spere/A gerle I bere” (20.109–10), while there is also mention slightly later of “boys sprawlyd at my sperys hende” (220). As the latter words are spoken, however, another crucial event is about to occur in the N-Town play: the despatch of Herod and his soldiers by Mors himself. Although the death of Herod often served as the conclusion of Massacre plays in medieval drama, the N-Town play is unusual in presenting a personified figure of Death. Mors appears on the scene after Herod’s vainglorious words “In joy I gynne to glyde” (167) in the foolish belief that Christ has indeed been killed. His sense of triumph is, of course, both false and short-lived, as Mors himself reminds the audience. Mors turns out to be a more effective killer even than Herod or his soldiers. His ominous line “Wher I smyte þer is no grace” (190) may suggest that he, too, uses a spear to dispatch the tyrant and his henchmen before handing them over to the devil, who promises to “teche [hem] pleyes fyn” (235).⁵⁵ One might even wonder whether Herod mistakes Mors for one of his minstrels when he issues his last command to “[b]lowe up a mery fytt!” (232)—prophetic words, considering the dance he is about to face. Yet Mors is in no way disguised;⁵⁶ his description of himself as naked and worm-infested in his final speech conforms to the traditional image of Death as found in depictions of



Fig. 8. Death striking a dying man with his spear: deathbed scene in the Carthusian Miscellany, produced in northern England in the first half of the fifteenth century (London, British Library MS. Add. 37049, fol. 38^v).



Fig. 9. Death transfixing the knight with his lance, in Hans Holbein the Younger, *Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort*, first published in Lyon in 1538 (Photo: Europäische Totentanz-Vereinigung).

the *danse macabre* and elsewhere in medieval art—and to the late-medieval phenomenon of the cadaver effigy.

It was the appearance of Mors in the N-Town play that inspired Gail McMurray Gibson's remarks on the Dance of Death in East-Anglian drama and the connection with Lydgate, Long Melford, and Bury St. Edmunds.⁵⁷ A link between Death's concluding role in the N-Town Massacre play and the Dance of Death had already been made in 1903 by E. K. Chambers, who also drew attention to the fact that the *danse macabre* is known to have been enacted on the Continent on a number of documented occasions.⁵⁸ Of course, the personification of Death occurs in a number of morality plays across late-medieval Europe, and these include the Middle English *Castle of Perseverance* and *Everyman*.⁵⁹ The Chester play also features the death of Herod, but here instead of a personified Death it is a demon who comes to fetch the king directly to Hell. Herod's moans about his rotting legs and arms strangely conjure up an image of a semi-decomposing corpse—in fact, much like Death himself—although this is actually in line with medieval tradition.⁶⁰

As Gibson has argued, a link between the appearance of Mors in the N-Town play and the *danse macabre* is not hard to accept, but is it possible to detect the same influence in the Chester mystery cycle? Could the repeated joke made by the second soldier in the Chester Massacre play somehow have been inspired by the quip in the German *Totentanz* versions about teaching an infant to dance when he cannot yet walk? Moreover, could his spear have helped to reinforce his mocking impersonation of Death himself? Rosemary Woolf simply preferred to interpret the soldier's words as a game metaphor that "very horribly conveys enjoyment in the savagery," while Lumiansky and Mills offer little comment on this repeated joke.⁶¹ To interpret this Chester Massacre scene as carrying overtones of the Dance of Death—especially when one relates the soldier's actual words to a German *Totentanz* version of the early to mid-fifteenth century, around a century older than the extant versions of the Chester play—may seem far-fetched, even though there also appear to be echoes of this German quip in Lydgate's text. A visual link between the Massacre of the Holy Innocents and the Dance of Death was certainly made by artists on the Continent at a later date. The skeletal figure of Death is shown hopping around gleefully in a violent

Massacre scene amongst a set of thirty *danse macabre* engravings with accompanying verses in *Het schou-toneel des doots, of Dooden Dans* by the Dutch physician Salomon van Rusting (1652–1709/13) which was first published in 1707 (fig. 10).⁶² This sixth engraving with the caption “Geen wreder soort als Bethl’hems moort” (no fate more cruel than the Bethlehem murder) follows five earlier episodes from the Old Testament, from the Fall of Man to scenes of war and destruction upon the return of the Israelites to the promised land.

Although much later, Death’s wild antics in the Dutch 1707 engraving are a reminder of another vital aspect, for dancing and jumping were originally an intrinsic part of the iconography of the medieval Dance of Death, but especially in the German tradition. The Chester soldier twice uses the Middle-English word “hop,” which could have two distinct but related meanings: to dance, but also to hop, leap, bound, or bounce. It is found several times in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* as well as in Lydgate’s work, albeit not in his *Daunce of Death* poem.⁶³ The Middle English verb “hoppen” is related to the Lower and Middle German verb *hoppēn*, which is a variant of the modern German word *hüpfen*, meaning to leap or hop. It even occurs in the *Totentanz* version of the Heidelberg blockbook, although there it is not the child who is enjoined to “hop.” Instead it is the cook whom Death orders to “hoppe off” and prepare a pepper sauce to liven up the sluggards in his dance.⁶⁴ In visual presentations of the Dance, the grim specter of Death is usually the more energetic dancer who forces along his reluctant partners from all ranks of society. Although Lydgate’s elegant language makes it sound almost like a formal court dance, there are hints that it really is not quite so sophisticated, for example, when the king admits that “I haue not lerned / here-a-forne to daunce / No daunce in sothe / of fotyngē so sauage.”⁶⁵ Just like the infant, the king too must learn, albeit in his case a new “savage” type of dance more in line with the energetic depictions of the *danse macabre* in medieval art than with court entertainment.

It is in the German *Totentanz* tradition that Death is typically presented playing one of a variety of usually rather lowly musical instruments, from bagpipes to drums, and even applying a still current proverb to one of his victims in the lost mural of c.1463 at Lübeck: “Went gy moten na myner pypen springen” (for you must dance to my pipes).⁶⁶



Fig. 10. Death in the Massacre of the Innocents: engraving no. 6 in *Het schou-toneel des doots* by the Dutch physician Salomon van Rusting, first published in 1707 (Photo: Europäische Totentanz-Vereinigung).

Again and again, "der doit" in the German *Totentanz* exhorts his victims to join him in his dance. Mordant humor is evident throughout when Death summons the various ranks of society with impunity, even those whose position would have made them unlikely dancers whilst alive. The pope, the empress, the patriarch, and the cardinal in the Heidelberg blockbook are all ordered to "springen" or leap, while the "stolzer herzog" (proud duke) is pointedly reminded of how he had previously "hoch gesprungen" (jumped high) with women.⁶⁷ In the slightly later Knoblochtzer *Totentanz*, Death reminds the "iungeling" how he can "gar sußlichen syngen/hofieren dantzen vnd spryngen" (sing, behave, dance, and jump quite sweetly).⁶⁸ Only on rare occasions does Death seem willing to adapt the pace slightly in accordance with his victim's condition, as when he addresses the pregnant woman in the late-fifteenth-century French *Danse Macabre des Femmes* with the words "Allons pas a pas bellement," suggesting that "easy does it."⁶⁹ Thus each participant in the Dance of Death "hops" according to his or her condition. Perhaps this is an additional indication that the soldier in the Chester play facetiously assumes the role of Death as a dancing master in the Massacre of the Innocents at Bethlehem. Similarly, the word "play" in the Chester soldier's repeated joke is, of course, a commonly used Middle English word but with a wide range of meanings from merriment and children's play to an actual performance or spectacle and even music or dancing;⁷⁰ its meaning here could be deliberately ambiguous. One may compare it to the words of Diabolus after Mors has killed off Herod and his soldiers in the N-Town Massacre play: "I xal hem teche plays fin, /And shewe such myrthe as is in helle!" (20.235–36).

Yet it is another Chester play that offers even more compelling evidence for further *danse macabre* influence in this mystery cycle. Unusually, the Chester mystery cycle has three plays (nos. 22–24) devoted to the end of the world, but it is the Last Judgment play, in which the two groups—the saved and the lost souls—are presented, that is relevant here. Woolf remarked in 1972 that the risen souls in play 24 "are not socially unidentifiable, but are part of the cast of the Dance of Death."⁷¹ This appears to be peculiar to Chester, although more common in French plays.⁷² After the initial words of God and two angels, the first blessed souls to rise from their graves are the pope, emperor, king, and queen.

They are followed by the damned souls, who consist of another pope, emperor, king, and queen, with an additional "Justiciarius" and merchant.⁷³ Lumiansky and Mills comment upon the apparent descending order of authority, yet they make no explicit mention of the fact that both the blessed and the damned adhere very closely to the order of the first few characters in most *danse macabre* schemes. Marchant's version, which does not feature the queen or any other female personages, starts with the pope, emperor, cardinal, and king and includes a merchant, as does group A of the manuscript versions of Lydgate's poem; it is interesting to note that the English *Kalender of Sheparden*, from the first 1506 edition by the London printer Richard Pynson onward, contains what has been described as a rudimentary *danse macabre* that includes a king and bishop, followed by knights, judges, and merchants.⁷⁴ The main character missing among the Chester souls is the cardinal—incidentally, a rank that few English clergymen ever attained. Group B of the Lydgate manuscript versions does not include the queen either, but it has the empress preceding the king and thus follows nearly the same order of many German *Totentanz* versions. For example, the order in the Latin-German manuscript version is pope, emperor, empress, king, and cardinal;⁷⁵ the Heidelberg blockbook features the pope, emperor, empress, and king, with the cardinal only appearing after the patriarch and archbishop;⁷⁶ the famous *Totentanz* mural of c.1440 in the Dominican convent at Basel started with the pope, emperor, empress, king, queen, and cardinal;⁷⁷ and, finally, Holbein's woodcut series has first the pope, then the emperor, king, cardinal, empress, and queen, with a judge, advocate, and merchant among the remaining characters.⁷⁸ The hierarchical choice of souls in the Chester play seems fixed in the *danse macabre* tradition.

Significant in the Chester cycle is the appearance of the two queens, although female characters are hardly unexpected in a Last Judgment play. More striking is the inclusion of the emperor (albeit here without an empress), which seems to point directly at some form of *danse macabre* influence. The emperor was obviously an important political figure on the Continent, although he is not to be found in late-medieval Doom paintings in England.⁷⁹ However, as we have seen, he does feature with the pope, king, and cardinal in a typical if small *danse macabre* series on the painted rood screen at Hexham, and there is also a moralistic image

of a dead emperor lying in state in the Carthusian Miscellany.⁸⁰ One finds the emperor with the pope and a king as a trinity of earthly power in Continental art—for example, in Hieronymus Bosch's *Haywain* triptych of the early sixteenth century which shows these three personages on horseback immediately behind the haywain.⁸¹ Another example is a miniature in a mid- to late-fifteenth-century book of hours produced in northern France (British Library MS. Harley 2917, fol. 119) which shows a pope, emperor, and king opposite their dead counterparts wearing exactly the same crowns appropriate to their status (fig. 11).⁸²

The speeches given to each of the blessed and damned souls are also in many ways characteristic of the Dance of Death. All refer to their former lives, status, and deeds with great humility and regret. The Papa Salvatus describes his "fleshlye will that wicked was" (*Chester* 24.61) and his neglect to fulfill God's commandment, but his time in purgatory has cleansed him of his sins. The Emperor Salvatus owes his salvation to his last-minute contrition and a thousand years in purgatory, much like the Rex Salvatus. In contrast, the Papa Damnatus faces the ultimate penalty for his covetousness and simony, while the damned emperor and king belatedly show remorse for their covetousness, manslaughter, gluttony, lechery, and lack of pity for the poor and the sick. However, it is the Regina Salvatus and the Regina Damnata who echo the very feminine regrets of many women in Martial d'Auvergne's *Danse Macabre des Femmes* who, even when faced with Death, still hanker after their pretty clothes and jewels.⁸³ The saved queen realizes that her alms and her "great repentance at the laste" (24.155) have brought her salvation, despite the fact that she was not only guilty of lechery but also reveled in her "softe sandalles and silke alsoe," her velvet, "and all such other weedes" (150–52). Her damned colleague bemoans the fact that she "was woman wrought" and curses the typically feminine enticements and sins that have brought her only perdition:

Fye on pearles! Fye on prydee!
Fye on gowne! Fye on guyde!
Fye on hewe! Fye on hyde!
These harrowe me to hell.

(24.277–80)

The Justiciarius Damnatus and Mercator Damnatus, for whom there are no blessed counterparts, are figures that also occur in many *danse*

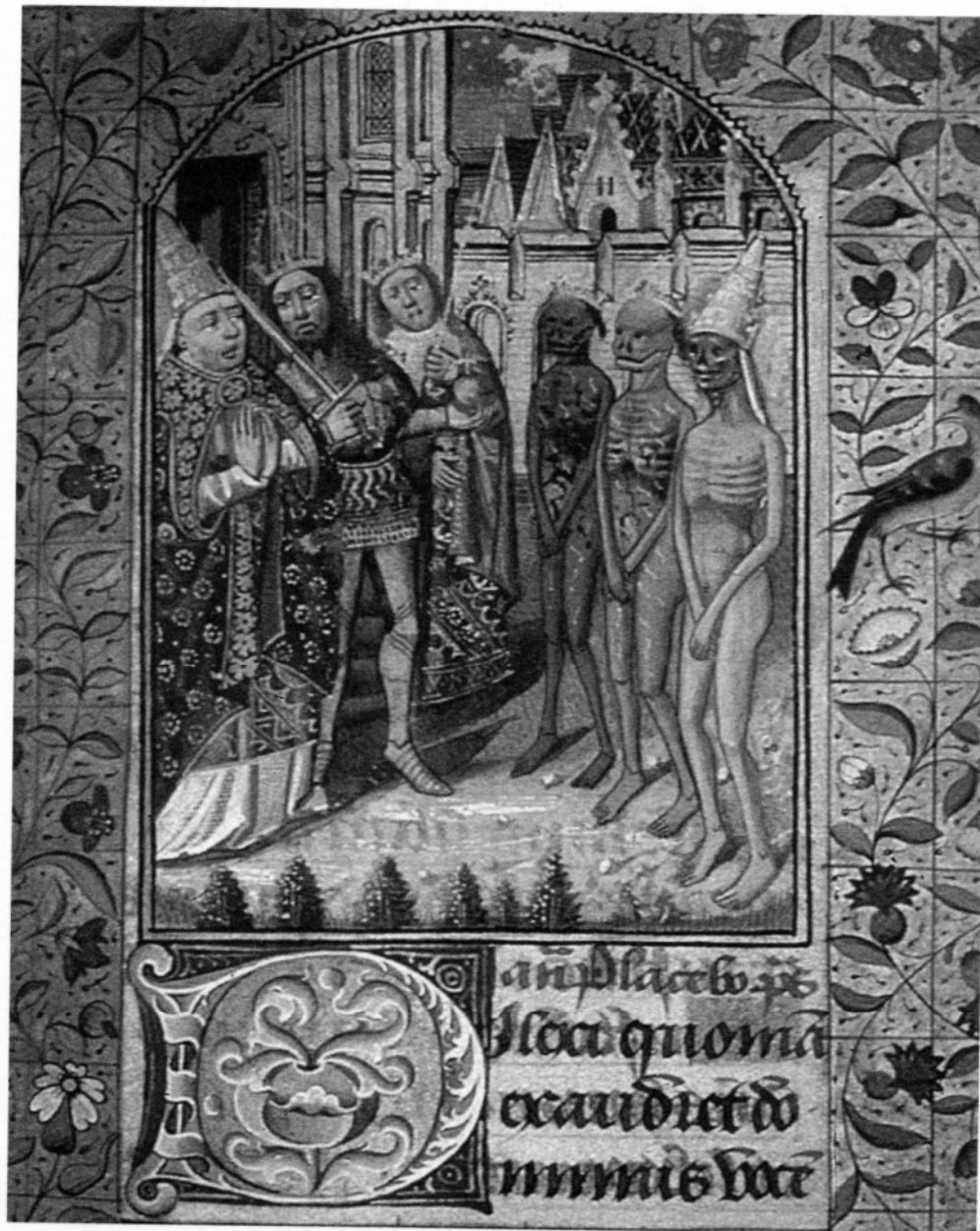


Fig. 11. A pope, an emperor, and a king facing their dead counterparts: illumination in a mid- to late-fifteenth-century book of hours produced in northern France (London, British Library MS. Harley 2917, fol. 119^r).

macabre versions. The former likens his flesh to a flower, which is quite a common image in this period but also is vaguely reminiscent of the words of Lydgate's "Doctor vtriusque Juris," who compares human life to a flower that is killed off by frost.⁸⁴ His self-confessed list of sins is spiked with legal references and includes dishonesty, covetousness, and injustice both toward the poor and the Church. Finally, the merchant, describing his dishonest and covetous dealings both in trade—in acquiring land and property—and in usury, thus paints what Lumiansky and Mills have termed "a composite picture of evil at local level."⁸⁵

In the past, many scholars have tried to find evidence for the *danse macabre* in other literary texts. One such example occurs in the B-text of *Piers Plowman*: "Deeþ cam dryuyng after and al to duste passhed / Kynges and knyghtes, kaysers and popes" (Passus 20.200–01).⁸⁶ However, as James Clark pointed out, these alliterative sequences were very popular not just with Langland but also with other medieval authors; they are rather stereotypical and occur elsewhere in the poem. Nor are these sequences always alliterative, as illustrated by Death's warning to Everyman that he "set not by golde, siluer, nor rychesse, / Ne by pope/emperour/kynge/duke, ne prynces," and by Mors's boast in Robert Henryson's poem "The Ressoning betuix Deth and Man":

Paip, empriour, king, barroun, and knyght,
Thocht thai be in thair ryell estait and hicht,
May nocht ganestand quhen I pleis schote this derte.⁸⁷

Curiously, in both instances we find the same threesome of pope, emperor, and king. More significant might seem another example of alliteration in the first soldier's reference to "kinge and [kesar]" (10.90)—the only occurrence, albeit misspelled in the manuscripts, of this Germanic term in the Chester cycle. However, there is not necessarily a direct German association here, as the word *kesar* had been known in England for centuries, and the alliterative formula "king and kesar" had been commonplace since at least the later thirteenth century.⁸⁸ The word is also used twice in *The Castle of Perseverance*, where it appears with a clear alliterative purpose.⁸⁹ Other listings of different personages can be found in the Chester mystery cycle—for example, when the Justiciarius in play 24 bemoans the money he sought "of baron, burges, or of bound" (306). Play 10 also contains several such examples, as in Herod's opening lines

"Princes, prelates of price, /barronnes in blamner and byse" (1–2) and soon after in "barrones, burges, and barronett" (10). Similarly, it may just have been a liking for hierarchical lists that made the Chester monk and author Henry Bradshaw recommend his *Lyfe of the glorious Virgyn saynt Werburge* (published with woodblock illustrations by the London printer Richard Pynson in 1521) to "[e]uery great estate / quene/duches/and lady"; the fact that Pynson is known to have produced by this time at least three editions of the *Kalender of Sheparden* with its "rudimentary" *danse macabre*, and that Bignon's edition of the *Hore beate marie virginis ad vsum Sarum* with Lydgate's verses accompanying ten Dance of Death woodcuts, is said to have been published the same year, could well be significant.⁹⁰

Although modern-day Chester still retains a medieval character, there is reason to believe that the loss of medieval art in the city and its surrounding area must have been great and deplorable. Medieval Chester was once a thriving city, rich in churches, monastic houses, and friaries.⁹¹ Fragments of high-quality wall paintings dating back to Henry III have been found at Chester Castle,⁹² and the colossal sandstone figure of St. Christopher of c. 1375–1400 from Norton Priory is rare surviving evidence of the quality of art produced in the area.⁹³ The Benedictine Abbey of St. Werburgh at Chester was home to such authors as the well-known historian Ranulph Higden in the fourteenth century and Henry Bradshaw in the early sixteenth.⁹⁴ Two of the latter's works were published in London, and there is no doubt that other printed works could have found their way to Chester; these could have included French and English books of hours and copies of the *Kalender of Sheparden* featuring marginal *danse macabre* illustrations. The fortunate survival of the Chester mystery cycle adds to the picture of Chester as a cultured and intellectual center in the early sixteenth century.

There can be no denying that the *danse macabre* influenced the choice of saved and lost souls in the Last Judgment play. Once we acknowledge this, it seems even more plausible that the *danse* also inspired the second soldier's joke about teaching an innocent to "hop" on his spear and thus his apparent impersonation of Death in the Massacre play. Yet in a fitting ironical twist, king Herod, who ordered his soldiers to carry out the Massacre, ultimately discovers that he too cannot escape the devil, death,

bodily decomposition. Does the textual evidence then point to the existence of a now lost Dance of Death scheme in the Chester area? MacLean does not include this subject in her *Chester Art* in the EDAM Reference Series, nor is there any mention of the Dance in the REED volume on Chester.⁹⁵ While this may indicate a complete absence of surviving evidence, it is possible that any references to such a scheme were simply overlooked, or even that the *danse macabre* was not thought to be relevant to the Chester cycle.⁹⁶ There appear to be no known antiquarian sources mentioning a mural of this theme in the Chester area, but there remains the possibility of an unrecorded cloth hanging similar to the ones that previously existed at Long Melford, Salisbury, and Bristol, or even of a *danse macabre* sequence in a lost stained glass window.⁹⁷

However, even if no such *danse macabre* scheme did exist in the vicinity, we should not forget the late date of the Chester mystery cycle as we now know it. By the second quarter of the sixteenth century, Death had long been a familiar stage figure in morality plays, and he also appeared in pageants, masques, and other types of performances.⁹⁸ We also need to be aware of early printed works containing references to the *danse macabre* and woodcut illustrations of it which would have helped to make the theme more widely known. It is likely not only that local people knew the famous "Dance of Paul's" by reputation, but also that the Chester playwrights were familiar enough with *danse macabre* texts, visual schemes, or even performances to insert references to the Dance in certain of the plays. After all, it has long been recognized that the Chester plays contain borrowings from other medieval texts and mystery plays elsewhere.⁹⁹ Thus, the Chester mystery cycle may teach us not only about religious drama on the eve of the Reformation but also about the wider cultural context in this period and in particular about a once popular theme that is now so little known in Britain.

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NOTES

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¹ *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills, EETS, s.s. 3, 9 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974–86); citations to the Chester cycle in this article are to this edition and refer to play and line numbers. See also David Mills, "The Chester Cycle," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle (1994; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 109–33.

² W. L. Hildburgh, "English Alabaster Carvings as Records of the Medieval Religious Drama," *Archaeologia* 93 (1949): 51–101; M. D. Anderson, *Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

³ Sally-Beth MacLean, *Chester Art: A Subject List of Extant and Lost Art Including Items Relevant to Early Drama, Early Drama, Art, and Music Reference Series 3* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1982).

⁴ See John Phillips, *The Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England, 1535–1660* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973); Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, vol. 1: *Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); *Iconoclasm vs. Art and Drama*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Ann Eljenholm Nichols, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 11 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), esp. Clifford Davidson, "The Anti-Visual Prejudice," 33–46. Also Phillip Lindley, "Introduction," "Image and Idol," and "From Romanesque to Reformation," in Richard Deacon and Phillip Lindley, *Image and Idol: Medieval Sculpture* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), 25–53.

⁵ The number was based on the number of the elect in the Apocalypse current in Byzantine liturgical tradition, and thus highly symbolic. Compare *Cursor Mundi*, ed. Richard Morris, EETS, o.s. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99, 101 (London: Trübner, 1874–93), 2:664: "It was a mikel sume o quain / O þaa childer þat war slain, / An hundret fourti-four thusand. / Thoru iesu com to lijf lastand" (ll. 11,577–80). The same number is found in the Herod pageant in *The Towneley Plays*, ed. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, EETS, s.s. 13–14 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994): "A hundreth thowsand, I watt, / and fourty ar slayn, / and four thowsand" (16.703–05). Subsequent citations of the Towneley collection are to this edition. Cf. *The Passion de Semur*, ed. P. T. Durbin and Lynette Muir, Leeds Medieval Studies 3 (Leeds: University of Leeds, Centre for Medieval Studies, 1981), 95, in which a soldier reports the slaughter "D'anffans cent xl iiii mille" (l. 3410).

⁶ As indicated in the comments on ll. 325–26 by Lumiansky and Mills (*Chester*, 2:154), "the pattern of events in this section is not clear," and the two children may be killed by the first and second soldier, respectively, rather than both by the second soldier. There is even a suggestion that there could have been as many as four women and more than two knights enacting this Massacre scene.

⁷ See Sophie Oosterwijk, "'Long lullynge haue I lorn!' The Massacre of the Innocents in Word and Image," in *Reading Images and Texts: Medieval Texts and Images as Forms of Communication*, ed. Mariëlle Hageman and Marco Mostert, Proceedings of the Third Utrecht Symposium on Medieval Literacy (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, forthcoming).

⁸ *Ibid.*; E. W. Tristram, *English Wall Painting of the Fourteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), 84–86, 153–55, pl. 30; also *The Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, ed. Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (London: Royal Academy of Arts and Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), catalogue no. 93. The Chalgrove painting of the Massacre is now in a much worse state than shown in Tristram's illustration, although one can still clearly recognize the Innocent's penis omitted in his plate.

⁹ As pointed out to me by Miriam Gill, who is an expert on late-medieval wall painting in England, the use of red ochre for body outlines was more common, which means the use of red lead pigment was clearly intended to make the blood stand out more vividly.

¹⁰ Compare the life of the Virgin, for example, in the *Legenda Aurea*, where she is said to have been offered to the temple at the age of three, once she had been weaned. Her age of three, which is in strong contrast with her precocious behavior, is repeatedly mentioned in the N-Town play of the Presentation of Mary (9.162–67), as when the Episcopus describes her as a “babe of thre 3er age so 3ynge.” Quotations from the N-Town collection in my article are from *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*, ed. Stephen Spector, EETS, s.s. 11–12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). The perceived image of the infant in the Middle Ages is examined in my “*Litel enfaunt that were but late borne*”: *The Image of the Infant in Medieval Culture in North-Western Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, forthcoming), based on my Ph.D. thesis (University of Leicester, 1999). The Innocents of Bethlehem are traditionally shown naked in medieval depictions of the Massacre; this helps emphasize their infant helplessness and vulnerability, although one does find the occasional cradle or swaddled baby in such scenes.

¹¹ *The Pageant of the Company of Shearmen and Taylors*, ll. 797–800, in *The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. Pamela M. King and Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 27 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).

¹² One may find the cradle in the fourteenth-century semicircular mural scheme of the Seven Ages of Man at Longthorpe Tower near Peterborough; see E. Clive Rouse, *Longthorpe Tower, Cambridgeshire* (1987; reprint, London: English Heritage, 1998), 4–6. See also John Winter Jones, “Observations on the Origin of the Division of Man’s Life into Stages,” *Archaeologia* 35 (1853): 167–89, esp. 186–89 and plate, showing a woodblock print of a Wheel of Life from the Middle-Rhine area, c.1480 (British Library IC.35), with a swaddled infant in his cradle opposite a corpse in the grave, and a newly ambulant naked toddler with a whirligig pointing at the decrepit old man bent over his walking stick on the opposite side of the Wheel. For additional discussion and examples, see Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), and J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). See also *The Worlde and the Chylde*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Peter Happé, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 26 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), esp. 6–20.

¹³ I quote from the facsimile of the 1485 edition in Gert Kaiser, ed., *Der tanzende Tod: Mittelalterliche Totentänze* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1983), 102 (translation mine).

¹⁴ Holger Eckhardt, “‘et dixi a a . . .’: Vom Tod der Kinder und von der Umgestaltung eines biblischen Topos in Totentänzen,” *Wirkendes Wort* 4 (1994): 33–40. For the Vulgate text, see *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgate Versionem*, ed. Robert Weber et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983).

¹⁵ For example, the *danse macabre* mural of c.1500 on the north wall of the nave in the parish church at La Ferté-Loupière in Burgundy has clearly been modeled on the woodcut illustrations of Marchant’s 1486 edition. The antiquarian and collector Francis Douce compiled an early list of all then-known editions; see *The Dance of Death in a series of Engravings on wood from designs attributed to Hans Holbein with a treatise on the subject by Francis Douce; also Holbein’s Bible cuts consisting of ninety engravings on wood with an introduction by Thomas Frognall Dibdin* (London, 1902), chap. 5.

¹⁶ For these two text versions, referred to as groups A and B, see Florence Warren, ed., *The Dance of Death, edited from MSS. Ellesmere 26/A.13 and B.M. Lansdowne 699, Collated with the Other extant MSS.*, EETS, o.s. 181 (London: Oxford University Press, 1931). Warren’s discussion of the two manuscript groups appears in *ibid.*, xxiv–xxxi. According to Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), these two distinct groups “indicate an unusually extensive revision on Lydgate’s part” (177).

¹⁷ See James M. Clark, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1950), 12–13.

¹⁸ Ibid., esp. 7–21; Fred Kloppenborg, "Totentänze in der religiösen Gebrauchskunst Englands," in *L'art macabre 1*, ed. Uli Wunderlich, Jahrbuch der Europäischen Totentanz-Vereinigung (Düsseldorf, 2000), 53–67; Miriam Clare Gill, "Late Medieval Wall Painting in England: Content and Context (c.1330–c.1530)," Ph.D. diss. (Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2001), chap. 4. See also Ethel Carleton Williams, "The Dance of Death in Painting and Sculpture in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd ser. 1 (1937): 229–57, esp. 237–39, and A. Caiger-Smith, *English Medieval Mural Paintings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 45–49.

¹⁹ *The Dance of Death*, ed. Warren, 68, 70, stanzas 73–74 (Ellesmere MS.); cf. British Library MS. Lansdowne 699, stanzas 67–68. Further quotations in my article are based on the Ellesmere version in this edition.

²⁰ Philippa Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death in Medieval English Literature* (London: Paul Elek, 1976), 170.

²¹ For this earliest German version, see Reinhold Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes: Die mittelalterlichen Totentänze und ihr Nachleben* (Berne and Munich: Francke Verlag, 1980), 29–39, 149; Hellmut Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz: Entstehung—Entwicklung—Bedeutung*, 2nd ed., Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 3 (Cologne and Graz: Böhlau Verlag, 1968), 89–102, 308–23. Interestingly, a scribal note in this manuscript seems to suggest that this version was copied from an earlier illuminated manuscript.

²² Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz*, 317, 323 (translation mine); also Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 37–38.

²³ Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 189–91; Kaiser, ed., *Der tanzende Tod*, 276–77.

²⁴ Kaiser, ed., *Der tanzende Tod*, 328 (translation mine).

²⁵ For a discussion of this iconography, see Sophie Oosterwijk, "Muss ich tanzen und kan nit gan? Das Kind im mittelalterlichen Totentanz," in *L'art macabre 3*, ed. Uli Wunderlich, Jahrbuch der Europäischen Totentanz-Vereinigung (Düsseldorf, 2000), 162–80.

²⁶ The verses dedicated to "Diu Muoter" or "Mater" naturally follow those of the infant in the Latin-German manuscript version, although their order is reversed in the Heidelberg blockbook.

²⁷ See Roger Brand, "Die mitteldeutsche Totentanztradition: Ein Werkstattbericht," in *L'art macabre 1*, 21–36, and also Kaiser, ed., *Der tanzende Tod*, 108–93, but esp. 158–59.

²⁸ See the description of the woodblock print IC.35 in n. 12 above, and also Cornelia Löhmer, *Die Welt der Kinder im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1989), 156–59; Annemarieke Willemsen, *Kinder delijt: Middeleeuws speelgoed in de Nederlanden*, Nijmeegse Kunsthistorische Studies 6 (Nijmegen: Nijmegen University Press, 1998), 127–30. For Death parodying his victims, see also Death displaying banners with the crossed keys of St. Peter and the Habsburg double-headed eagle to respectively the pope and the emperor in Knoblochtzer's edition, or the small wall-painting of c.1520 of Death and the young gallant in the church of St. Mary Magdalene at Newark (Nottinghamshire), where Death extends a rose to his victim in a parody of courtship.

²⁹ In fact, Lydgate's version deviates from the French model in another crucial respect in that it includes several female characters among the dancers, just like the earliest known German versions; instead, if we can rely on the evidence of Marchant's edition, the mural in Paris seems to have been an all-male scheme.

³⁰ Warren, ed., *The Dance of Death*, xxiv–xxxi, 107–08; Hubertus Schulte Herbrüggen, "Ein frühes liturgisches Beispiel für den englischen Totentanz: 'Hore beate marie virginis ad vsum ... Sari,' Paris (1521?)," in *Poesis et Pictura. Studien zum Verhältnis von Text und Bild in Handschriften und alten Drucken: Festschrift für Dieter Wuttke zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Stephan Füssel and Joachim Knappe (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1989), 235–53.

³¹ STC, nos. 6222–23; see also Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 19–20. Awdeley's 1569 broadsheet is illustrated in Douglas Gray, *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pl. 12. Additionally see Hubertus Schulte Herbrüggen, "Der Schäfer-Kalender: Zur unbeachteten Rolle des *Kalendrier des bergiers* als Übermittler des *Danse macabre* in die englische Literatur," in *Festschrift Otto Schäfer zum 75. Geburtstag am 19. Juni 1987*, ed. Manfred von Arnim (Stuttgart: Hauswedell, 1987), 237–88, and "Ein anglikanischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des englischen Totentanzes: John Days *Christian Prayers and Meditations*, 1569," in *Motive und Themen in englischsprachiger Literatur als Indikatoren literaturgeschichtlicher Prozesse: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Theodor Wolpers*, ed. Heinz-Joachim Müllenbruck and Alfons Klein (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), 73–93.

³² Warren, ed., *The Dance of Death*, xxvii, mentions that two manuscripts in group B of Lydgate's poem are actually entitled "The Daunce of Powlys" (Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS. 237) and "Daunce of Poules" (MS. Bodley 686).

³³ For example, a recent article by Hartmut Kokott, "Todeserleben und Totentänze im Mittelalter," *Der Deutschunterricht* 1 (2002): 11, lists Bohemia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland in addition to the more obvious countries, but fails to mention Great Britain. This common omission was recognized in Hubertus Schulte Herbrüggen, "Der Totentanz von Rosslyn (Schottland): Ein Beitrag zu einem neuen Forschungsvorhaben," *Jahrbuch der Universität Düsseldorf* 1981–83 (Düsseldorf, 1986), 165: "Während der kontinentaleuropäische Totentanz durch eine Fülle hervorragender Studien weithin als erforscht gelten darf, herrscht gegenüber dem britischen Totentanz selbst in Fachkreisen verbreitet Unkenntnis."

³⁴ Wilfrid 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; Clifford Davidson, *The Guild Chapel Wall Paintings at Stratford-upon-Avon* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), esp. 8–9, 54.

³⁵ See Clark, *The Dance of Death*, 7–8 and accompanying plate.

³⁶ See Williams, "The Dance of Death in Painting and Sculpture," 237–39; Clark, *The Dance of Death*, chap. 2; Herbrüggen, "Der Totentanz von Rosslyn," 165–75. Although the Norwich glass is illustrated and briefly discussed in Richard Marks, *Stained Glass in England during the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1993), 84, pl. 67, it is not identified as a *danse macabre* scene. However, Clark (*The Dance of Death*, 17) claims that this panel of Death and a bishop was part of an original scheme of forty-four panels, which were distributed over eleven windows and once included Death with an emperor, a pope, a cardinal, and other figures. Clark based his claim on the antiquarian John Kilpatrick who in his Church Notes for St. Andrew's Church dated September 1712 in the Norwich Record Office (NRO, MC 5000/14) described the window with the emperor, pope, cardinal and "all degrees of professions to carpenter and other mechanical trades" and added that "ye greater part of ther figures are quite defaced." I am extremely grateful to Fred Kloppenborg for sharing this information with me.

³⁷ Clark, *The Dance of Death*, 16.

³⁸ Kloppenborg, "Totentänze in der religiösen Gebrauchskunst Englands," 56–66. References to the Salisbury painting are be found in the churchwardens' accounts for the 1490s. For Long Melford, see also Gail 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. The lost painting in the Hungerford chapel at Salisbury Cathedral, described as a Dance of Death by Clark (*The Dance of Death*, 10), is instead identified by Kloppenborg as a scene of the Three Living and the Three Dead.

³⁹ Kloppenborg, "Totentänze in der religiösen Gebrauchskunst Englands," 63–65.

⁴⁰ David Mills, "The Chester Mystery Plays and the Limits of Realism," in *The Middle Ages in the North-West*, ed. Tom Scott and Pat Starkey (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1995), esp. 222–23.

⁴¹ Lawrence M. Clopper, "The History and Development of the Chester Cycle," *Modern Philology* 75 (1978): 219–46; see also *Records of Early English Drama: Chester*, ed. Lawrence M. Clopper (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), esp. liii–lv; Mills, "The Chester Mystery Plays and the Limits of Realism," esp. 230, and "The Chester Cycle," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, esp. 109–13.

⁴² *Danse macabre* borders can be found in books of hours from the 1480s on, both in illuminated manuscripts and in editions printed by Simon Vostre, Antoine Vérard, Thielman Kerver, and John Day; see Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 177. For John Day, see Herbrüggen, "Ein anglikanischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des englischen Totentanzes"; and also Samuel Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 228–32.

⁴³ See Sophie Oosterwijk, "'The sodeyne vyolence of cruel dethe': Commemoration and the Dance of Death in Late-Medieval England," unpublished paper presented at a conference on the "Commemoration of the Dead in Ireland and Britain from 1400 to the Present: Monuments and Society," National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 24 November 2001. A number of examples, including the lost 1577 brass to Thomas Annot at Lowestoft in Suffolk mentioned below, can also be found in the author's contribution to the Picture Library on the Monumental Brass Society Web site at www.mbs-brasses.co.uk.

⁴⁴ Translation mine. See also William Lack, H. Martin Stuchfield, and Philip Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Bedfordshire* (London: Monumental Brass Society, 1992), 12–13; and A. C. Bouquet, *Church Brasses, British and Continental, with Some Notes on Incised Stone Slabs and Indents* (London: Batsford, 1956), 148–49, which contains a transcription of the complete epitaph, albeit not wholly accurate.

⁴⁵ Richard Marks, "Henry Williams and his 'Ymage of Deth' Roundel at Stanford on Avon, Northamptonshire," *Antiquaries Journal* 54 (1974): 272–74.

⁴⁶ I am grateful to Sally Badham for bringing this brass to my attention.

⁴⁷ In John Awdelay's 1569 broadsheet, Dance is seen leading along "the old man" with his walking stick and "the childe," with the latter shown as a naked toddler; the old man on the Chesterfield monument also holds a walking stick, while the naked infant has a whirligig.

⁴⁸ This is a later iconographical development from the earlier type of moralizing encounter between the Three Living and the Three Dead. Compare the various illustrations in *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: Éditions du Cherche-Lune, 2001), e.g., 12, 26, 50, 60, 78, 81, 92, 100, 102–03, 106, 114, 137, 143, 147. In German *Totentanz* scenes, Death is more usually presented with musical instruments to accompany the dancers.

⁴⁹ See J. G. Waller, "On the Wall Paintings Discovered in the Churches of Raunds and Slapton, Northamptonshire," *Archaeological Journal* 34 (1877): 219–41, esp. 221 and illustration opposite. I am very grateful to Miriam Gill for drawing my attention to this mural and its iconography.

⁵⁰ For the York window, see Marks, *Stained Glass in England*, 82, 84, fig. 66. The Bodleian Library miniature is illustrated in Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death*, pl. 24. The figure of Death in the left column on fol. 19^v is specifically referred to in the right column in the lines: "Syth that ye lyste to be my costes. ¶ And in your book to set myne Image." According to the text on the frontispiece, the manuscript was a gift to Sister Pernelle Wrattisley in the nunnery of Detford from her uncle William Baron.

⁵¹ *The Pardoner's Tale*, 675, 677. Quotations from *The Canterbury Tales* in my article are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987); see also Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (1972; reprint, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 393, n. 84.

⁵² See *An Illustrated Yorkshire Carthusian Religious Miscellany* (Brit. Library London Additonal MS. 37049), ed. James Hogg, *Analecta Cartusiana* 95 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1981), vol. 3. Death is shown with a spear in scenes on fols. 19^r, 36^r, 38^r, 39^r, 40^v, 42^r, 42^v, 43^r, and with arrows on fols. 69^r and 84^v. One could wonder whether the illustrator saw a link between the scenes of Death spearing dying figures—e.g., on fol. 38^v—and the lance piercing Christ's side on fol. 67^v.

⁵³ *The Castle of Perseverance*, l. 2867, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. Mark Eccles, EETS, o.s. 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). See Joan Steffek and Clifford Davidson, "A Late Pictorial Analogue to a Scene in *The Castle of Perseverance*," *Early Drama, Art and Music Newsletter* 12 (spring 1990): 31–33. Mors also confirms his use of a lance in l. 2807: "Wyth þis launce I leye hem lowe."

⁵⁴ For the use of puppets in mystery plays, see the commentary by Spector in *The N-Town Play*, 2:477, and Sophie Oosterwijk, "Of Mops and Puppets: The Ambiguous Use of the Word 'Mop' in the Towneley Shepherds' Plays," *Notes and Queries* 242 (June 1997): 169–71.

⁵⁵ See Woolf, *English Mystery Plays*, 210, 393 (n. 80).

⁵⁶ As noted by Spector in his commentary (*The N-Town Play*, 2:479), in Holbein's woodcut Death approaches the king at his feast while acting the part of a servant pouring wine.

⁵⁷ See Gibson, "East Anglian Drama and the Dance of Death," and also her subsequent book *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). See additionally the commentary on Death's speeches in Spector, ed., *The N-Town Play*, 2:478–79.

⁵⁸ E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1903), 2:153. *Danse macabre* performances are believed to have taken place at Caudebec in 1393, Bruges in 1449, and Besançon in 1453; see Gibson, "East Anglian Drama and the Dance of Death," 2, and Warren, *The Dance of Death*, xi. Clark (*The Dance of Death*, 93–94) also mentioned a chronicle report of a court procession at the wedding of Alexander III of Scotland at Jedburgh in 1285 which reads like an early *danse macabre* performance. Many scholars believe that the late-medieval Dance of Death developed out of an earlier folk ritual.

⁵⁹ See Spinrad, *The Summons of Death*, esp. chaps. 3–4.

⁶⁰ For Herod's grisly end, which was traditionally regarded as a fitting punishment for his role in the Massacre, see the commentary by Lumiansky and Mills on ll. 417–33 in *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, 2:156, and also by Spector in *The N-Town Play*, 2:479 (commentary on play 20.232).

⁶¹ Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, 206, 254–55, comparing this episode with other game metaphors such as the game resembling blind man's buff elaborated in the scourging of Christ in three out of four English cycles, although not in the Chester Play.

⁶² I am grateful to Uli Wunderlich, president of the Europäische Totentanz-Vereinigung, for alerting me to this print and to yet another Massacre scene with a figure of Death painted in 1885 in the Friedhofskapelle at Bad Mergentheim.

⁶³ For Chaucer, see the Reeve's Prologue, "We hoppen alwey whil the world wol pype" (3876), and the Cook's Tale, "At every bridale wolde he synge and hoppe" (4375). The *MED* (s.v. "hoppe") quotes Lydgate as having used the word in his poem "O Fools": "The tenth fool may hoppe vpon the ryng, Foore al afforn, and lede of riht the daunce" (25).

⁶⁴ See Kaiser, ed., *Der tanzende Tod*, 320.

⁶⁵ Warren, ed., *The Dance of Death*, 14 (stanza 15).

⁶⁶ This motif of Death playing musical instruments also occurs in the Spanish *Danza*, but not in the French or British traditions; see Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 51–55.

⁶⁷ See Kaiser, ed., *Der tanzende Tod*, 280, 288, 292, 296.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁶⁹ See *The Danse Macabre of Women: MS. fr. 995 of the Bibliothèque Nationale*, ed. Ann Tukey Harrison, with a chapter by Sandra L Hindman (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1994) 34, 82–83.

⁷⁰ See *MED*, s.v. "plei(e)."

⁷¹ Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, 295; see also the commentary on l. 40 in *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. Lumiansky and Mills, 2:355.

⁷² Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, 295, 413 n. 95, lists the damned souls in the French play *Le Jour du jugement* as a bishop, abbess, king, bailiff, provost, lawyer, queen, usurer, and the usurer's wife, servant, and child.

⁷³ Clark, *The Dance of Death*, 14, translates *justiciarius* as justiciary; Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, 295, interprets the term as judge; and Lumiansky and Mills in *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, 2:355, as lawyer.

⁷⁴ For the different personages in the two manuscript groups, including the empress, see Warren, ed., *The Dance of Death*, xxiv–xxxi; although belonging to group A, MS. Selden Supra 53 shows the two stanzas relating to the empress added in a different hand. For the *Kalender of Sheparden*, see Herbrüggen, "Der Schäfer-Kalender," esp. 246–48 and fig. 1.

⁷⁵ Hammerstein, *Tanz und Musik des Todes*, 32–33.

⁷⁶ Kaiser, ed., *Der tanzende Tod*, 276–329. In contrast, the Knoblochtzer edition of c.1488 has first the pope and cardinal, with the emperor and king as the tenth and eleventh personages, but without the empress or queen; see *ibid.*, 108–93.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 194–275, esp. 198–209.

⁷⁸ See the list by Werner L. Gundersheimer in the complete facsimile of the 1538 edition in *The Dance of Death by Hans Holbein the Younger* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), xii.

⁷⁹ I am grateful to Miriam Gill for this information.

⁸⁰ See *An Illustrated Yorkshire Carthusian Religious Miscellany*, fol. 87^v, where the dead emperor's newly crowned son is shown his father's corpse by a steward.

⁸¹ See Roger H. Marijnissen and Peter Ruysfelaere, *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Works* (Antwerp: Tabard Press, 1987), 52–83, but esp. 74, for the version in the Prado, Madrid; another version of the *Haywain* triptych is in El Escorial. All three figures can easily be recognized by their characteristic crowns and tiara.

⁸² For this miniature, see Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death*, 162–63, pl. 25; Tristram describes the figures not just as the Three Living and the Three Dead but also as representing three Ages, without mention of their actual status or significance as figures of power. Referring to this illustration, Spinrad (*The Summons of Death*, 5) interprets the three figures as a pope, an emperor, and a prince.

⁸³ Despite the assertion made by Suzanne F. Wemple and Denise A. Kaiser, "Death's Dance of Women," *Journal of Medieval History* 12 (1986): 341, that "the author can not be accused of misogyny," many of the women are presented as preoccupied with clothes and jewelry, which is very much in line with the attitudes to women expressed in other medieval texts. Even the little girl, who was once quoted by Johan Huizinga as a touching example of medieval childhood, still worries about her "belle cotte" when captured by Death; see *The Danse Macabre of Women*, ed. Harrison, 107. In the *Danse Macabre des Femmes*, the queen, who is presented as its first personage, does not mention clothes or jewelry, although she does complain that Death's dance is "bien nouvelle" to her—probably another reference to its "savage" or lowly character; see *ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁴ Warren, ed., *The Dance of Death*, 35, 37; this character is apparently unique to MS. Lansdowne 699.

⁸⁵ Lumiansky and Mills, eds., *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, 2:364.

⁸⁶ William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone Press, 1975), 665; see also Clark, *The Dance of Death*, 16, and Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death*, 179.

⁸⁷ *Everyman*, ed. A. C. Cawley (1961; reprint, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), 4 (ll. 125–26); "The Resonning betuix Deth and Man," ll. 4–6, in Robert Henryson, *The Poems*, ed. Denton Fox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Compare also "thow may me noch deny, / Thocht thow wer paip, empriour, and king al thre," in the same poem, ll. 39–40, and the mention of emperor, king, and queen in "The Thre Deid Pollis," ll. 37–38.

⁸⁸ I am grateful to David Mills for pointing this out to me.

⁸⁹ Belyal mentions the "Kynghys, kayserys, and kempys and many a kene knyth" in *The Castle of Perseverance* (215) among his victims, while Malus Angelus refers to "caysere, kynge, and knyth" (343).

⁹⁰ Henry Bradshaw, *Lyfe of the glorious Virgyn saynt Werburge*, ed. Carl Horstmann, EETS, o.s. 88 (Oxford: Trübner, 1887), 198 (l. 1986); see Elizabeth Danbury, "The Intellectual Life of the Abbey of St Werburgh, Chester, in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Archaeology, Art and Architecture at Chester*, ed. Alan Thacker, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 22 (Leeds, 2000), 116. In subsequent verses, Bradshaw also commends his text to virgins, widows, and nuns. For Pynson's and Bignon's editions, see Herbrüggen, "Ein frühes liturgisches Beispiel für den englischen Totentanz" and "Ein anglikanischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des englischen Totentanzes."

⁹¹ Simon Ward, "The Friaries in Chester, Their Impact and Legacy," and J. Patrick Greene, "The Impact of the Dissolution on Monasteries in Cheshire: The Case of Norton," in *Medieval Archaeology, Art and Architecture at Chester*, ed. Thacker, 121–31 and 152–66.

⁹² Sharon Cather, David Park, and Robyn Pender, "Henry III's Wall Paintings at Chester Castle," in *Medieval Archaeology, Art and Architecture at Chester*, ed. Thacker, 170–89.

⁹³ See Deacon and Lindley, *Image and Idol*, 46 and plates (exhibit 8).

⁹⁴ Danbury, "The Intellectual Life of the Abbey of St Werburgh," 107–20.

⁹⁵ Clopper, *Records of Early English Drama: Chester*, *passim*.

⁹⁶ The likelihood of any relevant reference having been overlooked seems especially small in Clopper's extensive REED study, yet evidence for *danse macabre* schemes can be hard to detect or interpret. For example, Gail McMurray Gibson herself originally misinterpreted the reference to the "three long cloths" of the "daunce of Paule" in the Long Melford inventories as banners for a maypole dance, nor was she the only one to make this mistake; see Gibson, "East Anglian Drama and the Dance of Death," 1, 7 n. 2.

⁹⁷ In addition to the remaining glass panel of Death and a bishop at St. Andrew's Church in Norwich, Clark (*The Dance of Death*, 16) mentions two medieval panes of glass once in the possession of Francis Douce. One of these is described as Death and a pope, while the other showed "three Deaths" that could once have been placed at the beginning of a Dance of Death, with the accompanying text: "... ev'ry man to be contented w^h his chaunce, / And when it shall please God to folowe my daunce."

⁹⁸ Spinrad, *Summons of Death*, *passim*. Of course, scholars have long wondered whether the *danse macabre* could have developed out of a much older folk dance or ritual; see, for example, Warren, ed., *The Dance of Death*, xiii–xvi; Kaiser, ed., *Der tanzende Tod*, 55–58; Christoph Mörgeli and Uli Wunderlich, "Tanzende Tote in einer Aargauer Handschrift des 14. Jahrhunderts," in *L'art macabre* 3: 144–61.

⁹⁹ See David Mills in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, esp. 113–15, for the inclusion of material from the Middle-English poem *A Stanzaic Life of Christ* in at least seven Chester plays, and also borrowings from the Coventry, Towneley, and York cycles and the Brome play.

