WALK THIS WAY:
A CONTEXTUALIZATION OF
THE DANCE OF DEATH IN MS M.359

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by

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OF THE DANCE OF DEATH IN MS M.359

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To Cindy Anders
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A caveat on pronouns: I use “it” and will consistently do so throughout the thesis in reference to Death, unless the Death in question is obviously gendered. While Death is often referred to as a male under the pronoun “he,” some depictions of Death are obviously female, with pendulous breasts. Furthermore, the female pronoun “she” is often utilized in reference to the reader of a Book of Hours, as this particular type of devotional aid is often associated with women, but in reference to the reader of MS M.359, I will use the masculine pronouns “he” and “his.” I do this because I have reason to believe that the intended patron was a man, and I will address this in the body of my text.

Any errors within this work are my own.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the personification of death in the Dance of Death depicted in the margins of a French, fifteenth-century Book of Hours. It contextualizes the Dance of Death with regard to its artist and his workshop, its time and place of facture, its position within the margins of the Office of the Dead in a Book of Hours, and in relation to other, monumental Dances of Death. The Dance of Death is compared to other image cycles within the decorative program of the same manuscript - including themes of leprosy, St. Lazarus, blindness, personifications of the seven virtues, the fifteen signs of the apocalypse, and the life of St. Job. Similarities between these themes indicate a consistent and largely didactic plan behind the image program for the manuscript that is meant to guide the reader toward contemplating his life and presumably amend any errors therein. Wolfgang Iser’s phenomenological approach to reading is employed to trace how this particular Dance effects that didactic plan, both from its place in the Office of the Dead and as opposed to those Dances which are presented in large-scale mural form. This thesis proposes that the manuscript was probably commissioned by a wealthy man who may have had connections to the Parisian court of John of Lancaster, the Duke of Bedford, and who may have had ties with the clergy and/or hospital ministries.
INTRODUCTION

Books of Hours were a form of devotional book that was particularly popular in the late Medieval and early Renaissance periods. They became the most popular prayerbook used by the laity. In fact, Books of Hours were so popular that they have been identified as “the bestsellers of an era that lasted 300 years,” and they were produced in such large quantities in the medieval period that, as John Harthan states, “they form the largest single category of illuminated manuscripts which now exists.”¹ Books of Hours originated from a tenth-century addition to the Breviary, which holds the entirety of the Divine Office.² This addition was a service honoring the Virgin Mary and known as the “Little Office of Our Lady.” Roughly three centuries later this service was extracted from the Breviary to stand alone.³ As Roger S. Wieck explains, “The Hours of the Virgin are a sequence of prayers to the Mother of God that, ideally, were recited throughout the course of the entire day, sanctifying it through her to God, Hour by Hour.”⁴ To this end, they contained prayers and psalms, usually organized according to the eight canonical hours of the day, saints’ days, and special services appropriate to the liturgical calendar. They often begin with a calendar, which can be used to pinpoint the location of its intended use, as each calendar was usually personalized according to the saints of the region and city of its user. With the exception of a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century movement in the Netherlands that produced

² Harthan, 13. Harthan’s book, The Book of Hours, has a very good description of books of hours, and unless otherwise noted, the information in this section about this type of book and in the section on the Office of the Dead will be from his work.
³ Harthan, 13. According to Harthan, the “earliest known English example of a separate Book of Hours appears to be the mid-thirteenth century Hours of the Sarum Use executed by William of Brailes (British Library, Add. Ms. 49999).”
Books of Hours in Dutch, most were written (or printed) in Latin – though in some cases, there might have been captions in the vernacular to assist the reader.\(^5\)

In addition to calendars and the main hourly prayers, these books contained other devotional texts such as the Office of the Dead. According to Ashby Kinch, the Office of the Dead is “the only text in the Book of Hours that replicates the canonical liturgy.”\(^6\) Harthan states that this Office contains “the prayers to be said over the coffin as it lies in the bier of the church.”\(^7\) While the Office itself was probably developed in the early ninth century, it did not gain widespread popularity until later. Harthan connects the common practice of combining the Office of the Dead with the “no doubt expensive public ritual with mourners and candles” of the early fifteenth century with the waves of Black Death experienced by Europe from the mid-fourteenth century to around the nineteenth century.\(^8\) According to Harthan, including the entirety of this office in Books of Hours indicates that, in addition to its use in public services, “it was the habit of the layfolk to read it regularly in private.”\(^9\) He connects this with “the need for constant penitence and preparation,” and he cites the popularity of *Of the Imitation of Christ*, the early fifteenth-century book by Thomas À Kempis.\(^10\) In the twenty-third chapter of the first book, “Of Meditation on Death,” Kempis makes the statements such as, “Happy is he that always hath the hour of

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\(^5\) Wieck, 10.


\(^7\) Harthan, 17.

\(^8\) Harthan, 17. The connection between a possible cultural preoccupation with death and the massive mortality of the Black Death around 1348 and its successive waves is commonly made, but it has frequently been challenged in the last few decades. Harthan’s statement here, then, is a traditional assertion but should be taken with a grain of salt, for scholars know that the practice of using candles was in place *before* the outbreak of the plague because some authors contemporary to the plague’s fourteenth-century occurrence note the cessation or reduction of the use of candles *during* the plague itself as a way to mark a breakdown in usual decorum and practice.

\(^9\) Harthan, 17.

his death before his eyes, and daily prepareth himself to die...When it is morning, think thou mayest die before the night; And when evening comes, dare not promise thyself the next morning.”

The contemplation of not only dying but dying well was, therefore, an important facet of late medieval life in Europe. Wieck states that praying the Office of the Dead was primarily meant “to reduce the time spent by one’s friends and family in the fires of purgatory.” Thus, when contemplating it alone, the devotee prepared herself for the inevitable end, and when she said it for others, she carried out her duty toward loved ones, hoping that others would return the favor when said inevitable end came. As Wieck states, “These aids were essential, because only the living could help the dead.”

In this thesis, I will discuss a long series of roundels that decorate the Office of the Dead in a fifteenth-century French Book of Hours now in New York (Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.359).

The roundels that are the focus of this thesis are nestled in the dense, foliate margins of the prayerbook and depict scenes of the Dance of Death. Most are full-circle roundels containing one Dancer being led away by two Deaths. This particular Dance contains fifty-seven vignettes, whereas the usual number of Dancers is between thirty and forty. William Voelkle, who cites the Morgan Dance of Death as being the only Dance that has been attributed to the Bedford Master, states that this particular

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11 Kempis, 64.
12 Wieck, 9.
13 Wieck, 117.
14 It is unknown for whom the manuscript was originally commissioned. However, the Pierpont Morgan Library has made its curatorial documents available online, and the ownership has been traced almost continuously from roughly a century after its facture to the present. Based on inscriptions added to the manuscript itself, in the mid-sixteenth century, Charles de Bourgueville, sieur de Bras, owned it, and it was in his family’s possessions until 1604. Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan bought MS M.359 “from Ludovic Bodin of Paris in June 1909.” Pierpont Morgan Library, Curatorial Description of MS M.359, 2.
Dance “is the earliest extant representation of the Dance of Death, and it is also the most extensive.”

Within the context of a Book of Hours, death triggers the final of seven sacraments, Last Communion and Extreme Unction, and, as Natalie Zemon Davis writes, is “one of the crucial transitions of the Christian” life. But, of course, more generally, death is something that touches everyone, whether collectively, individually, or peripherally. Whether it entered the world at a specific moment, such as the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden as Hans Holbein the Younger depicts it in his Dance of Death woodcuts published in 1538, or whether it is the most obvious and final expression of the scientific processes behind the law of entropy, death has been a constant part of the basic human experience.

Yet, it remains a mystery, and often a terrifying one. As Socrates says in Plato’s Apology, “No one knows whether death may not be the greatest of all blessings for a man, yet men fear it as if they knew that it is the greatest of all evils.” Despite this fear of the unknown, the mystery still incites curiosity.

An interesting manifestation of this fascination is the personification of death, and the implications of the moments when death becomes Death hold their own appeal, though they are inherently problematic. As Elina Gertsman states, “Since death is an absence rather than a presence, any attempt to paint death underscores the impossibility of doing so

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by the very tangibility of the represented subject.” The idea of taking an often difficult event and turning it into, or rather conceptualizing it as, a thinking, talking entity who stalks through the night, chooses victims, and steals people away is a fascinating historical development; the purpose of such a practice is less clear. Whether as an intellectual or contemplative exercise or a didactic tale or simply a plot device of apocalyptic scale, Death appears in poems and songs, on pages, on pots, on walls, and in our minds, often as a sentient being which moves through the world of its own accord.

One could argue that Thanatos, the ancient Greek god who appears with Hypnos (Sleep) and collects warriors from the battlefields in texts such as the Iliad (fig. 1), somewhat blurs the line between a personification and a deity, particularly since his name literally means “Death,” but his image as an idealized and intact human form clashes somewhat with the depictions that appear in the late medieval period, and James M. Clark states that the Dance of Death cannot be traced back to this time because “there was no such thing as the Dance of Death in which both the living and the dead take part” in antiquity.20 How to portray, then, a personified Death who can dance with the living becomes a pictorial problem. Sarah Webster Goodwin and Elisabeth Bronfen have considered the complexities of writing about and depicting death in the introduction of the book Death and Representation, state, “A...gruesome but nevertheless pertinent question, especially given the thematics of fragmentation that the subject of death occasions, is How much of the body is needed to represent the corpse – legally, technically, emotionally?”21

19 Gertsman, 21.
Judging by *Hamlet*, one might presume to say that all that is needed to represent any person through their dead body is the skull. Indeed, the Death’s Head, with its ever-present and somewhat mocking grin, is an emblem that has been used frequently throughout history.\(^{22}\) But when representing Death itself, as a sentient entity, the matter may be a little different. During the late Medieval period, Death usually appears as one or more complete, mobile skeletons in various states of decay. The more cadaverous examples may bear hanging flaps of skin which reveal body cavities filled with frogs and worms or snakes (fig. 22). These creatures, according to scientific and medical thought at the time, did not flock to the body but rather were generated by the putrescence and contamination of its decay.\(^ {23}\) There are certain tropes within the more general theme of Death personified which occur in medieval art; the three main ones are The Tale of the Three Dead and Three Living, The Triumph of Death, and The Dance of Death. In this thesis, I focus on the trope of the Dance of Death.

Clark has defined the Dance of Death as “literary or artistic representations of a procession or dance, in which both the living and the dead take part.”\(^ {24}\) This trope began as an oral and literary tradition, in poetry and song, before being melded with images.\(^ {25}\) Gertsman has written a monograph on Dances of Death and has provided a good summary of the trope’s typical features. The Dances usually consist of a series of dialogues between Death and its victims, who vary in age, rank, and gender. Some plead and some try to

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\(^ {24}\) Clark, 1.

\(^ {25}\) Gertsman, 3.
reason with Death. Some even try to bribe it, but Death is adamant and often mocks their clutching at titles and roles. Monetary gain is similarly meaningless to it, and one by one, Death claims each of the speakers, who grow silent as the next speaker enters the conversation. In earlier versions of the Dance, the victims are usually arranged in a hierarchical, and thus somewhat standard, order. Death begins its harvest with figures such as the pope and the emperor and ends with the lower echelons of society - such as the craftsmen, the beggars and the ill, and the child - but the message is plain. Death may have a long line to work its way down, but it will get to everyone eventually, and each will get Death’s special attention and be taken in his or her proper time. It is this idea of a line which the visual depictions of Dances of Death usually utilize. These Dances often came in the form of large scale murals, but there are some examples in manuscripts and printed books. More discussion of the scholarship behind this trope will be given in a later chapter.

The exact state of the dancers’ lives is debatable. Some say that Death dances with living partners, with the understanding that they are dead once Death has led them away. Others say that by being in the dance, the human partners are technically now “the dying.” Others take the stance that once Death has seized its partner, that person is dead. And some even go so far as to rename the scene “The Dance of the Dead,” rather than “The Dance of Death.” These are important distinctions and allow for numerous opportunities in word play, but they are not the focus here.

This thesis seeks to contextualize the Dance of Death in MS M.359 within several spheres suggested by the historical and pictorial developments sketched in this

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26 Gertsman, 69-75.
introduction. These include the historical and geographical background supplied by the identification of its artist, the significance of the Dance’s presence in a Book of Hours and specifically in MS M.359, and the relation of this Dance to other examples of this trope. Due to these efforts at contextualization, my overall methodology for this thesis could be described as iconological in nature.\textsuperscript{28}

When attempting to describe a work of art, I begin by answering questions. The first question is what the work shows, and this is closely followed by questions of what it tells the viewer or, more bluntly, what it means. For the most part, the first question – \textit{what does it show} - can be answered in the simplest way by looking.\textsuperscript{29} The second two questions of mine – \textit{what does it tell us} and \textit{what does it mean} - can be answered in almost as many ways as there are people attempting to describe them. This is not to say that one can ascribe just any meaning to a work. Rather, tools of looking and methods of describing change over time, and meaning or significance is invariably multivalent. Furthermore, answers depend on the other questions asked, and the questions often depend upon who is asking.

One way to begin contextualizing a work is to take the simple questions one starts with and complicate them. For example, one might qualify the question of what a work ‘means’ with the additional question of what purpose it served. Three other questions that often surface are by whom, where, and for whom a work was made. For some works these are easier to answer, but with others this is more difficult to determine. MS M.359 is one

\textsuperscript{28} I use the word “iconological” rather than “iconographical” specifically with Erwin Panofsky’s influential essay of 1939 in mind, because “iconography” describes the only first two portions of the three-part process which Panofsky lays out, whereas he applies “iconology” to the process as a whole and the third part in which one interprets the work. Erwin Panofsky, “Introductory,” in \textit{Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance}, (United States of America: Icon Editions, a Westview Press, 1972), 3-17.

\textsuperscript{29} Though no doubt some would correctly say that knowing what a work \textit{shows} would be somewhat dependent upon knowing what it means and/or says, I am using this word in the more literal sense of what figures, objects, and places, if any, are depicted.
of these more difficult cases, and the first chapter of this thesis, “Death in Context: MS M.359 in the World of the Bedford Workshop,” will situate the manuscript’s facture in time and space.

When answering the question of who made this, one runs into the problem that the artistic style is recognizable but the artist is presently unknown. This is to say that his style or hand can be traced in this work and several others, but his individual identity as a person cannot be firmly established. MS M.359 has been identified as a work created by the Master of the Duke of Bedford, also called the Bedford Master. However, this appellation can be somewhat problematic, as well, for while several works have been attributed to the Bedford Master, more than one hand can be traced in each one. Scholarship surrounding this master - such as the works by Eleanor P. Spencer, Janet Backhouse, and Eberhard König - seems to lean more towards discussing one master with a whole workshop who worked in The Bedford Style, although the supposed master’s hand is still picked out by connoisseurs, especially in the larger miniatures which usually mark the beginnings of a new section of the text.\(^{30}\) The first chapter will place MS M.359 within the sphere of this artist’s, or rather these artists’, oeuvre and the circles of patrons in which they moved. It will also raise certain connections to the English poet John Lydgate and tie the Morgan Dance of Death to a specific poem.

After the wider context in which MS M.359 came into being is sketched out, the manuscript will become a context in its own right. In the second chapter, MS M.359’s layout will be summarized, and its decorative program will be examined, in order to see

how the sequence and presence of the Morgan Dance of Death sequence relates to the pictorial themes illuminating the rest of the codex, several of which convey themes which intersect with the Dance sequence in interesting, and usually didactic, ways. Kinch argues that MS M.359 was made on speculation, but by highlighting the coherence of the visual program throughout the manuscript as a whole, as well as certain issues within Kinch’s own argument, I will argue that this particular book seems to have been tailored to the tastes of a specific patron, even though that patron cannot now be identified.31 Another way to complicate the question of what purpose an object served is to ask why a certain motif presented in that work in that way. Unfortunately, the simplicity of this exercise is deceptive, because it is easy to ask why something is so, but arriving at an answer one can propose with certainty is nearly impossible. However, there are methods by which one can arrive at possibilities, and to this end I will apply Wolfgang Iser’s phenomenological approach to reading when examining the significance of the Morgan Dance in relation to the text of the Office of the Dead in MS M.359.32 I will use his 1972 article as a lens through which to view why one might want to display an image of death personified, what message this personification sends the viewer, and how that message changes when the motif is displayed in different formats.

After narrowing the paper’s inquiries from the contexts of MS M.359’s facture to the Bedford Master to the Morgan Dance of Death’s specific place within MS M.359, the third chapter will widen the contextualization along the lines of the theme of the Dance of Death. Iser states, “The phenomenological theory of art lays full stress on the idea that, in

31 Kinch, 213.
considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text... The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence.\textsuperscript{33} If one then takes the images of Dances of Death as texts, with or without their associated poems, the form in which each Dance appears changes the interaction between the image and the viewer and thus changes the nature of the messages which the image conveys. I will introduce a more extensive summary of the Dances’ early history and terms before comparing the Morgan Dance with other Dances which are made of very different or slightly similar mediums. Specifically, I will reference Gertsman’s monograph, which focuses more on Dances of Death as murals, and highlight what elements change when the Dance is adapted to book-form.

To conclude, I will tie these somewhat disparate contexts together and end with a look forward from MS M.359 to the continuing practice of personifying Death - in literature, television, and music - which has extended into the present.

\textsuperscript{33} Iser, 279.
Because the illuminations of MS M.359 have been attributed to a specific artistic context, the work can be placed within the contexts surrounding its facture. This includes temporal, historical, cultural, and spatial information. Because the manuscript itself lacks any inscriptions, portraits, or armorial markings that would tie it to a specific patron, these contexts cannot be described exactly. However, one can examine likely spheres to which the manuscript would have been connected. This chapter begins by looking at the scholarship surrounding the Bedford Master and his workshop, speculation about the master’s possible identity, and where these artists worked. The chapter then examines the patronage context, outlining patrons for whom the Bedford Master made works and what circles they moved in, as well as some of the political and social events of the time that might have affected the production of manuscripts such as MS M.359. The chapter closes with a consideration of the style and tendencies practiced by the Bedford Master and his workshop and how MS M. 359 reflects these.

With a somewhat dramatic flair, Jean Porcher has written that, “Complete obscurity enveloped the life of the painter whom we call the Maître de Bedford,” but it may be more accurate to simply state that, at present, his exact identity is not known.34 The eighteenth-century antiquarian Richard Gough catalogued the scenes in the London Bedford Hours (London, British Library, Add. MS 18850), providing an extensive list of their contents. While he does not attempt to identify any particular artist either by name or by an attributive title, he states, “Though all miniatures are in a good state for this time, yet we plainly

discover the hands of various artists, probably French or Flemish.”35 Eleanor P. Spencer published at least three articles on works attributed to the Bedford Master in *The Burlington Magazine* from 1965 to 1977.36 When addressing the possible origins of the Bedford Master in her article on the Salisbury Breviary, Spencer writes, “A Netherlandish origin for the Bedford Master is suggested by his pictorial style and technique but as yet the writer has found no early work.”37 Indeed, Eberhard König, who knew Spencer personally, stated that she “devoted her long career to the relentless study of” the Bedford Master, but that, even in private conversations, “this venerable lady was always reluctant to identify the Bedford Master...as ‘little Hainz’ or ‘Hans from Haguenau.’”38 König proposed this identity for the Bedford Master himself after examining the artist’s style. Noting a consistent misspelling of the word *puer* as *peur* “in at least five manuscripts,” König concludes that the Bedford master “was not fluent in French or Latin.”39 König also noted that illuminations of the Nativity in two of manuscripts attributed to the Bedford Master showed snow, which was rare in the Paris region at that season and, therefore, supported his argument for a more northern origin for the Bedford Master.40 After connecting stylistic tendencies such as this with upper Rhenish schools of painting, König traced the Bedford Master’s hand from border work to miniatures and surmised that the artist was in the

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38 König, 5.
39 König, 10.
40 König, 11-14.
employ of the French royal court by 1415. König, therefore, puts forward an illuminator named Haincelin de Haguenau, the chamberlain of the dauphin Louis de Guyenne from 1409 to 1415, as possibly being the Bedford Master. Kö nig reiterates this, citing König, but does not seem to consider this a firm identification. He does not offer an alternative because he is more concerned with how the Bedford Master presented himself through his work.

While the Bedford Master has not been definitely identified, however, scholars have traced some of the circles in which he moved by looking at his works. The Bedford Master has had portions of several manuscripts attributed to him including, in addition to MS M.359, the Sobieski Hours (Windsor, the Royal Library, s.n.); a Book of Hours now referred to as Vienna, Ö.N.B. cod. 1855; the so-called Prose Tristan (Vienna, Ö.N.B., MS. 2537); the Lamoignon Hours, which is also known as the Hours of Isabelle of Brittany (Lisbon, Gulbenkian Foundation, MS LA 237); the Breviary of Châteauroux (Châteauroux, B.M., MS.2); and the Missal of Jacques Châtelier (Paris, Arsenal 621). The Bedford Master made three manuscripts for John of Lancaster, Duke of Burgundy and Regent of France, and it is from this relationship that the artist gained his title. These works are the previously mentioned Bedford Book of Hours in London, the Salisbury Breviary (Paris, Arsenal 621).

41 König, 11-26. König states, “The Middle Ages were strictly hierarchical. People, occupations, pastimes, and so on, were all graded according to an absolutely fixed position in the social order. Illuminators too would have been ranked, doubtless at least in part according to their length of service in the trade. Even texts had a hierarchy of social value: pictures of hounds and whippers-in had a lower ranking than pictures of historical personages which, in turn, were ranked below images of saints. Clearly the Bedford Master began at the lowest level, painting margins and dogs” (König, 38).
42 König, 35. König cites Paul Durrieu, La peitur e à l'exposition des primitifs fran çais, (Paris: 1904), 72, as being the first to put forward this possibility, though he does not believe that all the works attributed to Haincelin by Durrieu were produced by one man.
43 Kinch, 196, 212-213.
Bib. Nat., MS. lat. 17294), and the Pontifical of Poitiers. The last of these was destroyed in 1871 when Paris was besieged. Because the variety of these works widens the circle of patrons associated with the Bedford Master and his workshop to several important figures beyond the Duke of Bedford, it is likely that this artist was not strictly associated with one court or locale. For example, his hand can be traced in the border of a miniature by the Luçon Master on the frontispiece of the _Tèrence des Ducs_ (Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 664, fol. 1v), a manuscript that may have had connections to the French dauphin, Louis de Guyenne, and that was definitely purchased by the noted bibliophile, Jean, Duc de Berry, shortly before he passed away in 1416. The Bedford Master also worked with the Limbourg brothers on two well-known manuscripts in the duke’s possession, the _Très Riches Heures_ (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65) and the _Grand Heures_ (Paris, B.N., MS. lat. 919).

As both Jean de Berry and Louis de Guyenne were members of the French royal court, these two men both had strong ties to Paris, the likely location of the Bedford Master’s shop for some time and where MS M.359 was made, as evidenced by its calendar. However, the calendar’s inclusion of English saints - St. George, St. Botulfus, St. Edward, St. Augustine of Canterbury, and St. Eadmund of Canterbury – is indicative of the political situation of the city at the time of its production, for at this point in the Hundred Years’ War, Paris was controlled by England. This occupation was, perhaps, most notable in the patron for whom the Master of Bedford has been titled - John of Lancaster, the Duke
of Bedford, who served as regent to the French throne after the death of his brother in 1422 left the infant Henry VI heir to both the English and French thrones.\(^{50}\)

Within the circle of the Duke of Bedford’s influence, there are several people who have been connected with MS M.359, although indirectly. One of these is the English poet and Benedictine monk, John Lydgate.\(^{51}\) While Kinch states that Lydgate was “never attached directly to Bedford,” he was in Paris around the time MS M.359 would have been made, and some of his works exhibit connections to elements found in manuscripts that exhibit the work of the Bedford Master.\(^{52}\) While these ties are somewhat tenuous, his repeated appearance in the literature surrounding the Bedford Master seems noteworthy. The Bedford Hours, for example, contains a miniature and poem that convey “a rarely used version of the story of Clovis and the origin of the fleur-de-lis of France.”\(^{53}\) According to Spencer, this particular version “corresponds to the *Mumming at Windsor* by John Lydgate performed in 1429 before Henry VI, newly crowned King of England, and his mother, Catherine of France.”\(^{54}\) However, Kinch points out that it is not possible to know whether Lydgate would have seen the Bedford Hours or not.\(^{55}\) More pertinent to this thesis, Lydgate also observed the Danse Macabre mural on the walls of the Cemetery of St. Innocents in Paris, translating its poem into English and later providing the text that accompanied the Dance of Death on panels in the cloisters of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London.\(^{56}\) Kinch pays

\(^{50}\) König, 8.
^{51}\) Kinch, 206.
^{52}\) Kinch, 191.
^{53}\) Spencer, *Bedford Hrs*, 497.
^{54}\) Spencer, 497.
^{55}\) Kinch, 210.
^{56}\) Kinch, 192-193.
particular attention to this connection in chapters five and six of his book, *Imago Mortis: Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture*.\(^{57}\)

While discussing the iconography of the seven virtues depicted in MS M.359 (fol. 116r-119r), Voelkle draws on the work of Rosemond Tuve to make connections to Sir John Falstof, the Duke of Bedford’s master of the household.\(^{58}\) Falstof owned a manuscript produced in 1450 (Oxford, the Bodleian Library, MS. Laud misc. 570), which contained “a French version of John of Wale’s *Breviloquium de Virtutibus*” accompanied by images of the four cardinal virtues with unusual attributes similar to those found in MS M.359. No one poem has yet been successfully connected with all aspects of this unusual iconography, which will be mentioned in a little more detail in the next chapter, but, according to Voelkle, Tuve found the images in the Falstof manuscript to be the earliest depiction of this new iconography and estimated that its inspirational source text originated earlier in the fifteenth century.\(^{59}\) Voelkle himself put forward the Morgan Virtues as being an even earlier example of this iconography in images.\(^{60}\) The Falstof manuscript bears another link to MS M.359 through its primary artist, the Master of Sir John Falstof, with whom the Bedford Master collaborated in Paris before the 1420s.\(^{61}\)

A third person who was within the circle of the Duke of Bedford, and who is worth mentioning here, is Phillipe de Morvilliers, who was first president of the Parlement of Paris and “was a friend of the Duke of Bedford” according to Spencer.\(^{62}\) Kinch mentions

\(^{57}\) Kinch, 185-259.
\(^{58}\) Voelkle, 61-69. From his notes, it was unclear which Tuve article Voelkle was citing. He seems to be referring to three or four articles, but he only gives complete information on two articles: Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, Some Medieval Books and their Posterity (Princeton, 1966) and Tuve, “Notes on the Virtues and the Vices [II],” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 27 (1964), p. 42 ff.
\(^{59}\) Voelkle, 64.
\(^{60}\) Voelkle, 65-69.
\(^{61}\) Voelkle, 69.
\(^{62}\) Spencer, *Hrs of Anne de Neufville*, fn 9, 709.
de Morvilliers within her discussion of the image of the *Parlementaire* in the Morgan Dance of Death, the latter often labeled simply “The Magistrate” in other texts (fig. 2, fol. 128r). The Morgan *Parlementaire* stands firmly centered in his medallion. While the Deaths on either side of him hold his wrists and back, his brow is furrowed in an annoyed expression, and it appears that he is throwing their grasp off rather than having his arms pulled outward. His distinctive red robes would have been an easy identifier within French visual culture, as Kinch points out when discussing images of the 1422 funeral of the French king, Charles VI, in which “the *Parlementaires* were granted special exception to appear in their characteristic red robes, rather than in mourning garb...[providing] a surrogate for royal power.” This distinction is something that de Morvilliers himself capitalized upon even after his death, as his polychromed effigy in his and his wife’s chapel in Saint-Martin-des-Champs depicted him in the red robes of his office.

Of the four men mentioned above, Lydgate and Falstof were English; de Morvilliers was French; and the Master of Sir John Falstof was probably French. This mixing of French and English was not atypical of the Duke of Bedford’s regency. The duke presumably had his English chaplains, John Estcourt and Alan Kirketon, perform English services, and most of his liturgical books were for the Sarum or Salisbury use. But, as Kinch points out, he also formed an alliance with the French Burgundian court through “his marriage to Anne, the daughter of Jean sans Peur,” and served as patron to “high French art” while establishing “a base of support in France, cultivated with both high-

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63 Kinch, 234.
64 Kinch, 232.
65 Kinch, 234.
66 Voelkle, 69.
67 Spencer, *Bedford Hrs*, 496.
low-ranking citizens.”68 This, not surprisingly, caused some tension between his court in France and that of Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester and Henry VI’s other regent, in England.69

Kinch states that the Duke of Bedford’s methods were “regularly the subject of nervous speculation” for exactly these reasons.70 Such tensions would not have been absent within the Duke’s court itself on the side of the Parisians, but the Duke’s patronage of the arts would have been a boon to artists of the luxury trades, such as the Bedford Master; according to Kinch, luxury arts such as manuscript production were in “a period of abeyance...after the collapse from 1416-22 of the intense period of manuscript patronage that marks the early fifteenth century.”71 After highlighting the self-promotion and entrepreneurship that Lydgate showed as he translated the Dance of Death poem from St. Innocents not only from French into English but also from a Parisian to a London cultural milieu, Kinch posits that the Bedford Master produced MS M.359 on speculation, as well, stating, “Like Lydgate, the Bedford Workshop most likely created Morgan 359 as a speculative production, aiming to appeal to an English aristocratic elite eager for objects of beauty that also affirmed a social identity of pious devotion.”72 While the inclusion of English saints in a Paris calendar would seem to point to an English target audience, the fact that the liturgy is a Roman rather than a Sarum use seems to muddle this possibility. Furthermore, it is more likely that, in a period of social and economic uncertainty such as the one Kinch describes, the Bedford Master would not have created such a lavish and individualized work as MS M.359 without a commission.

68 Kinch, 200.
69 König, 8.
70 Kinch, 200.
71 Kinch, 195.
72 Kinch, 213. Although, it should be noted, Kinch later attributed a supposedly muddled design element to “a breaking off of the commission;” he may have been more undecided on this issue than his statement implies (Kinch, 217, fn 82).
While the exact identity of the Bedford Master is unknown and the specific patron of MS M.359 is unclear, the style of this master serves as his identifying attribute. König characterizes the Bedford Master’s work as more painterly than linear, stating, “Colours merge smoothly one into another, often with almost blurred outlines.” Porcher goes into a little more detail, stating that the Bedford Master, “a true colourist, ...never resorted to the pen to sharpen his contours or his modelling; his colours are hazy, as if bathed in a soft and harmonious light.” Spencer expresses a similar sentiment, describing the artist as “a painter rather than a draughtsman.” Elaborating on this qualification, she states, “He leaves edges and surfaces indecisive, unless the theme calls for clear definition...This is probably the most characteristic feature of his style; line is there, clear but unobtrusive, whenever it is needed to supplement form that has already been established by colour.” These three authors seem to agree, therefore, that the Bedford Master, as Spencer states, “builds his forms, projecting or deepening planes with successive washes of paint, then modelling the form with short brushstrokes.” Scholars vary, however, in their response to the quality of the work of the Bedford Master and his workshop. While Porcher counts the Bedford Master among “lesser artists” when assessing the work of Fouquet, Gough states of the portrait of John of Lancaster in the Bedford Hours in London, “Nothing can exceed the strength of character and high finishing of the portrait of the duke; it is the finest example of art of that time I have ever seen.” Gough continues to include the rest of the manuscript’s miniatures in these raptures, stating, “Nor can anything be more happily

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73 König, 11.
74 Porcher, 67.
75 Spencer, Bedford Hrs, 501.
76 Spencer, Bedford Hrs, 501.
77 Spencer, Bedford Hrs, 501.
78 Porcher, 75; Gough, 16.
designed to convey a compliment to the noble owners of this book than the paintings round their respective portraits, as well as all the rest that follow."  

And Donal Byrne specifically includes the Bedford Master in the group of artists he examines because his method “affords a limited study at the highest level of artistic production.”  

He does later qualify this statement, however, saying that he will look “first in works of modest artistic quality, and then in the paintings of the Limbourgs.”  

Thus, in Byrne’s opinion, The Bedford Master’s work is within the highest level of quality but does not merit the very top ranks to which the Limbourg brothers ascended. Wieck seems to think more highly of him, stating that the “Bedford Master was France’s most influential Illuminator in the second quarter of the fifteenth century.”  

But, again, it must be stressed that while the Bedford Master is singled out by scholars now, he was not working alone. In addition to the artists already mentioned as having worked with the Bedford Master, the Boucicaut and Rohan Masters are often mentioned in conjunction with the Bedford Workshop. Spencer states that these three artists collaborated “occasionally,” but Porcher, while indicating that there were additional common partners, mentions the Boucicaut master seems to have had a more permanent connection with the Bedford Workshop but that the Rohan Master “left him in about 1414 to enter the service of the house of Anjou;” furthermore, Porcher also states, “Of the three, Bedford was the most active and the most open to new ideas.”  

In fact, when discussing the Bedford Master’s work in the Bedford Hours in London, Spencer discusses the

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79 Gough, 16.
81 Byrne, 121.
82 Wieck, 55.
83 Porcher, 67.
difficulty in picking out the Bedford Master’s hand due to what she terms “the highly co-
operative habits of the members of the shop” and the fact that “the Bedford Master himself
does not reject ideas or collaboration from others.”

Evidently they learned from one another, borrowing techniques when it suited them, for Spencer states in her article about
the Bedford Hours that the Bedford Master “takes no interest in light as a phenomenon
except to borrow twilit hills from the repertoire of the Boucicaut Master.”

Thus, when examining MS M.359 as a work by the Bedford Master, it may be more
beneficial to look at trends within the workshop than to learn, for instance, that the Bedford
Master “takes a naive pleasure in highlighting red or orange with bright gold” and to then
search the miniatures for that quality. One element that surfaces throughout this
workshop’s oeuvre is using the layout of the page to structure narrative elements within
and between the images. When the size of the manuscript permits, the full page miniatures
that often denote breaks in the sections of a liturgical work are often laid out so that one
large scene portrays one or several elements of a narrative and roundels bordering it add
further details, such as in the miniature for the Hours of the Virgin at Vespers in the Bedford
Hours (fig. 3, fol. 83). In this illumination, the holy family arrives in Egypt in the main
miniature while the border roundels depict Herod ordering the slaughter of the innocents.

Alluding to this practice, Porcher describes the Bedford Hours as “a mass of picturesque
and varied scenes, even in the borders, which he was the first to make an integral part of
the illustration of the whole page, completing the scene.” Occasionally these sets of

84 Spencer, Bedford Hrs, 498.
85 Spencer, Bedford Hrs, 501.
86 Spencer, Bedford Hrs, 501.
87 Backhouse, 30.
88 Porcher, 68.
miniatures will be arranged in an architectural form, but Spencer states that “Architecture does not interest the Bedford Master as a problem of perspective, only as a frame for action more suitable than landscape.” 89 Thus, for the Bedford Workshop, architecture serves more often as a divisional and organizing device than as a depiction of a structure within the context of the scene. Furthermore, according to Spencer, within architectural settings especially, “Very little attention is given to the new realism which requires the spectator to fix his eye upon a point; here he is always free to move about and to look at what interests him.” 90 These elements allow the viewer to infer connections and engage with the story actively. Touching on this, Pearce states that, when looking at a work by the Bedford Master’s workshop, one can expect to find innovations in the miniatures that include “complex exposition of the theme and, particularly in the large miniatures, the inclusion of rich narrative detail.” 91 These innovations can also occur in what scenes are paired with what texts. For example, Kinch sees the Bedford Workshop’s pairing of Dance of Death images with the text of the Office of the Dead, rather than the Dance of Death poem often associated with these images, as a sign of “a workshop with an innovative sense of the complex function of death iconography.” 92

Kinch states that the marginal medallions, like the type in which the Morgan Dance of Death appear, “were a distinctive aesthetic attribute of the Bedford Workshop” that was used especially to develop the narrative aspects of its miniature series. 93 This is apparently such a particular attribute that it has “been used as a key device to recognize the work of

the Bedford Workshop in other manuscripts.” When speaking of the Salisbury Breviary, Spencer states, “Although the floral elements and the frames of the medallions are generally traced from recto to verso, the content of the medallions is independent and unique,” and judging by the repetition of certain frame patterns from one page to the next within the Morgan Dance of Death such as the circular frame with twists at the 3 and 9 o’clock positions on fol. 123 or the simple, two-strand, twisted frames on fol. 124, this seems to have been a workshop practice. Certain trends, such as this tracing of repetitive elements, would most likely have been an effective practice in many workshops. Another example is the practice of using diapered patterns in place of the sky. Citing scenes where a brilliantly patterned background was placed over a foreground of grass and flowering stalks, Kinch understandably identifies this design as “evidence of the confusions in the work process that can occur in a workshop manuscript,” but it was actually common practice in this period. Patricia M. Gathercole states that the upper background “in early French manuscripts, whether interior or exterior be depicted, ...could also be executed in a mosaic design of bright coloration (blue, red, and gold), a chequerboard background, very unrealistic in appearance.” Furthermore, Gathercole states, “In order perhaps to appeal to the medieval love for detailed decoration, the illuminators would from time to time paint small golden stars in these bright cerulean skies of broad daylight, a strange phenomenon...there were really few dark night scenes.” When the sky is blue in the Morgan Dance of Death, there are almost always stars present. Therefore, when examining

94 Kinch, 214, fn. 81.
95 Spencer, Salisbury Brev, 607.
96 Kinch, 216.
98 Gathercole, 29.
MS M.359, it is important to remember that, just as the presence of stars did not necessarily mean it was night, the presence of what appears to be wallpaper was not always indicative of a wall.

Another common practice that the Bedford Workshop employed is the use of certain models for scenes that would be repeatedly used by the workshop but varied according to each individual project’s needs. This applies to motifs, as evidenced by Spencer’s comment, “With a full set of photographs of the miniatures of the Annunciation painted in this workshop it would be easy to see where the basic design has been modified by reversing the figures, changing a gesture, enriching or simplifying the setting,” but it also applies to individuals.99 Spencer states that the vivacity and communicative gestures of the characters depicted by the Bedford Workshop “suggest an individuality in the actors which is seldom present, for instead of near portraits we find types repeated, patterns for kings and cardinals, evangelists and emperors.”100 This is especially noticeable in the Dance of Death, which can be seen as essentially a list of stock characters. However, even within the Morgan Dance, the ‘stock characters’ are changed slightly from scene to scene to emphasize that the experience of each is unique. For example, the Morgan dance contains two Benedictine Monks (fol. 136v and 138v) and two Dominican Monks (fol. 134v and 142v), yet it is made clear by changes in their posture and slight details altered in their garb that they are not the same monks repeated within the Dance.

With regard to certain elements that stand out strongly when examining the organization of images within the oeuvre of the Bedford Workshop, Spencer states, “There are two chief categories of design used in this atelier, one in which many episodes of a

99 Spencer, Hrs of Anne de Neufville, 705.
100 Spencer, Bedford Hrs, 501.
story are told successively, and one which features a figure or a small group not involved in a time sequence.”

Both of these elements are exhibited in the marginal medallions of MS M.359. The Morgan Dance of Death, especially, conflates these elements and provides a quasi-narrative through a series of small groups that are not necessarily involved in a strict progression of time. Elaborating on the medallions that focus on one figure or a small group, Spencer states that the Bedford Master “conceives these figures as live and independent bodies capable of action and able to express the quality of their physical energy and of their emotional tension. The turning of the body, the tilt of the head, the lifting of a hand are all more expressive than the face of the actor.”

While she made this statement about images in the Bedford Hours, she could very easily have said something similar about any one of the scenes of the Morgan Dance of Death. In most of the scenes, for example, the various incarnations of Death seem to be in a consensus as to where to lead their victim. In fol. 132v, however, there seems to have been a disagreement, for the Death on the right has set his feet in such a way that it is pulling the man, who has been identified as possibly being a cleric, to the right of the frame. The Death on the left, holds up one hand in a calm gesture of speech, as if to explain that everything will be fine, while taking the man’s wrist and heading off to the left of the frame. The man’s own uncertainty is conveyed through his posture. He stands with his back slightly arched as he looks up, and his hands are held out to either side. His face is rather blank, but the rest of the scene and his reaction to the event indicates that he is most likely questioning. Each of the figures has been imbued with a palpable individuality through pose and gesture.

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When discussing the marginal medallions within the Bedford Hours, Spencer states, “Some of the cycles point toward a carefully planned programme of illustration, like the exempla of a sermon, which must have been directed by a scholar familiar with contemporary theological problems,” and she implies that a similar expert might have been consulted to assist in organizing the program of illustrations in the Salisbury Breviary.\textsuperscript{103} MS M.359 exhibits a similar continuity of design throughout, which seems to be indicative, again, of its being a commissioned rather than a speculative work. The issues of narratives told over successive images and the interconnectedness of a manuscript’s whole program of images will be discussed further in the next chapter, which focuses on the context of the Morgan Dance of Death within MS M.359 as a Book of Hours.

\textsuperscript{103} Spencer, \textit{Bedford Hrs}, 498.
CHAPTER 2
DEATH IN THE MARGINS:
THE DANCE WITHIN MS M.359

Unlike the other works to which the Bedford Master applied his hand, MS M.359 has, for the most part, been studied as a comparison to other manuscripts, usually mentioned only in passing. It has not been examined in a monograph, even though it has several fascinating attributes and certainly merits such attention. Wieck mentions the Morgan Calendar images for October and November and the miniature of the Annunciation as entries 14 and 36, respectively, in his book *Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art*. That particular Annunciation image (fig. 4, fol. 21r) seems to be well known, for Spencer mentions it specifically when discussing the Annunciation miniature in the Hours of Anne de Neufville. The three noteworthy studies that specifically focus on MS M.359 are by William Voelkle and Ashby Kinch. Voelkle has written two articles on the unusual iconography of the seven virtues that precede the Dance of Death sequence. Kinch, as mentioned in the previous chapter, analyzes the Morgan Dance of Death in relation to the Dance of Death poems by John Lydgate. This chapter looks at the Morgan Dance of Death’s place within MS M.359 as a Book of Hours and how its themes fit in with those of other image cycles as part of a cohesive program of design.

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104 Interestingly, antiquarian M. R. James, does not include it in his list of apocalypse scenes, though he lists another manuscript held by the Pierpont Morgan Library (MS M.524). Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocalypse in Art*, (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1931), 2-20, 38, and 114.
105 Wieck, 30 and 55.
106 Spencer, *Hrs of Anne de Neufville*, 705.
MS M.359 is 10” x 6-7/8,” and it is made of 173 vellum leaves bound together in red velvet. It is collated in 22 gatherings. The first consists of 12 leaves; the next ten gatherings have 8 leaves each; the twelfth gathering has only 2 leaves, and the record indicates that two are missing, although the numbering of the folios continues without acknowledging this; and the remaining 10 gatherings have 8 leaves each.\footnote{108}

According to Wieck, by the fourteenth century, Books of Hours usually included:

- a Calendar, Gospel Lessons, Hours of the Virgin, Hours of the Cross, Hours of the Holy Spirit, the two prayers to the Virgin called the ‘Obsecro te’ and the ‘O intemerata,’ the Penitential Psalms and Litany, the Office of the Dead, and a group of about a dozen Suffrages; any number of accessory prayers complemented these essential texts.\footnote{109}

In this sense, MS M.359 is largely typical. This Book of Hours contains, in the following order, a Calendar, fragments of the gospels, the Passion according to St. Luke, the Hours of the Virgin, the Shorter Office of the Virgin, Penitential Psalms, Litany, the Hours of the Cross, the Hours of the Holy Ghost, the Offices of the Dead, and Seven Psalms for the Dead. The marginal image cycles consist of the Zodiac and Labors of the Months in the Calendar; images of Sts. John the Evangelist, Luke, Matthew, and Mark in the fragments of the Gospel; the Pasion of Christ; The Life of Mary, The Early Life of Christ, a portrait of Tiberius or Herod, the life and ministry of John the Baptist, Christ’s Temptation in the Wilderness, the Ministry of Christ, David Communicating with God, Christ after His Death, the Early Church, the Death and Funeral of the Virgin, the Seven Sacraments, the Seven Virtues, Burial Scenes relating to the Offices of the Dead, the Dance of Death, the Apocalypse, and the Life of Job. Interspersed throughout these, and not usually in relation

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{108} Pierpont Morgan Library, \textit{Curatorial Description of MS M.359}, 1.} \footnotesize{\textsuperscript{109} Wieck, 10.}
to the image cycle they interrupt, there are several scenes of the Annunciation, Visitation, Adoration of the Magi, Baptism, Crucifixion, and Pentecost.\textsuperscript{110}

This richly decorated manuscript contains 356 marginal medallions, a very impressive number which allowed the person who planned the program of image cycles the opportunity to allot several scenes to one section of a narrative.\textsuperscript{111} Wieck mentions that the Bedford Master “had a keen interest in storytelling,” and this becomes apparent especially in sections where the artist has used such a close exegesis to relate his tale that he allots not only several roundels to one tale but several roundels to one verse of that tale, such as in the Miracle of the Raising of Lazarus where three consecutive roundels can be connected with John 11: 44 (fol. 80v-81v).\textsuperscript{112} Such attention to detail makes it important to look at which episodes are emphasized in this way, and some of these emphasized segments are connected to one another or share similar themes, such as the two tales of blind men being healed, which both immediately precede image cycles relating to Lazarus and which carry connotations of miraculous healing and examining one’s spiritual life in the Gospel texts (fol. 75r-75v, 85v-89r). Themes of liminality and self-examination resurface throughout the manuscript’s program of decoration, and this is especially apparent in its Dance of Death sequence.

\textsuperscript{110} These seemingly out of place miniatures are not always the full-page miniatures that mark the start of prayers. If I return to this project, I would like to chart where these ‘out of place’ roundels fall in relation to the text and their respective image cycles.

\textsuperscript{111} Wieck, 30.

\textsuperscript{112} Wieck, 55.
The Morgan Dance of Death runs from fol. 123r to fol. 151r, containing fifty-seven marginal roundels in total. Most of the roundels contain two figures of Death. Of the twenty-one that do not, nine of these appear in half-circle medallions that, Kinch notes, mark breaks in the text of the Office of the Dead. Of the full-circle medallions with only one Death, one contains the two acolytes (fol. 150r), and I concur with Kinch that the second acolyte takes the place of the second Death to form a more balanced composition.

The eleven remaining single-Death, full-circle medallions mostly fall toward the end of the Dance, which may indicate that the presence of two Deaths is a sign of higher status. The Dance is nearly half full of religious figures, with twenty-eight total taking up twenty-seven roundels. Some of these are repeated, but the figures are clearly drawn to be different people. There are five abbots, two Dominican monks, two Benedictine monks, two acolytes sharing one roundel, three priests, and possibly three clerics. Kinch finds the workshop to have been “reveling no doubt in the visual diversity such range afforded, but also attending to the specific cultural life observable in Paris in the early fifteenth century.”

There seems to have been an effort to alternate between religious and secular figures although this pattern is broken in several places.

There are no women present in the Morgan Dance of Death. This fact connects it more strongly to the mural in the cemetery of St. Innocents in Paris, which also lacked

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113 The Dancers present in the Morgan Dance of Death are listed in a table in Appendix A so as to avoid an entire page-long list of titles, which can be a little overwhelming.
114 These are fol. 123v, 124r, 124v, 125r, 125v, 126r, 127r, 127v, 128r, 128v, 129r, 129v, 130r, 130v, 131r, 131v, 132r, 132v, 133r, 134r, 135r, 135v, 136r, 136v, 137r, 137v, 138r, 138v, 139r, 139v, 140r, 140v, 141r, 142r, 146r, and 147r.
115 Kinch, 214-215. The half-circle medallions with one Death are fol. 126v, 133r, 134v, 141v, 142v, 145v, 148v, 149v, and 150v.
116 Kinch, 215.
117 The full-circle medallions with only one Death are fol. 137v, 143r, 143v, 144r, 144v, 145r, 146v, 147v, 148r, 149r, 150r, and 151r. See Appendix A to note this pattern in order.
118 Kinch, 218.
female Dancers, and which inspired John Lydgate’s Dance of Death poems as was discussed in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{119} It is difficult to make stronger ties than time, location, and happenstance between this mural and the works it may have influenced because it was destroyed in the seventeenth century when the surrounding streets were widened, and it is now known only through woodcuts that were first published in 1485 by Guyot Marchant.\textsuperscript{120} However, it is noteworthy that the artist chose to expand the roster of religious figures from those present in the St. Innocents mural rather than adding women because other Dances of Death inspired by this same mural later included female Dancers. Kinch states that the earlier, A-version of Lydgate’s poem included four female dancers not in the original mural at St. Innocents – the Empress, the Abbess, the Lady of Great Estate, and the Amorous Gentlewoman.\textsuperscript{121} Gertsman notes that Marchant also added women to his later publications of the Dance so as to “appeal to his female audience as well.”\textsuperscript{122} Later large-scale murals, such as the oldest Dance sequence in Germany, painted in 1463 by Bernt Notke for the Beichtkapelle of St Mary’s in Lübeck, also included female figures.\textsuperscript{123}

Kinch identifies the mobile skeletons as signifying the dead in general who have come to dance with the living because of the presence of more than one skeleton in most of the roundels.\textsuperscript{124} However, it seems to me that these are still personifications of Death proper. They seize the individuals more often as if leading them for a stroll out of the frame than in dancelike motions. The conflation of more than one Death per frame both mimics the formula of the wall murals, in which each Dancer would have had a Death on

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\textsuperscript{119} Gertsman, 6.
\textsuperscript{120} Gertsman, 6.
\textsuperscript{121} Kinch, 207
\textsuperscript{122} Gertsman, 8.
\textsuperscript{123} Gertsman, 104.
\textsuperscript{124} Kinch, 214.
\end{flushright}
either side of him because the Dancers and Death usually alternated, and emphasizes the omnipresence of the possibility of Death. Furthermore, and perhaps most convincingly, the roundels into which the artist has added more details seem to convey more themes associated with Death specifically. For example, both the Holy Roman Emperor (fol. 124r) and the Constable (fig. 5, fol. 127r) hold swords aloft. This is both a symbol of their earthly authority and a visual metaphor of the idea that they are ‘fighting Death.’

In the roundel with the Benedictine Abbot (fig. 6, fol. 130r), the Death on the left appears to be grasping at not the Abbot’s wrist, as it does in many of the other roundels, but at his crook. This seizure of symbols of office by Death is something that Hans Holbein the Younger, especially, picks up on in his woodcuts of the Dance of Death almost a century later. In Holbein’s image of the Abbot, for example, Death has taken not only his crook but also his bishop’s mitre and is walking off with a somewhat smug stance (fig. 7).

The idea that ‘you can’t take it with you’ is exhibited in the Morgan Dance especially with the tradesmen, who appear at their work benches and tables. The Merchant (fol. 141r) is pulled gently away from his ledger book, and the Apothecary (fig. 8, fol. 142r) looks back at his open book as if he fears he has left his work unfinished. The Money-Changer (fig. 9, fol. 144r) appears to kick one foot out at Death’s ankle while he attempts to grab a few coins from his table, but Death just smiles at him. In the first and last roundels of the Dance in which Death appears (figs. 10-11, fol. 123v and 151r), it carries what could be a spear or an arrow. The first, the staff of whose weapon is longer, can be seen as ‘spear-heading’ the dance. The last, who comes alone to claim the child, appears to carry a shorter shaft, making an arrow more likely. The latter reading would make more sense iconographically,
as arrows are an attribute of Death when it appears as the Plague or Pestilence, making the death of the Child particularly poignant.\textsuperscript{125}

Before looking at how the Dance of Death in MS M.359 fits in with some of the other sets of images in the manuscript, it might be beneficial to ponder what purpose personifying death serves beyond the idea that it is a didactic device. When discussing the mental images one forms while reading, Iser states, “If one sees the mountain, then of course one can no longer imagine it, and so the act of picturing the mountain presupposes its absence. Similarly, with the literary text we can only picture things that are not there.”\textsuperscript{126} The idea that, to be imagined, something must be absent is reminiscent of the lines in literary critic T. S. Eliot’s poem “The Waste Land” which state, “We think of the key, each in his prison/Thinking of the key, each confirms his prison.”\textsuperscript{127} The prisoner could imagine that he is free or choose to remain where he is, and thus feel less trapped in his incarceration, but instead he becomes so consumed imagining the key - a way out - that he is only reinforcing his awareness of the presence of the prison as a cage. The idea that the way one thinks of something can be a sort of trap that confines the understanding of it fits in with how Iser extends his discussion. He adds the comparison of how perception is changed from reading a novel to seeing a movie of the same work, stating, “the moment these possibilities are narrowed down to one complete and immutable picture, the imagination is put out of action, and we feel we have somehow been cheated...[because] the vital richness of potential that arises out of the fact that the hero in the novel must be

\textsuperscript{125} Boeckl, 46.
\textsuperscript{126} Iser, 288.
pictured and cannot be seen.”\textsuperscript{128} After seeing what he had previously tried to imagine, the viewer is “confined merely to the physical perception, and so whatever he remembers of the world he had pictured is brutally cancelled out.”\textsuperscript{129} His understanding of the subject matter has been limited to - or perhaps, using Eliot’s terms, imprisoned by – the image he cannot put aside.

To some extent, this is a prime example of the difficulties that arise when attempting to use literary studies to examine art, because with a work of art, one starts with the image. However, this train of thought does have some relation to images that personify Death because the viewer is able to consider death and its implications without seeing an image of the personification. This contemplation becomes comparable to the novel in Iser’s example. The image of death personified then serves as the movie, replacing the viewer’s conception of the abstract concept with a more concrete form. Transforming the intangible and invisible process of death into an image of a personified Death is then not only a way to make sense of the process but to control the perception of it. If the image of Death personified has certain characteristics, seeing them shapes the viewers’ perception of death and how its appearance should be met. Thus the personified image \textit{embodies} Death in two ways. It gives death a body, making it Death, and it provides an image of characteristics meant to define the viewer’s interaction with death.

As Kurtz states, “Diffusion of the Dances of Death was mainly through the agency of the church... The fact that the subject was connected to the church accounts for the rapid dissemination to all countries with almost the same rapidity and universality observed in the case of printing,” but this connection with the church could also point toward a reason

\textsuperscript{128} Iser, 288.
\textsuperscript{129} Iser, 288.
for displaying macabre imagery. The fear of death is almost as common as death itself, and, while Thomas à Kempis wrote, “If thou hadst a good conscience, thou wouldst not greatly fear death,” in general, people fear death because they do not understand it. They do not know what happens afterwards, and they usually cannot control its occurrence. It is an absence that they can imagine but not see, for once they have seen it, medical miracles aside, there is no returning. And, due to the nature of the imagination’s conclusions when contemplating what could be, the possibilities for what is imagined to follow this life are endless, another daunting concept.

The church, however, has an entire doctrinal system that covers exactly those issues. When it disseminates macabre imagery, it provides an exact picture to structure and replace the viewer’s imagined understanding of what death might be. This limits the possibilities, relieving the fear of the unknown and giving the viewer a reassuring order. But it also, as Boeckl has proposed when discussing the Pisan Triumph of Death in il Camposanto, puts forth a certain view of Death in accordance with church doctrines, ‘brutally cancelling out’ dissenting views of the afterlife. However, for the church’s purposes the fear needs to remain to some extent. The possibility of horror must persist to encourage virtuous living, but now it takes the form of Hell or Purgatory instead of a mysterious unknown.

With regard to MS M.359, this idea that images of the Dance of Death fit well with the church’s attempt to guide its parishioners toward one mode of thinking about death is slightly complicated. While the manuscript is a Book of Hours and thus automatically

131 Kempis, 63.
connected with the church and its doctrines in certain ways, we cannot at this time know to what extent a member of the clergy was directly involved in the design of the program of its images. That said, the cohesiveness of its overall decorative program leads me to propose that someone with at least an advanced knowledge of church practices and theology was involved in planning its designs. This person may have been the Bedford Master himself, for when discussing miniatures in the Salisbury Breviary, Pearce states, “Although the Bedford Master may have consulted with theologians concerning the content of such miniatures, it was clearly characteristic of his mature style to explore iconographically rich alternatives to conventional liturgical themes.”

Given how closely some of the roundels that I discuss in this chapter match up to specific verses in the Gospel, a consulting theologian is even more likely, because owning an entire Bible was very expensive and most people would not have had access to more than snippets of the scriptures at this time.

While the presence of so many members of the clergy in the Morgan Dance itself could just be part of the apparent attempt to keep up a sort of pattern alternating the images of clerical and lay persons, the variety with which the clergy are represented makes me wonder if MS M.359 was possibly intended for use by someone very closely affiliated with the church. The presence of at least three members of the clergy who would have been associated with hospitals and certain illnesses – especially with the themes of illness and injury that are touched upon later in this chapter – could also point towards an owner or patron who had a strong affiliation with one of the city’s hospital ministries. These include

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133 Pearce, 32.
134 Or possibly one of its hospital ministries, given the emphasis on illness and suffering, which I will touch upon shortly.
the Hospitaller’s Abbot (fol. 133r), the Alexian Brother who would have been associated with treating the plague (fol. 140v), and the Crosier (fol. 144v).\textsuperscript{135}

When categorizing which scenes have one Death and which have two, the roundel that begins the series, fol. 123r (fig. 12), needs to be addressed separately because it falls into neither category. It is the only real outlier in the entire Morgan Dance because it is a full-circle medallion and contains the Scholar or Preacher but depicts no Death. Kinch refers to the figure in this position as the role of the “Auctor” - a figure who introduces the rest of the Dance without really taking part.\textsuperscript{136} When this figure appears in the Dance of Death murals, Gertsman interprets him as a Preacher, such as those who might have given sermons in front of the Dance of Death mural on the walls of the Cemetery of St. Innocents in Paris.\textsuperscript{137} His presence transforms the entire Dance that follows into a sermon.\textsuperscript{138} This fits with Kinch’s statement that the Dance of Death “genre is so intrinsically verbo-visual that the visual forms almost always refer to an oral preaching format or to the production of a text.”\textsuperscript{139}

Eberhard König puts it somewhat differently in claiming that, “Very great illuminated manuscripts are often like gothic cathedrals, in that they were not produced in a single day but resulted from generations of evolving work, changes of plan, and new ideas and different craftsmen,” but MS M.359 seems to have a fairly consistent organization when the themes of its decoration are compared. Most of the image sequences within this Book of Hours seem to fall into certain categories, each of which fits with the

\textsuperscript{135} Kinch, 218-221. 
\textsuperscript{136} Kinch, 214. One might also use the term Author or Narrator. 
\textsuperscript{137} Gertsman, 3. 
\textsuperscript{138} Gertsman, 6. 
\textsuperscript{139} Kinch, 188.
theme of reflecting on one’s life and/or penitential suffering. Leprosy and the somewhat related life of Lazarus, blindness, personifications of the virtues, the Dance of Death, the Apocalypse, and the life of Job – despite the images’ serene, restrained style and the artists’ use of less-saturated colors, the illuminations MS M.359 depict some rather dark subject matter.

The scenes depicting Christ healing lepers fall within a larger cycle of images of Christ’s ministry that reside in the margins of the Office of the Virgin. The first healing consists of three images, running from fol. 57v to fol. 58v. In the first scene, the leper, wearing characteristic garments and carrying a clapper to warn people of his presence, approaches Christ (fig. 13). In the next scene, he departs alone, now healed. In the third scene, he is seen making the proscribed offering and praying. The second healing is the parable of ten lepers, which is told in four scenes and runs from fol. 71r to fol. 72v. In the first scene, seven figures can be seen, in a similar costume to the leper in the first healing, approaching Christ, who raises His arm. In the next, Christ addresses eight of them. In the third scene, Christ sends the lepers – represented by a group of six figures – to be examined by the religious community (fig. 14). In the fourth scene, only one leper returns to thank Christ. While the depiction of either one of these scenes by themselves would probably have sufficed to cover the miracle of healing lepers, it seems significant that the artist has chosen to depict both instances and in such a stretched out, detailed manner. Part of this may be due to the practice of the Bedford workshop, which did tend to stretch simple narratives over several scenes. It is plain by the number of miracles depicted in this cycle as a whole that the artists wished to convey as much of Christ’s ministry as possible, but this theme of leprosy has connections to several others cycles in this manuscript - notably
the scenes of Christ’s interactions with Lazarus, which will be addressed shortly, and the
scenes of the life of Job, which will be addressed a little later.

The two sets of scenes relating to Lazarus, Christ’s friend in Bethany, are in the
portion of the cycle depicting Christ’s ministry that illustrates the Shorter Office of the
Virgin. The first set of scenes relates to Lazarus’ death and Christ’s raising him from the
grave. This miracle is depicted in thirteen scenes - from fol. 76r, in which Christ receives
word that Lazarus is on his deathbed, to fol. 82r, which depicts the Jews who marvel at
Christ’s power and/ or turn to flee from Him. Interestingly, when Lazarus is clothed after
leaving the tomb (fol. 81r-81v), he dons the short black tunic, though not the beehive-like
hat, which the lepers in the earlier miracles wore (fig. 15, fol. 81r). These scenes are taken
from the Gospel of John 11:1-45. In the second set of scenes, Christ attends a feast at
Lazarus’ house (fol. 90r), and Lazarus’ sister Mary (who is sometimes conflated with Mary
Magdalene) anoints Christ with expensive perfume (fol. 90v). This causes much drama
among the disciples, for Judas rebukes Mary for wasting the expensive oil, and Christ in
turn rebukes Judas (fol. 91r).

As depicted in MS M.359, this entire story covers four scenes and runs from fol.
89v to fol. 91r. One can tell that these scenes were taken from the account of Jesus’ being
anointed at Bethany as it is recorded in the Gospel of John 12:1-8 rather than the other two
accounts (Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9) because the latter two record the event as
being in the home of Simon the leper and leave the identity of the woman with the oil
anonymous. Only John’s account connects this event so closely with Lazarus and his
sisters, Martha and Mary, or identifies Mary specifically as being “that Mary who anointed
the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother was Lazarus."\(^{140}\)

This Lazarus was often conflated with the poor man named Lazarus in Christ’s story, which was mentioned only in the gospel of Luke 16:19-21. The poor Lazarus was always covered in sores and was ignored by the rich man at whose house he often begged. When they both died, Lazarus, for his suffering, went to heaven, and the rich man was consigned to hell for his cruelty. The conflation of the two Lazariuses’ combine’s St. Lazarus with the idea of Christ’s healing sores, making Lazarus an ideal patron saint for lepers, and, indeed, hospitals dedicated to serving lepers were often named after St. Lazarus or St. Ladre.\(^{141}\)

The presence of so many scenes depicting Lazarus and the lepers makes leprosy a noteworthy topic in examining this manuscript. During the Medieval and Renaissance periods, bodily health was thought to be closely tied to spiritual health and to the health of the community. Illness, particularly when accompanied by visible or lasting symptoms, was therefore easily associated with spiritual wrongdoing and contamination. Leprosy, especially, fell into this category because it had been mentioned in the Bible, with lepers there being considered unclean and stigmatized until ritually purified by a priest (fig. 14).\(^{142}\) The physical issues accompanying the disease – ranging from localized neuropathy to deterioration of the nasal passages and vocal chords - certainly did not help this.\(^{143}\) On top of the physical deformities the disease causes, leprosy can be very painful.\(^{144}\) It usually

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140 *Holy Bible*, John 11:2.
takes a long time to progress, even years, before symptoms show.\textsuperscript{145} This can make understanding transmission very problematic. The doctors had to rely on visual and tactile examinations, which were considered risky because how the disease spread was a matter of some debate at the time.\textsuperscript{146} It was assumed that some sort of corruption of the air and humors was involved, but whether exposure had to be prolonged was unclear.\textsuperscript{147} It was sometimes thought that the disease could be contracted merely by speaking to a leper.\textsuperscript{148} Other times, it was assumed that the disease compelled lepers to infect others, and there have been several instances of conspiracy in which lepers were accused of poisoning the water supply.\textsuperscript{149} This was the understanding that would have prevailed during the time in which MS M.359 was created.

The treatment of lepers in France and England during this period may be significant here. France, for instance, had several incidents where lepers were attacked and even burned to death within their leprosaria because they were suspected of plotting to poison local water supplies.\textsuperscript{150} However, the leprosaria were protected institutions in France. This partially reflects lepers’ position of being acceptable recipients of Christian charity, something that connects more with their treatment in England, which will be addressed shortly.\textsuperscript{151} Also in relation to the treatment of lepers in France, it should be noted that the Capetian kings of France were thought to be “thaumaturges and healers.”\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{145} Carmichael, 193
\textsuperscript{146} DeMaitre, 41.
\textsuperscript{147} Demainre, 134-135.
\textsuperscript{148} Demainre, 139-140.
\textsuperscript{151} Rawcliffe, 308-316.
\textsuperscript{152} Nirenberg, 58.
called ‘King’s Illness’ – which is to say the illness healed specifically by the king, not an illness which the king had himself - is usually thought to be limited to scrofula, some of the earlier kings, such as Robert the Pious, did heal other skin diseases, including leprosy. The kings of France still healed people into the fifteenth century, but by at least 1454, leprosy was no longer among the diseases addressed. Around the time when MS M.359 came into being, it can be safely assumed that leprosy would still have carried religious connotations, both in the context of illustrations of Christ’s ministry and in the sense of spiritual illness, and the disease may even have still had some connections to French rulers.

While this treatment of lepers in France paints a rather negative picture about how these people were stigmatized, such ill use was not always the case. This is evidenced by Carole Rawcliffe’s study of the quality of life in Medieval leper houses, which appears in her book, Leprosy in Medieval England. Challenging the idea that lepers were so stigmatized that the leprosaria were effectively prisons meant to keep the world safe from lepers, Rawcliffe states, “The purpose of these structures was...to exclude the malign influences of the outside world, which might so easily contaminate an environment of prayer and contemplation.” She points out that the leper houses, while often situated at a distance from most of society, were not completely cut off from the world because a primary means of income was begging for alms. Thus, many leprosaria were situated at high-traffic crossroads areas, and travelers sometimes used them to mark the length of their journeys and would stop there to rest and pray, sometimes overnight, without an apparent

153 Nirenberg, 58-59.
154 Nirenberg, 58.
155 Rawcliffe, 308.
156 Rawcliffe, 308.
fear of infection. Some leprosaria were permitted to hold annual fairs to bring in further revenue. As many leper houses kept gardens to support their own needs, they sometimes held markets to sell the surplus. Rawcliffe states that the leprosaria were often set outside of the city walls, and that it “was virtually impossible to enter an major English town or city without encountering a...ring of charitable institutions.” She posits that the presence of multiple leper houses and hospitals outside the walls might have been “a means of demonstrating the philanthropy and civic pride of their founders” by showing how well the wealthy take care of those suffering in their midst. However, it was also usually understood that a leper admitted to such an institution bore a duty to pray for the donors and civic leaders of the region. With the progression of the idea of purgatory and that suffering in this life sped one’s way to blessings in the next, there seems to have been the implication that prayers from those suffering with such a debilitating and painful disease held, perhaps, more weight.

This raises the issue of a strange dichotomy that surrounds the Medieval approach to lepers. On the one hand, they were stigmatized because of moral and physical contagion. They were seen as having different views of or goals than the rest of society, to the extent that they were sometimes accused of conspiracy and violently killed. Yet, they could hold markets and collect alms. And, whatever moral contaminant their disease implied, they were asked to pray for regularly for the souls of others. Their status seems to have been somewhat liminal. Much like the Dancers whom one sees while they are between the

157 Rawcliffe, 308-309.
158 Rawcliffe, 314.
159 Rawcliffe, 315-316.
160 Rawcliffe, 309.
161 Rawcliffe, 303.
worlds of the living and the dead, the lepers did not fit neatly into one category or another
and instead either embodied both simultaneously or slipped easily between them.
Specifically, the dichotomy between the stigma of leprosy as a horrifying and possibly morally corrupting disease and the suffering of the lepers that lends them an almost penitential status lends an association to leprosy – and thereby to St. Lazarus – which is perhaps not usually present in an iconographical description of such scenes. This is that lepers are an example of spiritual suffering that can offer a believer the chance to reflect on his own spiritual status and perhaps adjust his life accordingly. Katherine Parks has written, “Together with death and birth, hunger and war, the experience of disease was one of the most fundamental features of medieval life, becoming a principal magnet not only for religious cult or literary expression, but also for intellectual reflection and social resources,” and I would posit that just such an intellectual reflection on leprosy was at play within MS M.359.\textsuperscript{162}

While many of the incidents of violence against lepers occurred a century before MS M.359’s being made and the examples of a more favorable relationship between the leprous and general communities are from England, there are some tenuous connections that exist and should be taken into consideration. Paris was under English occupation from 1420 to 1437. Furthermore, adjacent to the Cemetery of the Innocents in Paris with its well-known Dance of Death mural, there was a market that was running from at least the 12\textsuperscript{th} century onward, beginning when the cemetery and the market were both more isolated from the city.\textsuperscript{163} This is significant because the market was originally run by the patients

\textsuperscript{163} Kurtz, 73-74. Kurtz quotes a sixteenth century chronicler, Gilles Corrozet, as stating that Philippe August “bought a market, which the sick of Saint Ladre had the privilege of maintaining outside of Paris for the
at St. Ladre’s, a hospital for lepers, and the market was referred to as “la foire sainct Ladre” until at least 1532 – nearly a century after MS M.359’s completion – putting leprosy and the Dance of Death in close proximity in Paris during the period when MS M.359 was made.¹⁶⁴ And, aside from the connections that have been made between the Morgan Dance of Death and that of St. Innocent’s cemetery, we know that the Bedford workshop had at least a loose connection with the church next to St. Innocents because it depicted portions of that church in at least one miniature in another manuscript. When speaking of the miniature of the Office of the Dead in the Hours of Anne de Neufville, Spencer states, “The setting is generally identified as the cemetery of the Innocents in Paris, but the façade of the church varies from miniature to miniature.”¹⁶⁵

As mentioned previously, the theme of healing the blind is illustrated twice in MS M.359, and both times it immediately precedes the scenes in which Lazarus is present. The first incident runs from fol. 75r to fol. 75v. As this takes up only two roundels, it would probably not normally be noteworthy except that the theme of healing the blind is repeated later. It has been identified as Christ healing Blind Bartimaeus, a story that only appears in Mark 10:46-52. There are other stories of Christ healing the blind which the artist might have chosen from. For instance, Christ is mentioned healing two blind men in Matthew 9:27-31 and Matthew 20:29-34. He heals a solitary, unidentified blind man in Mark 8:22-26 and Luke 18:35-42. The entire ninth chapter of John is dedicated to relating the tale of

¹⁶⁴ Kurtz, 73-74.
¹⁶⁵ Spencer, Hrs of Anne de Neufville, 706.
Christ’s healing yet another unidentified blind man, but this one is distinguished as having been born blind.\textsuperscript{166} This is the tale taken up by the second image cycle relating to healing the blind, which runs from fol. 85v to 89r. In addition to their repetition and their proximity to the images of Lazarus, these images of healing the blind are noteworthy because of the emphasis, in the specific story in John and in several other places in the Gospel, that is placed on the difference between physical and spiritual blindness.\textsuperscript{167} Interestingly, healing the blind is also specifically linked to Christ’s raising Lazarus from the tomb in the Gospel text when the people watching ask, “Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?”\textsuperscript{168} Blindness and especially Christ’s healing of the affliction, then, can be linked directly to the attitude of self-examination associated with leprosy, Lazarus, and the Dance of Death.

Seven marginal roundels, running from fol. 116r to fol. 119r, are illustrated with the four cardinal and the three theological Virtues, which accompany the text of the Hours of the Holy Ghost.\textsuperscript{169} These exhibit some interesting iconography in the form of their identifying attributes. Abstract female personifications of moral attributes such as the Virtues and Vices has its roots in art going back to Classical times, as well as to early medieval schematic diagrams such as the Trees of Virtue and Vice found in the twelfth-century manuscript, the \textit{Liber Floridus} (Ghent, Ghent University Library, MS 92, 241 f., 231v-232r).\textsuperscript{170} According to Voelkle, the unusual iconography exhibited by the Morgan

\textsuperscript{166} John 9:1-41.
\textsuperscript{167} For example, John 9:35-41, Matthew 15:14; Christ often referred to the Scribes and the Pharisees as blind – for example, in Matthew 23:16-17, 19, and 23-27.
\textsuperscript{168} John 11:37.
\textsuperscript{169} The three theological virtues are those mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 13:13 – Faith, Hope, and Charity. The four cardinal virtues are Temperance, Justice, Prudence, and Fortitude. They appear in MS M.359 in that order.
Virtues was newly invented in “the first half of the fifteenth century...in France.” Voelkle proposes that the Morgan Virtues are the earliest known example of these particular attributes in art. He laments that “alas, as in every other known example of the new iconography, the virtues are borrowed from their mysterious ‘original context’ and not explained” – something that these images share with the Morgan Dance of Death. Another attribute carried by both of these image cycles is the underlying theme of contemplating the moral quality of one’s life, especially in the face of Death, for to cultivate an understanding of the Virtues was to consider how life ought to be lived if it was to be lived well.

The Morgan Dance of Death is immediately followed by eighteen scenes of the fifteen signs of the apocalypse. This topic was not unusual in Books of Hours, but the interesting ways in which certain signs were conceptualized might bear further study. For example, it takes a certain audacity on the part of the artist to paint a mostly barren, flat ground line and top it with a largely nondescript and empty sky in order to convey the idea of the catastrophic event of mountains being leveled (fig. 16, fol. 155v). This cycle runs from fol. 151v to fol. 160r and includes such events as the sea rising above mountaintops and then receding before burning (fol. 151v, 152r, and 153r, respectively), trees sweating

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171 Voelkle, 57.
172 Voelkle, 57.
173 Voelkle, 65.
175 For the purpose of the organization of this chapter, it should be noted here that the Morgan Dance of Death appears after the scenes of burial for the Office of the Dead that immediately follow the scenes of the virtues and just before the apocalyptic signs. I will detail how the Dance fits in with the others after discussing the end of the world and Job.
blood and spotting the birds (fol. 153v), buildings crumbling (fol. 154r), rocks colliding (fol. 154v), and fire burning the earth and sky (fol. 158r). This apocalyptic cycle also illustrates the Office of the Dead, and as Wieck states, “The Office of the Dead was in the back of every Book of Hours the way death itself was always at the back of the medieval mind.”176 The connection between the end of the world and the end of one’s life would have been an easy one to make. Contemplating the two together, especially after viewing such a long Dance of Death, should have incited the desire to amend one’s erring ways while hammering home the idea that the things one values in this world will perish.

The manuscript closes with twenty-seven scenes detailing the life of Job, which run from fol. 160v to fol. 173v, straddling the Offices of the Dead and the Seven Psalms for the Dead. Job’s life in general carries connotations of overcoming suffering in a manner acceptable to the Christian faith and being rewarded accordingly, and he may, therefore, have connections with Lazarus (the beggar) in the idea that suffering in this life means less time in Purgatory, but he has specific ties to the Office of the Dead because scripture from the book of Job usually closes the Office.177 The rise of the depiction of Job in Italian art in the 1370s has been attributed by Millard Meiss to the terrors inflicted upon the small towns and villages surrounding Florence and Siena by mercenary troops associated with the Duke of Milan.178 Meiss posits that the people identified with Job at the time because “Not only did Job suffer from a disease whose outward symptoms were like those of the plague; his cattle were driven off and his children killed.”179 Given that, during the time

176 Wieck, 117.
177 Wieck, 13 and 118.
179 Meiss, 68.
of MS M.359’s creation, the Hundred Years’ War was underway, it is possible that the presence of the Morgan Job has similar sentiments behind it. If Job could survive all the turmoil and suffering limned in those roundels in such a way that he was considered righteous and was later blessed by God, why could the reader of MS M.359 not do the same? There exists a parallel between the wealth and family of Job being restored at the end of his life and the eternal rewards one would receive upon entering heaven after death. It could simply be present because ‘Job on the Dungheap’ was one of “the most common illustrations for the Office of the Dead,” but its underlying themes of living a virtuous life now and being blessed by God later also fit well with the program of images in the rest of the manuscript.\textsuperscript{180} It was after all Job who said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.”\textsuperscript{181} Such a strong resemblance between a beginning and its corresponding end may have been a comfort to people undergoing the turbulent times of the Bedford Regency in Paris, because it is somewhat similar to the idea of a continuity of power despite changes that is exhibited by the phrase, “The king is dead; long live the king.”

The Dance of Death is nestled among these corresponding image cycles just as its roundels have been fit within their surrounding \textit{rinceaux} borders. It conveys the ideas of contemplating and bettering one’s life not by vague connections between suffering in this life and reward in the next or through the veil of symbolism that surrounds the personification of the virtues, but rather with the stark exposure of naked, leering corpses – skeletal representations of an intangible event leading society, one by one, into the

\textsuperscript{180} Wieck, 119.  
\textsuperscript{181} Job 1:21.
unknown space lying just outside the frame of our current perception. The personifications of Death ask the Dancers to walk one way or the other. In some scenes, such as with the Patriarch (fol. 125v) or the Duke (fol. 126r), the way is clear, and the Deaths present agree on one direction in which to head. In others, such as with the Constable (fig. 5, fol. 127r), there is some confusion, and the Death’s seem to disagree, as if the final destination for that individual is undecided or mutable. There does not appear to be a pattern to how the decisions are made. Both clergy and laymen are led in either direction; however, the result is the same. They will soon be out of the picture.

The Morgan Dance of Death, and the other image cycles already discussed, would have provided the encouragement to consider one’s life and to consider that its end was inevitable - and perhaps suddenly oncoming - and that the time to change was at hand. Leaving behind of one’s physical suffering and temporary, earthly treasures was best supplemented by attaining lasting reward from God through virtuous living. The repeated appearance of nuances of these messages in the image cycles throughout the manuscript is evidence of a cohesive program, designed with the specific context of a Book of Hours in mind. The next chapter examines how the message of the Dance of Death is altered when the medium of its presentation changes.
CHAPTER 3
DEATH THROUGH A WIDER SCOPE:
MS M.359 AS ONE DANCE AMONG MANY

After having narrowed the scope of this thesis’ focus from the world of the Bedford Master and his workshop to the Morgan Dance of Death’s place within the decorative program of MS M.359 as a Book of Hours, I will now widen the scope once more to consider the trope of the Dance of Death and the Morgan Dance’s place within it. I will sketch out the literary origins of the theme before turning to some of the scholarship surrounding the Dance as a visual motif. I will then utilize Wolfgang Iser’s phenomenological approach to reading to consider what changes occur when the Dance of Death motif moves from a wall, in large scale mural form, to the pages of a book, as a series of broken up images. For my discussion of monumental examples, I will turn to Elina Gertsman’s assessment of three murals, the Lübeck and Reval Dances of Death by Bernt Notke and the Parisian Dance of Death which was in the Cemetery of St. Innocents. Gertsman also relies upon a phenomenological approach, and the murals I have selected will give a good example of how the Dance could be utilized in an interior space and how it would have been encountered outside in the Paris the Bedford Master and his workshop would have known. Both the Lübeck and Parisian Dances are examples of murals that have fallen to progress, one through an air raid in 1942 and the other during a civic beautification project.\footnote{Gertsman, 105.} As I mentioned in chapter 2, the Dance from St. Innocents is now known only through woodcuts which Guyot Marchant first published in 1485.\footnote{Gertsman, 6.} After reviewing Iser’s approach, I will outline the differences between viewing, for instance, the
Parisian mural and encountering the Morgan Dance in the margins of the Office of the Dead.

As I noted in the Introduction, James M. Clark has stated that the Dance of Death cannot be traced back to antiquity.\textsuperscript{184} Despite this, it is possible to see classical trends that may have led to the idea. When the ancient Greeks believed that Charon ferried souls to Hades across the rivers of the underworld, “Death was then not a being who killed, but simply one that fetched away and escorted to the underworld,” and this was similarly the case with other ancient cultures’ cthonic deities.\textsuperscript{185} However, with Christianity increasingly postulating the horrors that might await sinners in Hell during the fourteenth century, a shift occurred, and Kurtz states, “As the old divinity of the lower world fell into the background and Death came forward acting for himself, there could not but ensue a harsher reading of his character or a confounding of him with other gods.”\textsuperscript{186} This ‘new’ view of Death has endured and colors our perception of it even today. As Goodwin and Bronfen point out, “Indeed it is as the antagonist that we most clearly figure death: it stands as a challenge to all our systems of meaning, order, governance, and civilization.”\textsuperscript{187} It is this shift in Death’s role that laid the groundwork for the tropes that would precede the Dance of Death.

As previously mentioned, the Dance of Death is a didactic motif that seems to have sprung from literary origins - not Athena-like and fully formed but rather, as Kurtz posits, it “evolved from poems of a minor nature which were similar in tendency.”\textsuperscript{188} Kurtz traces

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\textsuperscript{184} Clark, 2. \\
\textsuperscript{185} Kurtz, 3. \\
\textsuperscript{186} Kurtz, 7. \\
\textsuperscript{187} Goodwin and Bronfen, 4. \\
\textsuperscript{188} Kurtz, 179.
\end{flushright}
the poems’ antecedents from an AD second century satire by Lucian entitled *The Dialogues of the Dead*, which follows Diogenes, Charon, Hermes, Menippus, and several dead shades on the boat to Hades.\(^{189}\) From this, he moves through *De Contemptu Mundi* - which has been attributed to St. Bernard, who lived during the change from the eleventh to the twelfth century – to the late twelfth-century poem *Les Vers de la Mort*.\(^{190}\) The latter, he states, “is possibly the earliest literature to which the poem of the Danse Macabré may be more directly referred,” for it is a possible precursor to the Tale of the Three Dead and the Three Living.\(^{191}\) The poem in question was written by a monk named Hélinant, who – in the poem – sends Death to each of his friends to warn them to live better lives. Moving away from these specific poems, Kurtz identifies two types of poems that functioned more immediately in ushering in the Dance of Death motif. The first is a group referred to as the Vado Mori poems, because “Each strophe in these poems begins and ends with the phrase ‘Je vais mourir’,” or ‘I am going to die;’ these, however, do not contain the dialogue exhibited by the Dance of Death poems.\(^{192}\) The earliest surviving manuscripts of these poems date from the thirteenth century and include about thirty, hierarchically arranged lamenters, anticipating the visual format of the Dance of Death.\(^{193}\) The second group of influential poems is that of the *Dit des Trois Mors et des Trois Vifs* (The Tale of the Three Dead and the Three Living), in which three nobles who are usually out hunting meet three dead corpses, sometimes thought to represent their own remains. The dead warn the living, who go back to their lives and live better due to the encounter. These poems are often

\(^{189}\) Kurtz, 9.
\(^{190}\) Kurtz, 11-12.
\(^{191}\) Kurtz, 12.
\(^{192}\) Kurtz, 16-17.
\(^{193}\) Kurtz, 17.
illustrated, sometimes with the three dead standing without the support of their coffins (fig. 17). Kurtz cites examples of this type of poem in Latin that date from the twelfth century. Kurtz then introduces one more specific poem before moving onto Dances of Death proper. This is Le Débat du Corps et de l’Ame (The Debate of the Body and the Soul), which appears in Anglo-Saxon and Early English in the tenth century. Its title explains its content quite well.

When it comes to dating the first poem that can be identified as a Dance of Death, however, there is some disagreement. Clark alludes to the presence of an argument by removing himself from it when he states, “It is not necessary to trace every tributary to its source. It suffices to follow the main stream, and draw the broad line of development.” Kurtz argues that the earliest recorded mention of a Danse Macabré poem is by Jehan Le Fevre in his 1376 poem Respit de la Mort, which he wrote after recovering from a severe illness. Kurtz sees this reference as an indication that Le Fevre had written a prior poem titled Danse Macabré, which does not survive. He sees the word macabre, for which he prefers the accented spelling macabré, as referring to someone’s surname. Gertsman, whose work was published most recently, glosses over Le Fevre’s mention of the phrase and states that the earliest extant example is Dança general de la muerte in 1400 from Spain, making it seem that she finds this a more solid date if only through its survival. That said, the tradition of these poems and songs was spread throughout Europe.

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194 Kurtz, 17.
195 Kurtz, 20.
196 Clark, 3. Given how he weighs in on the argument surrounding the etymology of the word macabre, it is interesting that he chooses not to contend here.
197 Kurtz, 24.
198 Kurtz, 178-179.
199 Kurtz, 21-24.
Many of the works written on the subject of the Dance in imagery focus on specific Dances. For example, there are quite a few on Holbein’s woodblocks. Dances are sometimes mentioned in conjunction with studies on Triumphs of Death and/or the Black Death, such as in Joseph Polzer’s article, “Aspects of the Fourteenth-Century Iconography of Death and the Plague” or Christine Boeckl’s book, *Images of Plague and Pestilence*, for macabre imagery and the plague have been consistently linked in scholars’ minds. Yet many of these publications fail to distinguish the Dance of Death from other tropes with personifications of death, such as the Tale of the Three Dead and the Three Living. For example, T.S.R. Boase’s book *Death in the Middle Ages: Mortality, Judgement, and Remembrance*, collapses *memento mori* imagery with other Death personifications. The two, more comprehensive volumes by James M. Clark and Elina Gertsman, therefore, stand out, both in their treatment of Dance of Death scenes in general and in that they distinguish the Dance of Death trope from other, similarly macabre themes.

Clark states that his book, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, which was originally published in 1950 and has since been republished by the Arno Press in 1977, is the first “authoritative account of the Dance of Death as a whole” to be published in English since the nineteenth century. He breaks his work up by country, discussing Britain, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. He includes

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a chapter on the origin and meaning of the Dances, and he traces some of the etymology of the word *macabre*.\textsuperscript{203} Interestingly – though, as the Morgan Dance shows, incorrectly - Clark states, in his discussion of printed Dances in France, that “So popular did the subject become that Books of Hours...began to adopt the Dance of Death among the miniatures with which they were decorated...as these miniatures are all derived from the Paris *Danse Macabre*. They add nothing essentially new to the central theme.”\textsuperscript{204} While it would seem that he is correct to assume that the mural at the Cemetery of the Innocents influenced the Dances found in books, the fact that MS M.359 predates by at least thirty-five years those images based on the Parisian mural that were printed by Marchant, in 1470 and afterward, challenges Clark’s implication that all French Books of Hours exhibiting Dances of the Dead post-dated the printed versions and indicates that the thinking about these images needs to be realigned. It is possible that the printed books were influenced by illuminated Books of Hours, rather than the reverse.

Elina Gertsman’s recent book, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance*, focuses on Dances of Death that take the form of large scale murals. However, she does note in the section on the history of the motif that some murals influenced printed Dances and vice versa. For example, she states that the French Dances of Death at Kernascleden and La Chaise-Dieu “probably owe their existence to the dissemination of Marchant’s and Vérard’s prints.”\textsuperscript{205} Alternately, Bernt Notke’s Lübeck Dance of Death led to the creation of a mural on painted panels, which “was shipped to the

\textsuperscript{203} When addressing the theory that the word stemmed from the name Maccabees, which Kurtz also mentioned, Clark states, “Here again there is a distinct possibility but nothing more,” and he closes the discussion with several individual words in various languages that have been posited as possible origins, dismissing them as being “historical curiosities and cannot be taken seriously by anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with philology.” Clark, 119.

\textsuperscript{204} Clark, 27.

\textsuperscript{205} Gertsman, 9.
Livonian town of Reval (now Tallinn, Estonia),” and “inspired a number of prints, among them Heinrich Knoblochtzer’s Der doten dantz mit figuren, clage und antwort, published around 1488” and now also referred to as Der Heidelberger Totentanz. Gertsman examines the reception of several large scale murals in the context of contemporaneous dancing practices, theatrical performances of the Dance of Death, the wording used in Dance of Death poems (especially those paired with murals), and how the spaces in which certain mural forms of the Dance were utilized to aim certain messages at the viewers it enfolded in their narratives.

These sources provide a more specific history of the Dances of Death in general than I gave in the introduction. In the previous chapter, I applied certain aspects of Wolfgang Iser’s phenomenological approach to reading to the idea of personifying death in order to propose a possible reason to, so to speak, bring death to life as a dynamic character in an artwork. Like seeing a movie based on a novel, when one sees Death personified one’s ability to imagine the qualities of the concept is limited. Any previous understandings are cancelled out and replaced with the characteristics with which the artist imbuces the figure. The more concrete the personified Death, the more strongly that version becomes the foundation for understanding the event, locking the ideas put forward by the image within one’s mind. This would make the image of Death an attractive one to portray within a religious context, as the church is so thoroughly concerned with life, death, and whatever may lie after, but now I will apply another aspect of Iser’s approach to examine

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206 Gertsman, 9-11. Gertsman cites a study and facsimile of Knoblochtzer’s work as Albert Schramm, ed., Der doten dantz mit figuren, clage und antwort schon allen staten der werlt (Leipzig: K. W. Hiersemann, 1922), but I was also able to find a facsimile of a version of Der Heidelberger Totentanz from three years earlier that exhibits the same woodcuts that Gertsman attributes to the 1488 version. See Manfred Lemmer, ed., Der Heidelberger Totentanz von 1485: 42 Holzschnitte Herausgegeben von Manfred Lemmer (Main and Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1991).
how the presentation of the image, and not just the image itself, may affect the understanding of Death to which a viewer becomes limited. This aspect is Iser’s idea that “The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence,” and this applies to works of art, as well.207

For Iser, a work, whether literary or artistic, is not complete without someone present to behold and contemplate it. The work then exists neither in the text on a page or in the paint on a canvas nor solely within the beholder’s mind, but rather somewhere within the space between that is created by the meeting of the two. The complete work is active, or perhaps more accurately interactive, for the beholder encounters areas where the writer does not tell the whole story or where the artist cannot paint the whole picture, and he is led “to shade in the many outlines suggested by the given situations, so that these take on a reality of their own.”208 Moving from this idea, then, it would seem sensible that the form a work takes alters the ways that one can interact with it, thereby changing the completion of the work, in Iser’s terms. In the rest of this chapter, I will employ Iser’s understanding of what happens in the reader’s mind while reading as a way to frame an understanding of the experience of viewing specific Dances of Death. Specifically, I will look at the change that occurs when the Dance is translated from a large scale mural to a series of roundels on the pages of a book.

According to Gertsman, the large-scale murals of the Dance of Death in Lübeck and Reval are linked because they have been attributed to the same artist and because they “are the only large-scale medieval Dances outfitted with a detailed background.”209 While

207 Iser, 279.
208 Iser, 281.
209 Gertsman, 119.
Gertsman states that “As a rule, the dancing procession is never inscribed in a site-specific space” so as to highlight the Dancers, these two feature recognizable cityscapes containing specific buildings from Lübeck, although the cityscape of the Reval Dance depicts a more “generalised yet familiar Hanseatic cityscape.” 210 This literally brings the Dance home for the viewers and “reinforces the sense of reality: an abstracted didactic lesson about the inevitability of death has been transported into the realm of the recognizable.” 211 However, the city is portrayed as being far away, separate from the Dancers, who inhabit the extreme “foreground in order to invade the spectator’s space.” 212 In this way, the viewer is both home and not home. He can see places he recognizes, yet he has entered a liminal space that is “now governed by Death, its skeletal manifestations mingling among the living,...killing them with word and gesture.” 213 Both of these murals lined the interior walls of chapels and were accompanied by verses that contained a dialogue between Death and the Dancers. 214 In placing the liminal space in which the Dancers invade the viewer’s domain on the walls of a chapel, the artist has both confined the encounter and literally surrounded the viewer with Death, emphasizing its inevitability. Similarly to the Morgan Dance, the Reval Dance contains a Preacher figure at its head, making this dance a visual sermon. 215 Gertsman notes that the process of moving along the walls to view the entire mural creates “the beginning of a complimentary dance: while the skeletons drag men and women to the left, towards the Preacher’s pulpit, viewers, following the narrative of the text, move from left to right.” 216 In this way, viewers travel back towards the end of the

210 Gertsman, 119.
211 Gertsman, 119.
212 Gertsman, 120.
213 Gertsman, 120.
214 Gertsman, 117.
215 Gertsman, 105-107. Interestingly, the Lübeck Dance does not contain this figure.
216 Gertsman, 123.
line, where they meet the child in the cradle, the point from which everyone begins their journey towards Death. At some point along the way, they would have also, most likely, found their counterpart, the Dancer who represents their role in life, and the Preacher’s verse encourages the viewer to treat the mural as “a mirror, thereby immediately transforming it from a mere spectacle of others’ suffering into a reflection of its beholder.” This drives home the point that, while the viewer may exit the chapel and the liminal space that the mural creates within it, he will continue to be a part of the Dance.

The Parisian Dance of Death in the Cemetery of St. Innocents would have been a slightly different viewing experience. The entire mural was about twenty meters long. As it was in a cemetery, it would still technically have been in a realm ‘governed by Death,’ but the situation would have been quite different than that of the chapels bearing the Lübeck and Reval Dances, for the mural – situated as it was “along the southern wall of the cemetery’s inner courtyard” - would have been outdoors. Because the mural itself has been destroyed, it may not be possible to reach an understanding of just how the space was structured, but according to Gertsman, the gallery that the mural lined had arcades of some kind, and this is an effect that Guyot Marchant duplicated with the frames of his woodblocks. The framing devices Marchant employs may reflect the exact appearance of these arcades, but it is also possible that he needed to frame his printed Dancers more thoroughly given the constraints of codex-style pages and strengthened the effect at which subtler arches only hinted. If Marchant reproduced the effect faithfully, the architectural

\[217\] Gertsman, 112.
\[218\] Gertsman, 122-123.
\[219\] Gertsman, 3. This would be roughly 65.6 feet.
\[220\] Gertsman, 3.
\[221\] Gertsman, 3-6.
details surrounding the mural would have organized though not completely divided the Dancers into small sets, both focusing the attention on a few characters at a time and giving the eye a visual rhythm to follow as it moved down the dance. Gertsman states that “the dejected procession sashayed through a universal, timeless scene that did not occur anywhere in particular, but rather everywhere on God’s earth.”

The verses accompanying this mural were “the product of a milieu filled with religious fervor and dominated by learned ecclesiastics,” many of whom would later find their way into the Morgan Dance. The Parisian verses warn “of eternal damnation, ...[focusing] on the vileness of the human body,” an appropriate topic given that the mural itself was displayed within sight of the bones displayed in the cemetery’s charnel houses.

The area, unlike cemeteries today, would have been full of people on a regular basis. Gertsman describes it as “hardly a place for mourning, but rather a site of worldly affairs – public picnics, promenades, commercial transactions, and celebrations – and therefore always busy.” Additionally, preachers would have frequently been present and giving sermons. Gertsman has unearthed specific references to a Franciscan friar named Richard who gave five or six hour long sermons on the apocalypse for more than a week in April of 1429 while facing the St. Innocents’ Dance of Death mural. This performance on the part of preachers would have fit well with the Dance itself, which included a Preacher at its head just at the Morgan Dance does. Viewing this mural would have been a crowded affair and most likely noisy. It would still be a liminal space, but one in which many things competed for the

222 Gertsman, 122.
223 Gertsman, 122.
224 Gertsman, 3 and 122.
225 Gertsman, 3.
226 Gertsman, 3. In a subtle nod to the format of the Dance of Death itself, Gertsman actually begins her discussion of the topic with an anecdote about this preacher so that her book begins as a Dance would.
viewer’s attention. This might have, perhaps, made it difficult for the viewer to become fully immersed in the dance as he might at Lübeck or Reval, but the presence of so many of the living within a cemetery mimicked the Dance itself, though in a less menacing, less didactic manner. In this way, the Parisian Dance somewhat reverses the method in which the liminal space was created at Lübeck and Reval. Instead of the dead or dying invading the space of the living by moving into the extreme edges of the foreground, the living have asserted their presence upon the place where the dead reside. It is this mural that would have most likely influenced the production of the Morgan Dance of Death. Thus, returning to the idea that changing the medium changes the message, if the Dance of Death was most often encountered as large scale murals, then what happens when that monumental sequence is miniaturized into the margins of a book?

The murals are large and affront the viewer, holding his attention. When the murals line the walls of an interior room, as in Lübeck, the Dance of Death literally surrounds the viewer, making it seem inescapable - which is, of course, partly the point: Death will always come in the end. The viewer can be temporarily thematically enfolded into the dance that everyone will join someday. However, when moved from the wall to the page, much of the immersive quality of the mural is lost, or at least drastically altered. When the visual connectivity between the individual Dancers is severed, the attendant personifications of death still maintain some universality in that they visit each Dancer, but their connection to the viewer as part of the Dance is lost. The Dance becomes, instead, a series of individual scenes for the viewer to observe while someone else experiences the events within. It is the difference between participating in a funeral procession and reading an obituary. While, in the case of the Morgan Dance, it would be a very long series of
obituaries, the distance remains. Each scene still represents someone else’s life coming to an end in a neat little frame in the margin of a beautiful book that the viewer can close and walk away from unscathed.

While reading a Book of Hours could be defined as an intimate and solitary action, which is in contrast to the very public setting of most Dance of Death murals, I would argue that viewing the murals would also be intimate as it situates each viewer within the frame of his/her own death, and technically everyone dies alone. Goodwin and Bronfen state that such considerations are “perhaps the very definition of self-fashioning solitude.”

Therefore, the contemplation of death would, by definition, be a solitary affair, even in a crowd of people.

At the same time, both viewing the murals on the wall of a church or churchyard cemetery and seeing scenes in the margins of the Office of the Dead would encapsulate the viewer in the religious and social community of the church. With this in mind, it becomes more important to note that the Morgan Dance is not just within any book but specifically within a Book of Hours. The Dance has not just been split from a long line of a continuous dance into a series of roundels that border several pages. It has been paired with a text that carries its own separate, though somewhat related, connotations. As Iser states, “Whatever we have read sinks into our memory and is foreshortened. It may later be evoked again and set against a different background with the result that the reader is enabled to develop hitherto unforeseeable connections.”

This is what occurs when the Bedford workshop combined images of the Dance of Death with the text of the Office of the Dead. According to Iser, reading allows one to string together sentences and paragraphs into illusions of

227 Goodwin and Bronfen, 3.
228 Iser, 283.
understanding, the interaction between reader and text that goes beyond the words the author supplied. But, no matter how immersed within these illusions he becomes, he is still somehow aware that he is reading a text.\textsuperscript{229} Thus, while reading, his consciousness moves between the text he reads, the illusions he creates, and the connections he makes with the memories of other texts and illusions. The interaction continually evolves, and Iser states, “Since it is he who builds the illusions, he oscillates between involvement in and observation of those illusions; he opens himself to the unfamiliar world without being imprisoned by it.”\textsuperscript{230}

While viewing the Dance of Death in the context of a book may not have the immersive qualities that standing in front of a mural might, I would argue that the emphasis on meditation involved in reading a Book of Hours might provide a comparable experience. Contemplating the Office of the Dead means mentally immersing oneself in the ceremony that accompanies funeral practices, whether one’s own funeral or that of a loved one. Combining this with a remembered understanding of the Dance of Death as evoked by marginal images, the immanence of Death’s presence and the inevitability of its coming for the reader/viewer is heightened. Contemplating one’s own death and funerary services while viewing the marginal roundels of the Dance of Death might evoke a similar feeling of inescapability as that evoked by standing in a room lined with a large scale mural of the Dance. But, just as Iser’s proposed reader continues to understand that he is reading a text while he becomes immersed in illusions of his own making, the reader of the Morgan Office of the Dead has an escape. The medium of the manuscript distances the viewer from the Dance itself, keeping him from being completely taken in by Death as it leads

\textsuperscript{229} Iser, 291.
\textsuperscript{230} Iser, 291.
away the other Dancers. Thus, while the meditation of the text opens the viewer up to the experience, the reader is ‘not imprisoned by’ this depicted world in which Death walks because he or she can close the book and walk away with ease.\textsuperscript{231} This allows the viewer to contemplate his own death both vividly and safely. And while he may not be trapped by the images, the understanding he gains from interacting with both the Dance of Death and the Office of the Dead simultaneously will be locked into his conception of the experience of death, and the macabre world he opened himself up to will linger in traces in his mind for a while, travelling with him when the book is left behind.\textsuperscript{232}

While the Morgan Dance may be the earliest extant example of a Dance of Death in an illuminated manuscript, it would become one of many Dances as the motif spread throughout Europe, though each would have its own particular audience and contexts that would tailor slightly the didactic message it conveyed.\textsuperscript{233} The Morgan Dance provides a view into the liminal space in which Death overtakes the living, but the viewer’s own space is not intruded upon by the images. Rather the viewer’s connection with that liminality is provided by his or her meditation upon the text that accompanies this Dance, the Office of the Dead.

\textsuperscript{231} Iser, 291.
\textsuperscript{232} Iser, 290.
\textsuperscript{233} Voelkle, 71.
CONCLUSION

By encompassing such a long series of roundels, the Morgan Dance of Death reflects the narrative practices of the Bedford Master and his workshop very well. By taking a motif that would normally have about thirty components and spinning it out over fifty-seven roundels, the artist explores the theme in an almost exegetical manner. This fits well with the similar treatment of other themes throughout the manuscript, such as the healing of lepers and the blind, the stories of Lazarus of Bethany and the life of Job, the seven virtues, and the fifteen signs of the apocalypse. The Dance continues the theme of self-examination to which these other image cycles allude, encouraging the reader to consider the state of his spiritual life, because the physical is all too temporary. In moving this motif from the easily accessible walls of the Cemetery of St. Innocents in Paris to the neatly framed marginal roundels in a book, the artist creates an even more noticeable distance between the viewer and the liminal space in which Death walks the earth and takes its victims than that which exists in the noisy, bustling crowds at the cemetery. However, by placing it alongside the Office of the Dead, which the viewer would allow the viewer to meditate upon his and others’ funeral ceremonies, the artist allows for a new liminal space, created by the interplay between the viewer’s meditation and the concreteness of the image of Death personified, where the viewer can safely access the realm of Death and contemplate the implications of that journey while still having time to amend his ways if necessary.

If I were to take this research further, I would begin by drawing upon the idea of dying well as it was laid out in the Ars Moriendi, or The Art of Dying. This book was a very popular text during the period in which MS M.359 was made, and it was often
illustrated, though it usually depicted the event of death rather than its personification. This would provide a deeper look into the culture of contemplating death. Another avenue of inquiry might be to expand the problem of patronage through a comparative study of the depiction of death by Northern artists in an effort to establish why or how this might have led a patron in Paris to select a master artist from an outside region. Although, given that it seems to be a general consensus among the scholars I have cited that the Bedford Master himself was open to a multitude of influences, this choice may simply reflect the multinational quality of the art scene in Paris at the time.

Another aspect of the Morgan Dance which I have not delved into fully is the lightness with which it treats its subject matter. This is evident by the pastel color palette and the general lack of gore, toads, and worms which becomes obvious when one compares it to other Dances (fig. 22). But the Dance is also lightened by the humorous expressions and gestures that the personified deaths utilize while claiming the Dancers. Thus, it may also be beneficial to approach this topic through an understanding of humor at the time. This would have ramifications for the class of MS M.359’s intended interpretive community, and it would lead nicely into a look at the evolution of the Dance of Death motif over time. Holbein, especially, used humor in his woodblock depictions of Death which were originally published in 1538.\textsuperscript{234} Holbein’s Deaths run amok – stealing hats, playing instruments, goading animals, donning costumes, and waving hourglasses at their intended victims (figs. 7 and 18-20). The results are quite humorous, but even the more laughable elements fail to hide that Holbein presents an uncaring, implacable, and unyielding Death. Gertsman sees the changes in Holbein’s Dance of Death as evidence of

\textsuperscript{234} Gertsman, 169.
the motif as a tamed and dying form by the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{235} Instead of a sermon introduced by a preacher figure, as at St. Innocents and in MS M.359, Holbein’s Dance is bookended by the Biblical narratives of the Garden of Eden and the Last Judgement, presenting what Gertsman terms, “a comprehensive view of the history of mankind, from Creation to the Last Judgement, with the Dance of Death as a necessary and repeating episode in the chain of events.”\textsuperscript{236} While the immersive nature of Holbein’s highly detailed designs and its accompanying texts do offer a different reading of the Dance than those I have outlined in previous chapters, his Dance does bear common elements with the older Dances, even in some of the parts which might be cited as obvious changes. For example, each of Holbein’s Dancers is depicted in a detailed, though still sometimes vague, setting. As Werner L. Gundersheimer has characterized it, “Holbein’s inventiveness has avoided any shadow of monotony.”\textsuperscript{237} However, the Morgan Dance seems to have anticipated this move in some of its scenes, notably the Apothecary, the Money Changer, and the Fieldworker (figs. 8-9 and 21, fol. 142r, 144r, and 146v), though it restricts the identifiable spaces to the laborers, as if their job defines them whereas the nobler classes need only their clothes to be identified. Interestingly, Stephanie Buck has proposed that Holbein might have gained inspiration from French books of Hours while designing his woodblocks.\textsuperscript{238}

Clark also closes his examination on the Dance of Death with Holbein, because, he states, “For the Dance of Death, properly speaking, was essentially a product of the late

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
235 Gertsman, 163-180.
236 Gertsman, 170.
237 Gundersheimer, xii.
\end{flushright}
Middle Ages...But a history of the Dance of Death which excludes Holbein would be unthinkable...We cannot ignore Holbein; our story should be incomplete without him, but to pursue our search beyond him into the modern age would have led us too far from our original course.”

He holds a fair point, and it makes sense to find a more tangible manifestation of Death during times of relatively high mortality that those of us with access to more modernized medicine tend to associate with more ancient times. However, medieval authors and artists were not alone in expressing their interest in death by bringing it to life in texts and images. The Dance as it was depicted in the Medieval period may be, for the most part if not completely, extinct, but it has echoes, and Death appears in other forms. These echoes may be more immediately visible in written works which have recently gained popularity, such as *The Tale of Three Brothers*, by J.K. Rowling, which was written as a fable framed within the seventh and final novel of her Harry Potter series.

In this tale, Death is a sort of trickster character who, finding that three brothers have added a bridge to a treacherous stretch of river, pretends to reward those who outsmarted him, only to give two of them objects which will hasten their demise. This text was translated into animated images when the book was turned into a two-part movie.

This story may have been influenced by medieval literature, specifically the story told by

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239 Clark, 3.
the Pardoner in Chaucer’s famous *Canterbury Tales*. There, Death is originally alluded to as a marauder sweeping the countryside but ultimately takes the unexpected forms of a bag of gold and some poisoned wine.\(^{242}\)

In a similar instance of a trope moving from medieval to modern, the tradition of the Dance of Death in songs continues even today, as evidenced by “O Death” which was sung by Ralph Stanley for the soundtrack of the movie “O Brother, Where Art Thou?” In it, a singer implores, “Won’t you spare me over for another year?” And Death identifies itself as one whom “none can excel” and describes what it does to those whom it claims, singing, “I’ll fix your feet so you can’t walk./I’ll lock your jaw so you can’t talk./I’ll close your eyes so you can’t see./This very hour, come, and go with me.”\(^{243}\) While this version no longer includes the hierarchical list of all strata of society, it retains the dialogic aspects which characterized the Dance of Death poems. Sometimes in modern versions, Death is conflated with the devil, and the Dance is merely mentioned, such as in “The Devil Takes Care of His Own,” by Band of Skulls in their album “Sweet Sour.” The chorus scoffs that if you make deals with the devil without reading the details of the contract, “then you’re a dancer.”\(^{244}\) A similar ambiguity is found in the song “The Man in the Long Black Coat,” which is sung by Mark Lanegan on the album “I’m Not There.” In this song, a man wearing a long, dusty, black coat hangs around an old dance hall and quotes from the Bible. A woman goes with him, leaving behind “not a word of goodbye, not even a note.”\(^{245}\) The man in question could be just a man, but given the tone of the song, he seems to be a more


\(^{244}\) Band of Skulls, “The Devil Takes Care of His Own,” on *Sweet Sour* (Vagrant Records, 2012), iTunes.

menacing than a human drifter. The invitation to dance and the reference to his mask-like face would seem to indicate Death. The dust could be from travelling, or it could be from graves and in reference to the idea of ‘ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.’

As with MS M.359 and Holbein’s Dance of Death, humor is often employed when Death is personified, and some of today’s versions of Death are lighter, though the air of menace is never entirely abandoned. For example, Death is the narrator of the New York Times Bestseller The Book Thief, and early in the novel he ends a description of the color white with, “personally, I don’t think you want to argue with me.” He tries to qualify this threat with a bold type announcement that he is “not violent...not malicious...a result,” but the threat is still there. A trivia game-playing DEATH, who insists he has not touched Elvis, appears in Neil Gaiman and the late Terry Pratchett’s novel Good Omens. In this incarnation, DEATH is one of the four riders of the apocalypse, but instead of the usual pale horse, he mounts a motorcycle. A cryptically smiling Death plays chess with a knight in a movie called “The Seventh Seal.” Death appears as a very thin man several times in the television series Supernatural, in which he has a penchant for pizza and greasy fair food. Throughout these examples, the themes which surface repeatedly are that Death always wins in the end, that one cannot kill Death, and that those who try to kill

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247 Zusak, 6.
251 Supernatural. (pizza: Season 5, Episode 21; deep fried pickles: Season 7, Episode 1) See full citations of the Supernatural episodes in the Bibliography.
Death usually die faster for having angered it.\textsuperscript{252} Whatever the game, however long the story stretches, Death comes for all.

\textbf{fig. 1: Euphronius, "The Death of Sarpedon," calyx krater, c. 515 BC, Archaeological Museum of Cerveteri, Italy}

\textsuperscript{252} Logically, one cannot kill Death because Death’s death would be a perpetuation of itself - the notable exception being \textit{Supernatural}, Season 10, Episode 23: “Brother’s Keeper”, in which the human character Dean Winchester takes Death’s own scythe and kills him (rather ironically in front of a mural of dancing skeletons, though it is for the Day of the Dead and not necessarily a Dance of Death). I must admit, I have yet to watch any episodes after that unsettling deviation from the usual rules of storytelling, so it is possible that Death’s death is like the demise of so many characters in that show: impermanent. It is also possible, but unlikely, that another character, perhaps even Dean himself, will have to take over Death’s role. Precedent for this possibility was set in Season 6, Episode 11, in which Dean attempted to wear Death’s ring of power, and collect souls whose time was up, for twenty-four hours.
fig. 2: Bedford Master, “The Magistrate” or “The Parlementaire” (MS M.359, fol. 128r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 3: Bedford Master, "Flight Into Egypt," miniature of hours of the Virgin at Vespers, (Bedford Hours, Add. MS 18850, fol. 83), British Library, London
fig. 4: Bedford Master, "Annunciation to the Virgin" (MS M.359, fol. 21r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 5: Bedford Master, “The Constable” (MS M.359, fol. 127r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 6: Bedford Master, “The Benedictine Abbot” (MS M.359, fol. 130r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 7: Hans Holbein the Younger, "The Abbot" from a 1971 facsimile of the 1538 edition of Les simulacres & historiees faces de la mort autant elegammèt pourtraictes, que artificiellement imaginées
fig. 8: Bedford Master, "The Apothecary" (MS M.359, fol. 142r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 9: Bedford Master, “The Money Changer” (MS M.359, fol. 144r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 10: Bedford Master, "The Pope" (MS M.359, fol. 123v), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 11: Bedford Master, "The Child" or "The Swaddled Infant" (MS M.359, fol. 151r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 12: Bedford Master, “The Preacher” or “The Scholar” (MS M.359, fol. 123r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 13: Bedford Master, "Christ Heals Leper" (MS M.359, fol. 57v), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 14: Bedford Master, "Christ Sends Lepers Forth" (MS M.359, fol. 72r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 15: Bedford Master, “Lazarus, Clothed, Kneels Before Christ” (MS M.359, fol. 81r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 16: Bedford Master, "Mountains Leveled" (MS M.359, fol. 155v), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
fig. 17: The Limbourg Brothers, “The Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead” (Les Petites Heures de Jean, Duc de Berry, Ms. Lat. 18014, fol. 282r), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
fig. 18: Hans holbein the Younger, "The Lady" from a 1971 facsimile of the 1538 edition of Les simulacres & historiees faces de la mort autant elegamment pourtraictes, que artificiellement imaginées
fig. 19: Hans Holbein the Younger, "The Fieldworker" from a 1971 facsimile of the 1538 edition of Les simulacres & historiees faces de la mort autant elegamment pourtraictes, que artificiellement imaginées
fig. 20: Hans Holbein the Younger, "The Queen" from a 1971 facsimile of the 1538 edition of Les simulacres & historiees faces de la mort autant elegammèt pourtraictes, que artificiellement imaginées
fig. 21: Bedford Master, "The Fieldworker" (MS M.359, fol. 146v), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
### APPENDIX A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
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<th>Deaths Present</th>
<th>Folio</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>123v</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man, who may be a Cleric</td>
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<td>Man, wearing a purse</td>
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<td>Franciscan Monk</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Notary</td>
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<td>Man, in a chaperone hat</td>
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<td>140v</td>
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<td>Alexian Brother</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Full Circle</td>
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<td>140v</td>
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253 Kinch, 230.

254 Kinch, 135. Kinch identifies this figure as the Sergeant
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<td>Swaddled Infant</td>
<td>57</td>
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\(^{255}\) I am tempted to posit that, if the man with the lidded jar carries a blade, he may be a surgeon, but I really have no way to back this up, especially since it would be odd for him to appear before the Physician.

\(^{256}\) Kinch, 218-221. The online database at the Pierpont Morgan Library identifies this figure as possibly being of the Knights of the Order of Our Lady of Mon Jolie-Outremer, but Kinch identifies him as one of the Brethren of the Holy Cross or the Crosier.

\(^{257}\) Kinch, 215. An unidentified man, walking behind a horse or ass, which carries bags of cargo.
APPENDIX B

IMAGES CITED

fig. 1. Euphronius, “The Death of Sarpedon,” calyx krater, c. 515 BC, Archaeological Museum of Cerveteri, Italy

fig. 2. Bedford Master, “The Magistrate” or “The Parlementaire” (MS M.359, fol. 128r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
<http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/252/76807> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 3. Bedford Master, “Flight into Egypt,” miniature of hours of the Virgin at Vespers, (Bedford Hours, Add. MS 18850, fol. 83), British Library, London

fig. 4. Bedford Master, “Annunciation” (MS M.359, fol. 21r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
<http://corsair.morganlibrary.org/icaimages/3/m359.021r.jpg> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 5. Bedford Master, “The Constable” (MS M.359, fol. 127r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
<http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/250/76807> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 6. Bedford Master, “The Benedictine Abbot” (MS M.359, fol. 130r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
<http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/256/76807> (accessed 7-22-2016)


fig. 8. Bedford Master, “The Apothecary” (MS M.359, fol. 142r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
<http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/280/76807> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 9. Bedford Master, “The Money Changer” (MS M.359, fol. 144r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
<http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/284/76807> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 10. Bedford Master, “The Pope” (MS M.359, fol. 123v), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
<http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/243/76807> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 11. Bedford Master, “The Child” or “The Swaddled Infant” (MS M.359, fol. 151r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City
<http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/298/76807> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 13. Bedford Master, “Christ Heals Leper” (MS M.359, fol. 57v), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=113&ti=101,113&Search_Arg=%22ms%20m.359%22%20ica&Search_Code=GKEY^&CNT=50&PID=7Yq4V1FvE9j3oBu87hibkKKc5Nb&SEQ=20160305210946&SID=1> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 14. Bedford Master, “Christ Sends Lepers Forth” (MS M.359, fol. 72r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=142&ti=101,142&Search_Arg=%22ms%20m.359%22%20ica&Search_Code=GKEY^&CNT=50&PID=7Yq4V1FvE9j3oBu87hibkKkc5Nb&SEQ=20160305210946&SID=1> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 15. Bedford Master, “Lazarus, Clothed, Kneels Before Christ” (MS M.359, fol. 81r), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=160&ti=151,160&Search_Arg=%22ms%20m.359%22%20ica&Search_Code=GKEY^&CNT=50&PID=7grUBG98nBA9_HKQENBGbjakMt00v&SEQ=20160305213655&SID=1> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 16. Bedford Master, “Mountains Leveled” (MS M.359, fol. 155v), c. 1430-1435, Pierpont Morgan Library <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=307&ti=301,307&Search_Arg=%22ms%20m.359%22%20ica&Search_Code=GKEY^&CNT=50&PID=XIFWQtREKcDeVUuY3M7Dv8I05CNhLLF&SEQ=20160305224234&SID=1> (accessed 7-22-2016)

fig. 17. The Limbourg Brothers, “The Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead” (Les Petites Heures de Jean, Duc de Berry, Ms. Lat. 18014, fol. 282r), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/50/Petites_heures_du_duc_Jean_de_Berry_fol_282r_(d%C3%A9tail).jpg/440px-Petites_heures_du_duc_Jean_de_Berry_fol_282r_(d%C3%A9tail).jpg> (accessed 7-22-2016)


fig. 20. Hans Holbein the Younger, “The Queen” from a 1971 facsimile of the 1538 edition of *Les simulacres & historiees faces de la mort autant elegamment*


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