

The Dance of Death





Hans Holbein, Death goes forth

The Dance of Death in Book Illustration

by Marcia Collins

Catalog to an Exhibition of the Collection
in the Ellis Library of the
University of Missouri-Columbia

April 1 - 30, 1978

On the Occasion of the Annual Spring Meeting
of the Midwest Chapter of the
American Musicological Society

The exhibition and catalog were sponsored by the Department of Music, the Ellis Library and the Graduate School of the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Photographs in the catalog were taken by Betty Scott.

Ellis Library . University of Missouri

Columbia, Missouri . 1978

University of Missouri Library Series, 27



Kaiserin
Wenn ich schon bin ein Kaiserin
Dazu am Römische Kommen
Vorwärts der Todt mein haben Stamm
Schreibt in die Eichen meinen Nam.

Rudolf and Conrad Meyer, The Empress

Preface



For several years, even before coming to Columbia, I was interested in a certain aspect of Renaissance iconography which I have identified as social typology. It had its origins in the humanism of the early Renaissance which first took shape in Italy and spread north throughout Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In book illustration social typology--the graphic record of man's concern with man--began to present itself as a new and strong current only in the sixteenth century.

The term social typology is one for which I must take personal responsibility. The understanding of its various forms as closely related symptoms of man's understanding of his social position is, I believe, a new approach. By itself the word typology has a number of meanings. For art historians it usually means the iconographic juxtaposition of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment as seen in the early illuminated manuscripts and picture books like the Biblia Pauperum and the Speculum Humanae Salvationis. Extending this usage, by social typology I mean the artistic depiction of a mirror of society emphasizing its various estates and the social strata in which men live. From the Pope and the Emperor to the beggar and the child, the illustrators of Renaissance

books evidenced a new and lively interest in the variety of the human condition.

One important question may be raised. This stock-taking of the society by the artist, was it a reflection of the already existent hierarchy, or was it something the artist himself created? Although I have searched for years for answers, consulting books of sociology and history and the experts in these fields, I have not found any clear study documenting the interaction of man's consciousness of society and the solidification of social strata. In a way it's a question of which came first the chicken or the egg? Probably one must be satisfied with a compromise. Social hierarchies existed before being recorded by artists and even before the written word but the mirror of the artist also created a consciousness of man's world and helped to fix its image.

The classic example of this interaction of the artist and society which is social typology is the Dance of Death. Showing the encounter of Death with representatives of all varieties of human occupations, the arrangement of the Dance carries an implicit understanding of society as subject to rigid stratification. Paradoxically it also shows Death as the great equalizer who comes to all men. Thus at the very threshold of modern imperialism a morbid concept of democracy is enunciated with terrifying graphic power.

In 1969, when I first came to the University of Missouri, we found a fine early edition of Holbein's Dance of Death and we were able to acquire it. This became the cornerstone of the by now quite remarkable collection which is described in this catalog. Besides acquiring facsimiles of the earliest Dances

of Death which were published in printed editions and blockbooks before 1500, we have worked on collecting the three main traditions of the Dances: editions of Holbein's woodcuts and copies of his designs in other graphic media such as engravings, etchings and lithographs; editions of copies of the wall-paintings at Basel; and variations on the theme such as illustrated editions of sermons and the modern Dances of Death from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.

Although the Dance of Death collection is by far the most extensive, during these past eight years we have also worked on building up the related collections of the Books of Trades, the Books of Fools, and the books on Man and Animal in order to provide a wide and diversified documentation of the fascinating subject of social typology. I hope that students and other researchers will continue to study the various aspects of social typology in pursuit of a fuller understanding of the complex and intriguing relationship of the artist, the book and society.

Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt



Hans Holbein, The Newly Married Woman

The Dance of Death



Towards the end of the fourteenth century in that transitional period which marks the close of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance, men's sights shifted. The momentous changes in the political and economic spheres were accompanied by the intellectual discovery of the world of man. In art and literature came a concern for observing and describing this world. Man was no longer seen as a small, indistinct figure in the divine landscape. He could be a self-conscious, critical individual who was important for himself. In art the discovery of new techniques helped the expressions of these changes to flourish. The less formal genres of woodcuts, etchings and engravings, all developed during the fifteenth century, were less expensive and easier to produce in multiple copies. The artistic interpretations of man's new world were accessible to a broadened audience which included the members of the rapidly expanding middle class.

One of the most striking conceptions born of this era was the Dance of Death. In the Dance, which can be seen either as a warning or a symbolic portrayal of the moment of death, is seen the confrontation of a skeleton or corpse with a living person. At its most basic level the Dance is merely the visual opposition of the appearance of the

living and the dead. The encounter emphasizes the physical differences between the living body and its dead double--a decayed soul-less corpse which is animated by some unnatural liveliness. But the simplicity of the scene is complicated by its meaning, for what is seen symbolizes a moment of passage when the soul departs from the body, leaving the mundane world for the realm of the sacred and eternal. Its force comes from our knowledge that it is a most important moment in man's life. Yet contrary to the solemnity of the occasion, Death is dancing and one feels mocking. Death seems to scorn men's worldly struggles for status and wealth, indicating that these count for nothing at the time of death.

ORIGINS AND ANTECEDENTS

The theme of the Dance of Death seems to have had its initial appearance in wall-paintings in churches where it was also performed as a liturgical drama to illustrate sermons. While examples have been discovered in other countries, the use of the Dance as a decorative motif for ecclesiastical settings seems to have predominated in France and Germany. In these early versions the participants in the Dance were the ecclesiastical and lay members of medieval society. Each sector was arranged hierarchically from the most important person to the least, and then the two orders were interwoven into a procession in which the clergy and lay persons were paired with their equivalents in social status. The Emperor followed the Pope, and the King stood next to the Cardinal. This detailed classification of the medieval society provides a good, if somewhat simplified picture of the social, political and economic realities of the time. As we study

the progress of the Dance of Death it is interesting to observe the variation in its participants. A product of social conventions and artistic license, the Dance of Death remains a contemporary social document as later artists adapted the theme. The choice of professions and members of various classes mirrors the life of the times, depicting the arrangement of society and social relationships, defining status and satirizing excesses and social injustice.

It is a common belief that the Dance of Death originated with the plagues which swept through Europe in the mid-fourteenth century. The Black Death was undoubtedly a strong influence because of the arbitrary way in which death struck and the plague must have heightened artists' awareness of the appearance of death. The Dance of Death was one way of dealing with the magnitude of death brought about by the plague. However long before the fourteenth century ideas and images of death appeared in literature, folklore and art which may equally be said to contribute to the later crystallization of the Dance of Death in the fifteenth century.

Representations of skeletons in art are at least as old as the ancient Egyptians who passed around small mummies during their feasts as a reminder of the fleeting nature of worldly pleasures. In Roman times a skeleton was carved as a memento mori on antique intaglios. Throughout the Middle Ages the skeleton was seen in depictions of the Adam's Tomb, the Last Judgment, the Legend of St. Stanislaus and the Vision of Ezekiel.

An interesting example of the artistic use of dancing skeletons is found in the rituals of Tibetan Buddhism whose death dance is part of a mystery play throughout which elaborate masks are worn. The masks

belonging to the graveyard ghouls are pale-faced with red-ringed eyes, flattened noses and compressed mouths. The dancers wore clothing painted to look like skeletons.

The art of Lamaism also has representations of skeletons dancing over a corpse. According to the myths these ghosts were the lords of the graveyard in the nether regions. The picture of a pair of skeletons dancing over a corpse is a common one in Lamaist households. But these examples may be considered only as parallel similar artistic expressions which lack any direct relation to the European Dance of Death. There is no evidence of any connection between the Oriental and Western forms of the death dance. Because of the different cultural and religious contexts out of which the artistic forms arose, the similarity must be regarded as a visual coincidence illustrating a common human response to the fact of death.

Although the medieval Dance of Death was inseparably connected to the Christian interpretation of the purpose of man's life, the figure of Death may have pagan roots which originate in Teutonic mythology. The idea of Death as a dancing figure who comes to lead men away, or as an attacking figure bearing a spear or scythe is very old and indigenous to the Germanic myths. Death is portrayed as a figure hiding or waiting in the background who appears suddenly. As a messenger Death carries a staff, the symbol of a journey or delegated authority; with this wand he touches whatever has fallen his due. Often like the Valkyries Death appears mounted; setting his victims on his horse he carries them away. And it is not unusual for Death to play an instrument or perform a dance. The messengers of old were often pipers or fiddlers who made music while the dead

danced around in a circle.

Before the appearance of more formalized literary and artistic versions of the Dance of Death, even Christian men's feeling about death were expressed in myths and traditions, in superstitions of graveyard dances, and in the ceremonies of demonic sects. The theme seems to have had its first literary expression during the twelfth century in poems, legends and sermons which have survived in contemporary manuscripts and copies.

One of the most popular variations on the theme of death was the Legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead. The Legend tells of the encounter of three young men, or in some versions, kings, with three corpses portrayed in various states of decay. The dead speak to the living, warning them: "We were once what you are. What we are you shall be." The Legend was intended as a serious moral lesson which cautioned men to live pious lives according to the demands of the eternal life of the soul rather than the fleeting life of the body. The unexpected confrontation exploited man's fear of death by its description of a surprising and unsettling encounter with death at an early age. Illustrated manuscripts of the poem date from the thirteenth century and a large number of illuminations and wall-paintings have survived from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is possible that the Dance of Death represents an expansion of the Legend in which all members of society encounter their dead doubles. Later on illustrated versions of the Legend were often included in the printed editions of the Danse macabre.

"Les Vers de la Mort" was written by a monk Helinand de Froidmont between 1193 and 1197. The theme of the poem is the duty of men to remember

and to prepare for death. In order to keep death in the forefront of men's minds and to inspire a salutary fear of death, the poet bids Death to visit his friends and contemporaries. First Death should go to see the princes, then to Rome to the Pope and the cardinals, and finally to the bishops in all regions of France, Italy and England.

As an antecedent of the Dance of Death "Les Vers de la Mort" is important because of its description of various levels of society, but Death is the foe only of the higher ranks who are sinful in their worldliness. Death is an abstract figure rather than the dead counterpart of the living. The poem emphasizes the intimate connection death has with the judgment of the living on the basis of their earthly actions while fulfilling their roles in society.

At approximately this same time Pope Innocent III wrote De Contemptu Mundi, whose text deals with the misery of man's life on earth, the anguish of the final judgment and torture in hell. Dwelling upon the work of the worms in one's grave and leaving little to his audience's imagination, Innocent's message was a strong one directed at every sinful man descended from Adam. It was aimed especially at those who would forget death in the pursuit of honor, riches and power. Innocent's characterization of death as not mere non-existence but a vividly described putrescence seems intended to evoke the feeling of one's own body rotting. Such an intense and strangely fascinating vision of death seems closely related to the conception of the Dance of Death.

Innocent's writings also mark a change in spirituality which was in part due to the rise of the orders of mendicant priests. In the midst of changing times the new orders such as the Dominicans and the

Franciscans prospered. In their sermons they criticized the pomposity and materialism of the great and powerful, castigating the decadence of the old orders of society. The poor and the weak were consoled with the promises of the future life. Mystery plays, one of which may have been the Dance of Death, were performed to illustrate and enliven the sermons. Since artists as well as others heard these sermons, witnessed the plays, and collaborated in the production of the decorations and costumes, it is not far-fetched to suppose that the liturgical dramas were soon transformed into independent works of art. The mendicant priests may have played an important role as the popularizers of the Dance of Death.

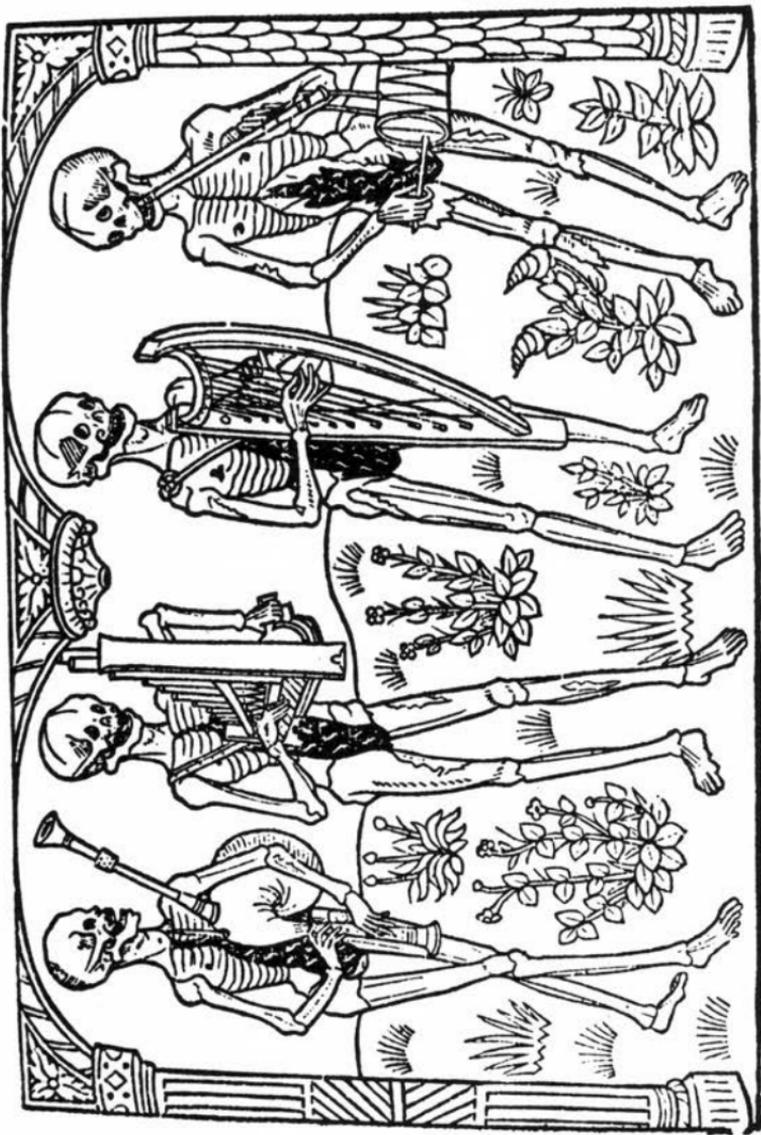
However the immediacy of the vision of death seen in the folklore and literature of the late Middle Ages is but one part of the theme. The other essential element is the elaborate social order whose members are named and described in the Dance. While the Legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead and "Les Vers de la Mort" stressed the punishment of the rich and the powerful, the couplets of the fourteenth century poems of the "Vado Mori" are addressed to representatives of all social strata. The poems contains appropriate warnings to persons as diverse as the Pope, the Doctor, the Fool and the Poor Man. The verses written for the Doctor are: "Vado mori medicus, medicamine non redimendus, Quidquid agat medici potio, vado mori." (Hurry to die, Doctor, no medicine will help you, Whatever potion you take, hurry to die, Doctor.) Yet the "Vado Mori" contain no detailed description of death nor a figure of death; its verses are not dialogues of the living and the dead; and while the flow of the poetry may convey the feeling of a procession, there is no dance. The idea that death bypasses no one is prominent. Death is

seen not as a punishment for the wicked but as a universal fact.

THE FRENCH DANSE MACABRE

In 1424 a Dance of Death was painted on the walls of the Cimitière des Innocents in Paris. Situated on the right bank of the Seine opposite L'Ile de la Cité the cemetery was used by most of the parishes in Paris. Being a small plot of land it was always full of the newly buried dead. These were removed periodically from the earth and stored in the cribs around the walls of the cemetery. Shops and markets were around the walls outside the cemetery so that many people passed by everyday. After the painting of the Dance of Death had been completed the Cimitière des Innocents became a major sight for travellers in Paris. John Lydgate came from England and copied the verses, translating them so that the Danse macabre became well-known in his own country. Unfortunately the cemetery and its wall-painting had to be destroyed in 1786 because the ground had become so putrid.

Exactly how the Dance of Death at Innocents looked is not known today but it was copied many times by fresco and panel painters and by the designer of the woodcuts for the first French edition of the Danse macabre printed in Paris by Guy Marchant in 1485. The verses of the text were in French, copied from the walls above the cemetery, as it was said were the woodcuts themselves. Given the drastic change in medium from paintings to the hard edges of outlines cut into wood, the renderings of the wall-painting cannot be considered a close copy in the strict sense. However most of the attitudes and attributes of the figures match the



Danse macabre: The Dance of the Dead

verses of the wall-painting which is known from manuscript copies as well as Marchant's printed edition.

Aside from the strikingly realistic portrayal of the figures of the dead, a unique characteristic of the fully developed Dance of Death as seen in the Danse macabre is the depiction of medieval society in a hierarchical arrangement of the persons who take part in the dance. The careful classification of the social order and the descriptive illustrations of the pictures and text are reminiscent of both Aristotelean and scholastic philosophy with their precise attention to definitions and symmetrical systems. Contemporary society is depicted by division into classes and professions which are illustrated as social or professional types. In the Danse macabre almost half of the entire number of persons in the procession as clerics, emphasizing the importance of the Church as a social force in the Middle Ages. Social status is indicated by the living person's placement near the beginning or the end of the dance and by his dress and physical characteristics. Many carry a distinctive attribute of their profession: the jailer wears his keys, the pilgrim and the herdsman have staves, and many of the higher ranking ecclesiastics hold crooks or crosses. The characters of the social types are also revealed by their physiognomy and bearing. Tradesmen and other members of the lower classes are bent over and have craggy, wrinkled visages, while the members of the upper classes stand up straight and seem to march along proudly with faces which are smoother and more refined. Compared to their dead partners, the living possess little animation. In the Marchant woodcuts it is the dead who are most active, grinning and leering at the viewer. They are not skeletons; they are merely emaciated to the point where their

bones show through their skin. Some wear shrouds or winding cloths. Their mid-sections are blackened from decay and there are glimpses of tiny white worms within the split-open body cavities. This new look of death is characteristic of the new realism in fifteenth-century art. After centuries during which death was portrayed as a quiet and dignified repose, death is observed and depicted in terms of its physical consequences rather than its spiritual meaning.

Although the text beneath the woodcuts contains a dialogue between the living and the dead, the illustrations carry little indication of conversation. The living stand stiffly like cut-outs and show little or no emotion. The significance of the Danse macabre is conveyed to the viewer by the appearance and gestures of the figures of the dead who seem alive with atrocious gaiety. The idea of the dance is communicated by the animated manner of the dead who link arms with the living and urge all to move along in a spirited fashion.

The initial woodcut of a cleric at a reading desk may document the origins of the Danse macabre as a liturgical drama or wall-painting used to illustrate a sermon. A similar scene of a preacher in a pulpit was often used as the introductory illustration in the German Dances of Death. Just as the performances of the Dance of Death were preceded by a sermon and the wall-paintings of the Dance were situated in churches or other religious buildings, the introductory portrait of the preacher set the medieval Dance of Death in its proper didactic context.

BOOKS OF HOURS

By the final decade of the fifteenth century the Danse macabre had become a popular motif for the decoration of ecclesiastical architecture and for illustrating manuscripts and printed books. At this same time a number of Parisian printers adapted the series for use as border decorations in their Books of Hours. Previously manuscript copies of the service books had been illuminated by hand, so that a relatively small number of copies was available to those who bought them or commissioned their production. With the advent of printing a large number of copies could be mass-produced and made accessible to a wider public. Wood- and metalcuts were used to illustrate these less expensive editions whose formats were modeled on the illuminated manuscripts. The blocks and plates for the decorative borders in the Books of Hours were most frequently illustrated scenes from the Bible, Jacob de Voragine's Legenda Aurea, the Vices and Virtues and the Danse macabre. To produce scenes of a size suitable for the bordercuts the procession of the dance was divided into single couples. Each vignette showed the appearance of Death to one person whose name appeared as part of the Gothic architecture of the frame. Usually three scenes from the Dance of Death were arranged in a vertical row on the outer edge of the page. The Danse macabre was used most often as border decorations for the pages of the Offices of the Dead. The printed editions of the Books of Hours must have been very popular, judging by the large number of copies which still remain from the period around 1498 to 1525.

THE GERMAN TOTENTANZ

The early German Dances of Death may be divided into two groups which denote regional variations. The southern German Totentanz is known from several examples in manuscripts, blockbooks and incunabula. The most complete version of the latter is Der doten dantz which appeared in at least two editions in the last decades of the fifteenth century. The dance is introduced by two full-page illustrations of the Dance of the Dead in a cemetery and inside a bone-house; these are similar to the first scene of four dead playing musical instruments in the Danse macabre. The woodcuts which follow are spare, simple representations of encounters of the living and the dead without architectural frames or the decorative plants which filled the background of the Danse macabre. Emphasis is given to the figure of Death who is portrayed as a trickster or a Spielmann (minstrel). Playing musical instruments and cavorting, the dead are humorous, active figures who actually seem to be dancing. Frogs or worms peer coyly from the depths of the corpses' blackened stomachs.

Not seen in Der doten dantz is the rigid division and arrangement of society which appears in the Danse macabre. Although a descending order from the members of the upper classes to those in the lower strata remains, the alternation of clerical and lay persons has been dropped. In the first part of the dance the clerics precede the secular types and in the latter section there seems to be no precise order for the figures of the living. Women are included in the Totentanz and not segregated into a separate procession as in the Danse [macabre] des femmes.

Des dodes dantz first printed in Lübeck in 1489 is a northern German Dance of Death. In its illustrations the figure of Death is unlike the gay minstrel of Der doten dantz, appearing more like the corpses in the Danse macabre. The attributes of Death--the spear, the scythe, the sword and the spade--and his grim appearance and threatening posture are reminiscent of the figure of Death in Teutonic mythology. Neither the living or the dead are dancing. Each figure appears alone on a separate page, facing one another and addressing his counterpart only in the text. Although this is a very early Dance of Death, the simplified conception of the dance seems to have brought it a step beyond the stage of being a copy of a wall-painting or a liturgical drama to a new conception of a symbolic Dance of Death designed especially for book illustration.

THE DANCE OF THE DEAD AND OTHER VARIATIONS

In Hartmann Schedel's Liber cronicarum published in Nuremberg in 1493 is the "Imago Mortis," a single woodcut of the Dance of the Dead. Three dead are shown dancing to the music of a shawm played by a fourth corpse. The dance takes place over the grave of another dead man who rises up and waves to the viewer. Depicting the seventh age of man in the chronicle, the woodcut stands by itself as a memento mori for the reader. The scene parallels the illustrations of the dancing dead which introduced the Danse macabre and Der doten dantz, representing the medieval superstition of graveyard dances. On certain nights it was believed that the dead rose from their graves and performed dances in the cemeteries before going out in search of their victims. As distinguished from the Dance of Death, the Dance of the Dead includes only dancing skeletons or corpses

and usually takes place in a graveyard or bonehouse.

As illustrated editions of the Dance of Death gained in popularity, other scenes from the Dance were isolated and depicted in woodcuts, etchings and engravings on single sheets. Well-known artists such as Hans Baldung Grien, Israhel van Meckenem and the Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet adapted the theme for their own use in fragmented form. The juxtaposition of an anatomically correct, decaying corpse with the well-formed, elaborately costumed figure of a youth or maiden offered distinct possibilities to an artist who wished to display the breadth of his talent in the portrayal of such a striking scene. In "Schönheit und Tod" (1509-1511) and "Tod und Mädchen" (1515) Hans Baldung Grien depicted the encounter of Death and a beautiful young woman. Albrecht Dürer emphasized the grim aspects of death in further variations on the theme in such works as the 1513 engraving of "Ritter, Tod und Teufel," in the woodcut of "Tod und Soldat," and an earlier drawing of Death mounted on a weary horse, the "Memento Mei" of 1505.

HOLBEIN AND THE RENAISSANCE

The illustrations of the Dance of Death changed their appearance quite rapidly as artists became infected with the new spirit of the Renaissance. The medieval Dance had relied heavily on the ecclesiastical sector of society for the social types who took part in the dance, for the preaching or moralizing text which accompanied the illustrations of the dance, and for its very propagation as a popular motif for the decoration of religious books and architecture. The fifteenth century was the great period for wall-paintings of the Dance of Death in

in churches and cemeteries and this form of the theme died out gradually during the sixteenth century. After 1500 the medieval Dance of Death, which had for its ultimate meaning the punishment of man's sins and inspiration to a Christian life, changed its emphasis to become a close examination of man's condition by a detailed, often satirical representation of social types. This new approach was characteristic of contemporary book illustration; the participants in the Dance of Death are cousins of those seen in the Books of Trades and the Books of Fools which also were concerned with describing various types of men. Out of the confluence of the medieval Dance of Death and the new view of man in the Renaissance came the classical statement of the Dance of Death, Hans Holbein's Imagines Mortis.

Hans Holbein was born around 1497 in Augsburg which had its own famous wall-painting of a Dance of Death. After living there for seventeen years he went to Basel. At this time Basel was an important center for printing; the Froben house was there. The city also possessed two fifteenth century wall-paintings of the Dance of Death. The earlier one in the Augustinian convent at Klingenthal is thought to have been done around 1440. It is referred to as the "Kleinbasel" dance because Klingenthal was a suburb of Basel. The so-called "Grossbasel" dance, which was better known, had been copied from the earlier painting about 1480. Being in the city proper it was in a more conspicuous and important spot, painted on the outer wall of the Dominican churchyard of the Predigerkirche. The dance at Klingenthal was neglected and eventually completely destroyed, while the dance at the Predigerkirche was renovated successively and extensively over the years.

The Dances of Death at Basel are of great interest because, more than any others, they stand between the medieval Dances and Holbein's designs, since he most certainly knew of them. At one time the Basel paintings were even attributed to Holbein, but both historical and stylistic evidence weigh against this. Because it was destroyed in the nineteenth century the Basel Dance is known only from copies. In the seventeenth century engravings of the Dance were made by the artist and bookseller, Matthaeus Merian. Merian's copper-plates are considered to be the most faithful renderings of the wall-paintings at the Predigerkirche.

The Dance of Death at Basel was a typical medieval Totentanz. Introduced by a scene of the preacher in a pulpit and preceded by a death dance in a bonehouse, the Dance itself was a simple representation portraying a procession of couples of the living and the dead. Death is an active dancing figure, mocking his victim by mimicking his carriage or wearing an identical article of clothing in a rakish fashion. The living are dressed elaborately with much attention given to the details of their costumes. Although the appearance of the Basel Dance changed as it was restored, the copies made by Merian and others still convey a good general idea of what the Dance looked like when Holbein was working in Basel.

The drawings for Holbein's Dance of Death are thought to have been made around 1526. For Holbein the medium of the woodcut allowed for a freedom of expression which he did not have when painting the large canvases for which he received commissions. When he painted he was usually bound to follow the wishes of his client. When he sketched designs for woodcuts there was an opportunity to please himself,



M. Merian (copied by Chovin), The Heathen Woman

and perhaps to inject a bit of satire or caricature which would have been considered improper on a more monumental scale. After this initial stage of work Holbein's role in the production of the prints ceased. He did not actually cut the woodblocks for his Dance of Death. This work was done by Hans Lützelberger. The woodcuts did not appear until 1538, published not in Basel, but Lyons. In part this was due to the Reformation when severe censorship was imposed on controversial literature. The atmosphere of the time generally inhibited creative thinking and activity in Basel, and Holbein himself left for England in 1526 because of the lack of commissions due to a decline in prosperity in the area. The blocks which had been cut and the remaining designs were left with Lützelberger who died a short while afterward. The Lyons printers, Melchior and Gaspar Trechsel, took possession of the blocks and sketches, since they had given Lützelberger an advance shortly before his death, and published Holbein's Dance of Death.

In his new conception of the Dance Holbein revised the old idea of a procession of the living and the dead. Instead he relied on the succession of pages in the book to achieve a similar effect. He retained the hierarchical arrangement of persons in the Dance but rather than beginning with the preacher in the pulpit, he began with Creation, explaining through illustrations to Genesis, how death came into the world. The Dance itself is introduced by a bonehouse scene, like the ones in the medieval Totentänze and follows with scenes depicting the encounters of the living and the dead. Rather than being a simple scene of Death leading his victim away, in Holbein's designs a living drama is depicted, showing the sudden intrusion of death into life. Hol-

bein's virtuosity lies in his creation of a minutely detailed environment which describes perfectly the person caught by Death. While the face of Death's victim is usually without any visible emotion, his clothing and the objects which surround him are given careful attention. All contribute to a symbolism of everyday objects which are so well known that their mere presence bears a variety of implicit meanings which describe the person in their midst. Holbein's Dance of Death shows the intersection of man's sacred and profane situation, depicting his daily activities interrupted by the metaphysical horror of death in the form of a mocking skeleton. The elements of humor and satire are often emphasized by several small jokes in the picture not unlike the tricks played on men by Death in the medieval Totentanz. The person upon whom Death intrudes is sometimes engaged in an activity which is particularly inappropriate to the moment, such as the Nun who is being serenaded by a lover. The skeleton is often a Doppelgänger. Dressed in similar attire or adopting a characteristic attitude of the person whom he visits, Death is the double whom one encounters at the moment of death.

Holbein also designed an alphabet of the Dance of Death at about the same time as he did the book illustrations. It is composed of twenty-four initial letters in Roman square capitals each of which is illustrated with a scene from the Dance of Death. Although the scenes include the same persons as the Imagines Mortis, the renderings of the figures are quite different. In the alphabet Holbein dealt successfully with the problem of fitting the figures artistically into the small space dominated by the letter. This was accomplished by using the lines of the letter not as a prop or focus, but as a balance

to the action, letting the line emphasize the action by reiterating it or serving as a counterweight to it.

COPIES OF HOLBEIN

Holbein's designs for the Dance of Death adumbrated the succeeding Dances through the eighteenth century. Even editions of the Dance of Death which one would assume not to be influenced by Holbein at all, such as a copy of the Dance at Basel, turn out on examination to be copied from Holbein. This is the case with a small volume issued as a popular tourist book of the Dance of Death at the Predigerkirche. Der Todten-tantz...in der weitberuhmten Stadt Basel was published in many editions between 1588 and 1842. Most of its woodcuts are crude schematic copies of Holbein's designs but the names and order of the persons in the Dance are those of the Basel wall-painting. One wonders what those who had been to see the Dance at Basel thought of the copies which they brought home with them in this book.

A far more skillful copy of Holbein's Dance of Death was done in the seventeenth century by the Bohemian engraver Wenzel Hollar. Hollar's engravings are close copies of Holbein's originals, but the difference in style and technique renders the copies quite different works. The technique of engraving made possible a subtle variation of lines, so that heavy darks outline figures, while light, short lines define the background, details of the figures and objects and supply shading. Holbein's woodcuts rely on clarity and simplicity of line, while Hollar's technical virtuosity is seen in the multiplicity of fine lines used to show deep flowing folds, small

scenic details and even the wrinkles of skin around the bones of the dead. In Hollar's hands Holbein's Renaissance Dance of Death becomes baroque.

In the late eighteenth century the Basel engraver Christian von Mechel also made fine copies of Holbein's designs, the style of which was also somewhat removed from that of Holbein's originals. Mechel's works are very elegant and delicately executed engravings in which the linear quality of the technique is softened by light lines to become a painterly lyricism of dreamy shadows and flowing forms and folds. Mechel transformed the humorous, awkward Dance of Death into a graceful polonaise.

Copies of Holbein's woodcuts in other graphic media virtually ceased by the middle of the nineteenth century. With the revival of interest in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, there came an appreciation for the true forms and values of the old styles. From around 1850 and continuing to the present many editions of copies of the original woodcuts were published. In the test of time the classical form of the Dance of Death has won over its weaker interpretations by less original artists.

VARIATIONS ON THE THEME

Out of the mainstream of the tradition of the Dance of Death are editions of sermons or meditations by priests which appeared in illustrated editions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As illustrations to religious texts the scenes lack the social commentary and satirical aspects of true Dances of Death, but they are closely related to the medieval and Renaissance traditions, sometimes borrowing directly from them.

In 1669 the Varii e veri ritratti della morte by Giovanni Manni was published in Venice. It is a moral and didactic work on death similar to a previous book by the Jesuit father on the Four Last Things. The illustrations are somewhat crudely executed etchings, six of which are done in the manner of Holbein's Dance of Death woodcuts. The rest of the etchings are a mixture of emblematic illustrations and copies of the woodcuts to the Ars Moriendi another popular work of the fifteenth and sixteenth century on the art of dying well.

Warnings about the punishment of sinners at the time of death were the distinctive mark of the sermons of Abraham à Sancta Clara who was "Hof-Prediger" to the Emperor Leopold in Vienna. He was popular and famous for the entertaining style of his sermons which often included humorous verses rhymed in onomatopoeic fashion. All of Viennese society came to hear his sermons at the Church of Sancta Clara.

Mercks Wienn! published in 1680 was a collection of Father Abraham's sermons and writings. The book contains eight engravings seven of which are on the subject of death. The text speaks of the plague which struck Vienna in 1679 and warns the Viennese that God will punish them again if they aren't careful. Although the illustrations do not constitute a Dance of Death perhaps its success inspired the following collection of Abraham's works.

In 1710 a year after Abraham's death Der Todten-Capelle oder Allgemeiner Todten-Spiegel was published by Christoph Weigel in Nuremberg. Its sixty-eight engravings were said to have been copied from paintings on the theme of death in the Chapel of Loretto in Vienna. Each of the series is based on a Biblical verse and several are similar to Hol-

bein's designs.

Another eighteenth-century variation on the Dance of Death whose illustrations were a mixture of Holbein's woodcuts and Biblical scenes was Het Schouw-Toneel des Doods by Salomon van Rusting published in Amsterdam in 1707. The author was a doctor in Amsterdam. Along with the two types of more or less traditional illustrations for Dances of Death were included some original scenes seemingly taken from Rusting's everyday life in Amsterdam such as skaters and tightrope-walkers. The final scene entitled "Einen Doctorirten-Poeten" and its accompanying text describes and illustrates the ironic plight of the author when confronted by the appearance of death.

BAROQUE DANCES OF DEATH

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries even original and gifted artists who designed illustrations to the Dance of Death were unable to escape the influence of Holbein's designs, but the appearance of their works was transformed both by the baroque style popular at this time and by the mature technique of copper-engraving. Woodcutting was considered to be a primitive technique; etching and engraving were at the height of fashion in the graphic arts. The demise of Holbein's technique signalled the end of the social satire and criticism characteristic of his designs as well. This aspect of the Dance of Death, apparent even in the medieval examples of the Dance, was eclipsed by the decorative concerns of the baroque artists.

In 1650 a handsome Dance of Death by the Zürich artists, Rudolf and Conrad Meyer, was published. Entitled Rudolf Meyers Todten-Dantz, the



S. van Rusting, The Old Man

series of sixty engravings was begun by Rudolf Meyer but he died before completing the work, and his younger brother Conrad finished and published it. The Meyers divided the persons in their Dance into three groups: the clerics, the worldly dignitaries and the middle class. The latter group is very large and with the two former groups comprises the most systematic and full portrait of society ever to appear in the Dance of Death. It introduces many new trades and professional figures, including the Meyer brothers and their father in the scene of painters and engravers. Compared to the Renaissance clarity of Holbein's woodcuts, the Meyers' engravings are baroque in detail and decorative qualities. In the mid-seventeenth century the Dance of Death is set in pastoral landscapes, classical ruins, and architecturally detailed interiors.

Not infrequently the Dance of Death appeared as illustrations to collections of sermons or other religious texts. Geistliche Todts-Gedancken with plates by Michael Rentz was a baroque version of this type similar to the editions of sermons of Giovanni Manni or Abraham à Sancta Clara. More richly illustrated than either of the latter, Rentz's engravings form the most monumental baroque Dance of Death with full-page depictions of the dramatic appearance of Death. The engravings contain memories of Holbein, but are highly embellished by many details in scenery and costumes. For both the Meyers and Rentz Holbein merely provided an artistic stepping-stone. As the pictorial qualities became of first importance, the satirical aspects of the theme were submerged and lost in the lavish profusion of landscape, lighting and architecture.

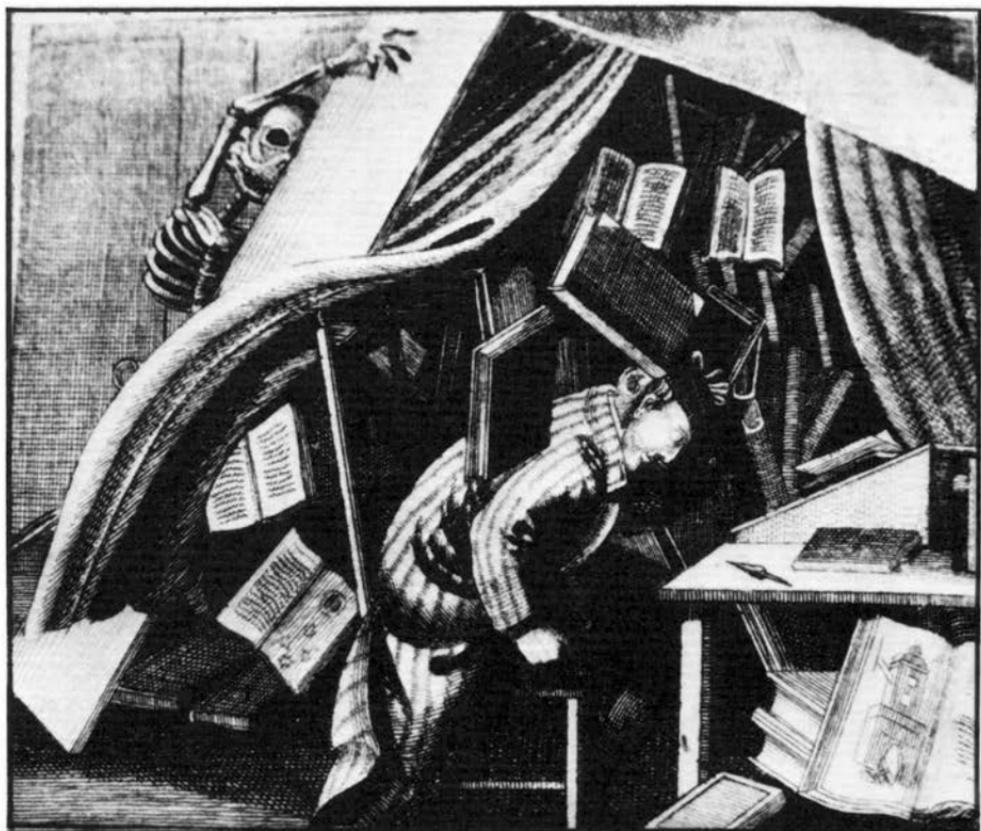
Michael Rentz's engravings brought the baroque line of the Holbein tradition to a close.

By the last part of the eighteenth century artists' conceptions of the Dance of Death began to return to being a mirror of society with a strong dose of irony or satire in the depiction of men's encounters with death.

THE MODERN DANCE OF DEATH

The first Dance of Death to take on a modern look was Freund Hein's Erscheinungen in Holbein's Manier with illustrations by J. R. Schellenberg. Although the title indicates the influence of Holbein, the illustrations show there is very little or none. Schellenberg's Dance of Death is a series of vignettes and predicaments, etched in a simple rococo style, depicting contemporary man faced with death. Some of the scenes show current events, such as the burning of Montgolfier's balloon or the invention of gunpowder, while others show a type of death, such as a suicide. In 1785 Schellenberg's Dance of Death made a decisive break with both the medieval and Renaissance traditions, signalling the form and content of the modern Dances of Death.

Whereas the baroque Dances of Death took place in a fantastic theater world, the Dances of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries acquired their dramatic force by the depiction of the social and political realities of the time. The old system of society had died after the period of revolutions. In the modern era there was a society of potentially equal individuals in a lonely crowd. After the third quarter of the eighteenth century the Dances of Death changed accordingly. The hierarchical arrangement of society disappeared completely, as did the emphasis on man's integral participation in society. But while the form had changed, the Dance



J. R. Schellenberg, The Victim of an Accident

of Death returned to being a vehicle for social and political comment as it had been for artists in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Thomas Rowlandson's English Dance of Death (1814-1816) is composed of a series of humorous or satirical situations which include death as the last laugh. In a modern expression of the inherent ambivalence in the theme of death, Rowlandson's treatment vacillates between the comic, the grotesque and the bathetic. His crowded scenes aim at the creation of a pregnant milieu in which every detail points to the undoing of the main character. While true to its medieval origins in its emphasis on social satire and social typology, Rowlandson's pictorial essay on the pitfalls of everyday life is a completely new and original interpretation of the Dance of Death.

Social criticism took on a more serious tone when the theme was used for comment on contemporary political events. The inspiration for Alfred Rethel's Auch ein Todtentanz published in 1849 came from the Revolution of 1848. His sympathies were anti-revolutionary. In the Todtentanz Death is portrayed as a seducer of the common people and the force behind the revolution. Liberty, equality and brotherhood are seen as deceitful platitudes which serve as the masks of death. Death's true identity is revealed when his promise is fulfilled. At the end of a battle in the final woodcut of the series all are free, equal and brothers--when they have died.

The nineteenth century was a period of great interest in the Dance of Death. Studies were made of the history of the various wall-paintings and editions of copies of the surviving examples were

published along with copies of the early editions of the Danse macabre and Holbein's woodcuts. Around the middle of the century several books on the history of the theme appeared. The most important were Francis Douce's dissertation published with reproductions of Holbein's woodcuts (1833), E. H. Langlois's Essai historique, philosophique et pittoresque sur les danses des morts (1852), Georges Kastner's Les Danses des morts (1852) and H. F. Massmann's bibliographical study Literatur der Totentänze (1840-1850).

During the nineteenth century a number of composers used the Dance of Death as a theme for their compositions. Like the earlier prints of Dürer, Franz Schubert's songs, "Der Jüngling und der Tod" and "Der Tod und das Mädchen" (both dating from 1817), were based on a single scene from the series. The second movement of Schubert's 1826 string quartet in D minor also known as "Death and the Maiden" used the theme from his earlier song as the subject for variations. Slightly later in the century two other composers used the "Dies Irae" as the basis for music on the Dance of Death. In 1849 Franz Liszt wrote his Totentanz for piano and orchestra; and in 1874 Saint-Saëns composed a symphonic poem entitled the Danse macabre. Originally written as a song based on a poem by Henri Cazalis, the Danse macabre returns to the medieval superstition of Death as a fiddler who comes to the graveyard at midnight to raise the dead and lead them in a night-long dance. Mussorgsky wrote his song cycle Songs and Dances of Death in 1875 and 1877. In settings of poems by Golenishchev-Kutuzov, the personification of Death is seen as an evil figure who preys on his spiritually or physically weak victims. Just after the turn of the century Alexander Glazunov revived the earliest form of the Dance of Death. In a scherzo which was part of his 1903 suite, From the



Alfred Kubin, The Rich Man

Middle Ages, he depicted the performance of the Dance as a mystery play.

Twentieth-century artists used the theme for personal statements on death. Social commentary and criticism were major elements in their illustrations which showed the influence of current events such as the two World Wars. The force of their commentary was often borne by the visual impact of the pictures alone; most had not text, being a series of plates, sometimes with brief captions for each plate, sometimes with only a title for the book.

Three Dances of Death were published shortly after the close of World War I: Alfred Kubin's Blätter mit dem Tod (1918); Hermann-Paul's Danse macabre (1919); and Alfred Zacharias's Tod und Teufel (1922). All show death's passage through the modern world but the meaning of individual scenes is often far from clear. Men are depicted as isolated, alienated creatures without the support of a cohesive society or a religious or moral purpose to their lives. The technique of the illustrations is intentionally crude, recalling the primitive woodcuts of the fifteenth-century Dances of Death. In the roughness of the woodcuts and Kubin's scratchy drawings one experiences the disorder and lack of purpose which these artists felt characterized modern society.

After World War II two more Dances of Death appeared. In 1947 Kubin's second Dance of Death, Ein neuer Totentanz was published. Although it was influenced by the war, its illustrations are not only of war, but also of real and imagined scenes of various kinds of death. In a brief bow to tradition Kubin includes himself in an autobiographical scene entitled "Der Tod holt der Zeichner."

Frans Masereel's Danse macabre (1941; 1946) was directly inspired by the Second World War. A series of war scenes, it shows man no longer as death's victim but as an instrument of death. Carved out of the thick, heavy strokes of the woodcut, Death is behind the holocaust portrayed as a grinning, demonic figure. Masereel's scenes stress the horrors and violence of war, showing man's helplessness and submission in the face of the forces of death. In one woodcut even Death stands back looking in amazement at the destruction he has caused.

The Totentanz von Basel was done in 1966 by HAP Grieshaber, a graphic artist working in Basel. This most recent Dance of Death has its roots in one of the oldest Dances. Grieshaber used the verses from the wall-paintings in Basel and has said that his inspiration for his work came from the seventeenth-century engravings of Matthaeus Merian.

Although he took the persons from the medieval Dance, Grieshaber made a radical departure from the traditional iconography. In style he is influenced by his artistic predecessors, the German Expressionists; in technique he is intentionally crude, letting the medium of the woodcut dictate the rough shapes and outlines of the forms which are composed of abstract shapes. All of the scenes are dominated by an active line which lends a frantic note to Death's intrusion, evoking feelings of horror and trembling by the use of shimmering colors. Line, color and form combine to give this Dance of Death an awkward quaking effect like the rattling of old bones.

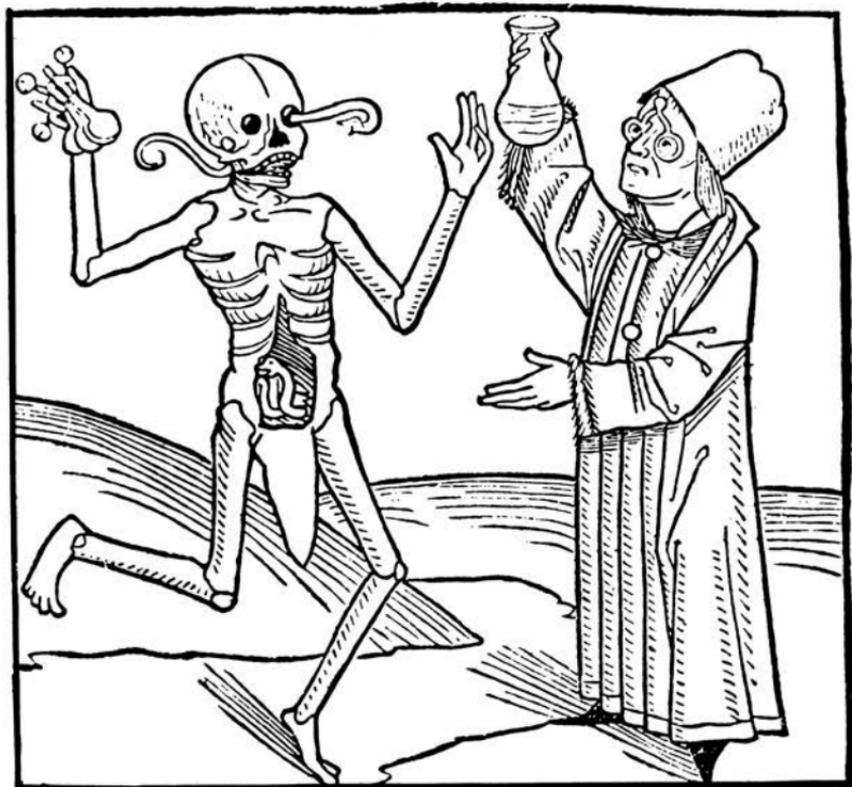
Grieshaber's Dance of Death brings the tradition full circle, reaching back to the Middle Ages

for its basic iconography and inspiration, while up-dating the theme by its abstract style and the inclusion of details which mirror modern society. The success of Grieshaber's illustrations lies in his respect for the spirit of the Dance of Death which has survived intact almost five hundred years after its first appearance in print.

Selected Bibliography

- Cosacchi, Stephan. Makabertanz. Meisenheim an Glan, 1965.
- Douce, Francis. Holbein's Dance of Death. London, 1858.
- Massmann, H. F. Literatur der Totentänze. Reprint edition: Hildesheim, 1963.
- Minns, Susan. The Dance of Death from the XIIth to the XXth century...The Notable Collection of Miss Susan Minns. Greenwich, Conn., 1922.
- Rosenfeld, Hellmut. Der mittelalterliche Totentanz. Münster, 1954.
- Schreiber, W. L. "Die Totentänze," Zeitschrift für Bucherfreunde, 2 (1898-99), 291-304 and 321-42.
- Sears, George E. A Collection of Works Illustrative of the Dance of Death. New York, 1889.
- Warthin, A. S. The Physician of the Dance of Death. New York, 1931.

Catalog



Note on the Catalog:

Entries in this section are listed in chronological order. Facsimiles and reprints appear under the dates of the original editions. Later editions are listed immediately following their first or earlier editions.

The sources listed in the "References" below each entry are those catalogs or bibliographies of the Dance of Death which were particularly helpful in providing bibliographic information and descriptions of the books in the Library's collection. Full citations of these titles may be found in the "Selected Bibliography" following the introductory essay on the Dance of Death.

Overleaf: Der doten dantz, The Doctor

Der doten dantz mit figuren clage und antwort schon
von allen staten der werlt.

[n. p. n. d.] c. 1485

(Facsimile edition: Leipzig, Karl Hiersemann,
1921)

Small folio. 22 l., 41 woodcuts.

A facsimile of the first printed edition of the southern German Dance of Death with a preface by Albert Schramm. Der doten dantz appeared in at least two editions neither of which is identified by place, publisher or date. Schramm dates these circa 1485 to 1492.

Two different artists seem to have been responsible for the illustrations. In the last seventeen woodcuts the representation of Death is somewhat cruder than in the first section of the series. Both artists portray the dead as animated, humorous minstrels, most of whom carry or play a musical instrument. Although the woodcuts are not notable for their detailed depictions of the figures, the instruments are drawn with great care. The illustrations document a wide variety of musical instruments from the period including: fiddles, rebecs, a tromba marina, lutes, a harp, a psaltery, a portative organ, bagpipes, trumpets, cornettos, cowhorns, a triangle, clappers, side drums, and a pipe and tabor.

Ref.: Massmann, 82-82.

Des dodes dantz.

[Colophon: Lübeck, 1489]

(Facsimile edition: Berlin, Bruno Cassirer, 1910)

Small folio. 36 l., 59 woodcuts.

A facsimile of the first edition of the Lübeck Dance of Death taken from the single extant copy in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg and edited by Max Friedländer. Three later editions with some changes and additions are also known: a second edition printed in Lübeck in 1496, a third printed in Lübeck in 1520, and a Danish version which is dated 1536.

The layout of text and illustrations in this Dance of Death is unlike that in the other early editions of the Totentanz. Small woodcuts containing one figure of the living or the dead are placed in the upper corner of each page, arranged so that the couples face one another on opposite pages. Only four different woodcuts of the dead are used throughout the book. In these the grim figure of Death appears with the traditional attributes from Teutonic mythology; Death carries a spear, a scythe, or a spade, or he is riding a lion in triumph. Both the living and dead are posed against a brick wall behind which is a hilly landscape. This brief indication of background may be reproduced in a schematic copy from the mid-fifteenth century wall-painting of the Dance of Death in Lübeck's Marienkirche. The celebrity of the church painting was probably the impetus for the publication of this printed edition and helped to spur its popularity.

Chorea ab eximo Macabro versibus alemanicis edita et a Petro Desrey emendata. (English title: The Dance of Death printed at Paris in 1490. A reproduction made from the copy in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress.)

Paris, Per Magistrum Guidonem Mercato pro Godeffrido de Marnef, 1490.

(Facsimile edition: Washington, D. C., The Rare Books Division of the Library of Congress, 1945)

Folio. 16 l., 24 woodcuts.

A facsimile edition with a foreword by William Ivins of an early Latin edition of the Danse macabre first published in a French edition of 1485 by the Parisian publisher Guy Marchant. Many subsequent editions with additions and changes were published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by printers in Lyons, Troyes and Rouen.

The woodcuts of the original edition have been attributed to Pierre Le Rouge and were based on the wall-paintings of the Danse macabre at the Cimetière des Innocents in Paris. Following an illustration of a cleric at a reading desk, the procession of the dance begins with a Dance of the Dead in which four skeletons play a bagpipe, portative organ, a harp and pipe and drums. In the following pages the dead carry spears, shovels and scythes. The verses of the "Vado Mori" are above the woodcuts and below are the dialogues of the Danse macabre.

Ref.: Douce, 50; Massmann, 91; Minns, 140.

[4]

Schedel, Hartmann

Liber cronicarum.

Nuremberg, Anton Koberger, 1493.

On folio CCLXIII is a woodcut of the Dance of the Dead by Michael Wolgemuth depicting the seventh age of man, the "Imago Mortis." In the context of the preceding illustrations alluding to music in the chronicle which represent the harmonious music of the spheres and the dance of the blessed souls in heaven, the Dance of the Dead seems to recall man's sinful nature and mortality.

[5]

Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary

[Paris, Phillippe Pigouchet for Simon de la Vostre, c. 1508?]

Two mounted vellum leaves (18 x 10.5) from a Book of Hours containing texts and Psalms in Latin from the Office of the Dead with border decorations of the Dance of Death. Probably from one of the many editions of Books of Hours printed by Simon de la Vostre between 1490 and 1525. The metalcut borders are by Pigouchet. These were printed in vertical rows of three scenes per page from relief plates with punched criblée backgrounds. The figures from the Danse macabre are: the Sorceress, the Pious Woman, the Stupid Woman, the Pope, the Emperor, the Cardinal, the Priest, the Laborer, the Monk, the Lover, the Lawyer, and the Musician.

[Holbein, Hans (1497?-1543)]

Icones Mortis. Duodecim Imaginibus praeter priores, totidemque inscriptionibus praeter epigrammata è Gallicis à Georgio AEmyllo in Latinum versa, cumulate.

Lvdgvi, Sub scuto Coloniensi, 1547. [Colophon: Lugduni, Excudebat Ioannes Frellonius, 1547]

8vo. 29 l., 53 woodcuts.

The rarer of two Latin editions of Holbein's Dance of Death printed in Lyons in 1547. The text and woodcuts are identical to the other edition, entitled, Imagines Mortis, but it is printed in a different, smaller type and entirely reset. Our edition is printed in italic type throughout with the exception of the Bible texts in roman at the head of the woodcuts.

Holbein's Dance of Death was first published anonymously by the Trechsels in Lyons in 1538. Some proof-sheets for the woodcuts also exist which presumably have an earlier date. The book was evidently very popular as at least eleven more editions with texts in Latin, German, French and Italian followed in quick succession after the first. The original edition had forty-one woodcuts; in 1547 an expanded version appeared with fifty-three illustrations, including cherubs and some new figures in the Dance of Death. None of the early editions acknowledge Holbein as the designer of the woodcuts. However at the same time the Trechsels published his Bible illustrations, Imagines Veteris Testamentum,

which did give Holbein's name as the artist. The four initial scenes from Genesis in the Dance of Death are also included in the Old Testament series.

Ref.: Douce, 94; Massmann, 16; Minns, 223.

Facsimile editions of Holbein's woodcuts

[7]

Hans Holbein's Todtentanz in 53 getreu nach den Holzschnitten lithographirten Blättern.

Munich, By the Editor, 1832.

12mo. 78 p., 53 plates.

The lithographic reproductions of Holbein's woodcuts are accompanied by an introduction by the editor, J. Schlotthauer, and an essay by H. F. Massmann.

Ref.: Douce, 106; Minns, 271; Sears, 17.

[8]

Holbein's Dance of Death Exhibited in Elegant Engravings on Wood, with a Dissertation on the Several Representations of that Subject, by Francis Douce. Also Holbein's Bible Cuts, Consisting of Ninety Illustrations on Wood, with an Introduction by Thos. Frognall Dibdin.

London, H. G. Bohn, 1858.

8vo. 475 p., 144 wood-engravings.

Reproductions of Holbein's designs in wood-engravings illustrate Douce's study of the history of the Dance of Death first published in 1833. Other illustrations include sketches of the medieval wall-paintings, woodcuts of the Three Living and the Three Dead, and Holbein's designs for a Dance of Death on a sword sheath.

Ref.: Sears, 15.

[9]

Hans Holbein's Todtentanz.

Munich, George Hirth, 1884.

8vo. 102 p., 41 plates.

A complete facsimile of the Lyons edition of 1538.

Ref.: Minns, 276.

[10]

The Dance of Death by Hans Holbein, with an Introductory Note by Austin Dobson.

London, George Bell & Sons...& New York, 1892.

4to. 62 l., 49 wood-engravings.

The plates to this edition were printed from the same woodblocks as those in the 1833 edition by Douce for which they were cut.

Ref.: Minns, 277.

[11]

The Dance of Death by Hans Holbein, enlarged facsimiles of the original wood-engravings by Hans Lützelberger in the first complete edition: Lyons, 1547.

London, Privately Printed, 1916.

4to. 105 l., 49 plates.

A limited edition of 250 printed by Arthur K. Sabin at the Temple Sheen Press. Holbein's woodcuts are enlarged to four times their original size and accompanied by the Bible texts and verses in English translations. Frederick Evans, the editor, has also rearranged the order of the woodcuts and omitted the Escutcheon of Death and the cherubs since "they have no bearing on the subject."

[12]

La Danza de la Muerte. Codice del Escorial Grabados de Holbein.

Madrid, Editorial Pueyo, 1919.

8vo. 97 p., 40 plates.

A facsimile of the edition of Holbein's woodcuts now in the Escorial with a preface by F. A. de Icaza.

Das alt Weib.

35

Der Todt ist besser dann
das Leben. Erckv. 30.



Ich bin betagt von alter schwer,
Lenger mein leben nicht beger.
Krümbs und gebückt gehe ich am stah,
Wein Körper nur beger ins grab
Todt thuë bald was du willens hast,
Bist mir ein gar willkomer gyst.

Icones mortis (Vogel), The Old Woman

La grande danse macabre des hommes et des femmes précédée du dict des trois mors et des trois vifz, du débat du corps et de l'ame, et de la complaincte de l'ame dampnée.

[Troyes, Garnier, 1641]

(Reprint edition: Paris, Baillieu, 1862?)

4to. 67 p., 56 woodcuts.

A new edition of the Danse macabre de Troyes printed from the seventeenth-century blocks. The woodcuts are rough, cropped copies of those in Guy Marchant's fifteenth-century editions. Like the expanded versions of the Paris editions, this anthology of texts and illustrations on the subject of death includes the Dance of Death of Women, the Legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead, the Debate between the Body and the Soul, and the Complaint of the Damned Soul. On the title page "Danse macabre" is spelled out by small figures of the dead.

Ref.: Minns, 146-148.

Icones Mortis sexaginta imaginibus, totidemq; inscriptionibus insignitae, versibus quoq; Latinis novis germanicis illustratae durch Johann Vogel.

Nürnberg, Bey Paulus Fursten Kunsthändlern zu finden, 1648. [Colophon: Gedruckt zu Nürnberg, durch Christoff Lochner]

8vo. 78 l., 63 engravings.

The sixty engravings which illustrate Vogel's text first appeared in a German edition published by Eberhard Keiser, Der Todten Dantz durch alle Stände und Geschlecht der Menschen (Frankfort, c. 1600). Seven of the illustrations--the four Genesis scenes and the Pope, the Cardinal and the Bishop--are copied from Heinrich Aldegrever's 1541 copies of Holbein's woodcuts. The others are direct copies of Holbein in reverse. These are probably the first renderings of the entire series made on copperplates. A frontispiece designed by Georg Strauch and engraved by Andreas Kohl depicts a Dance of the Dead and on the last page is an engraving of skulls in a bonehouse.

Ref.: Douce, 108-109, 131; Massmann, 46-47, Minns, 256.

[15]

Meyer, Rudolf (1605-1638) and Conrad (1618-1689)

Rudolf Meyer's Todtentanz. Ergänzt und Herausgegeben durch Conrad Meyern, Maalern in Zürich im Jahr 1650.

Zürich, Johann Jacob Bodmer, 1650.

(Reprint edition: Zürich, Art Institut Orell Fuszli, 1919)

4to. 62 engravings in a vellum portfolio with an introductory leaflet of 6 leaves.

A new edition printed from the original copper-plates of the Meyers' Dance of Death first published in 1650. Only the plates from the first edition are included; lacking are the pious songs and psalms on death with musical accompaniment which were printed in the earlier editions. Bodmer published another edition in 1657 and in 1704 fifty-seven of the engravings appeared in an Augsburg edition by Abraham Gurger. In 1759 a fourth edition was published with the title Die menschliche Sterblichkeit oder Todten-Tanz which was printed in Hamburg and Leipzig.

Ref.: Douce, 131-134; Massmann, 48; Minns, 443; Sears, 27.

[16]

Manni, Giovanni Battista (1606-1682)

Varii, e Veri Rittratti della Morte Disegnati in Immagini, Ed espressi in Essempij.

Venetia, Presso Gio: Giacomo Hertz, 1669.

8vo. 181 p., 30 etchings.

A first edition of Manni's reflections on death. Two later editions appeared in Milan in 1671 and in Venice in 1675.

The series of thirty full-page etchings on the theme of death is not a Dance of Death. However six of the illustrations are influenced by Holbein. These are the Queen, the Knight, the Merchant, the Doctor, the Gambler and the Miser.

Ref.: Douce, 114; Sears, 27.

[17]

Abraham à Sancta Clara (1644-1709)

Mercks Wienn!

Wienn, Gedruckt bey P. P. Vivian, 1680-1681.

8vo. 192 p., 8 engravings.

The eight engravings in this collection of Father Abraham's sermons are not a Dance of Death but scenes of death illustrative of the subjects of the sermons. Some are emblematic and others are similar to Holbein's designs, such as Death interrupting a lady at her toilette or Death surprising a miser counting his money.

[18]

Rusting, Salomon van (c.1650- ?)

Schau-platz des Todes, oder Todten-Tanz in Kupffern und Versen vorgestellet; Ehemahls von Sal. van Rusting, Med. Doct., in Nieder-Teutscher Sprache; nun aber in Hoch-Teutscher, mit nöthingen Anmerckungen, herausgegeben von Johann Georg Meintel.

Nurnberg, bey Peter Conrad Monath, 1736.

8vo. 375 p., 31 engravings.

First edition of the German translation of Het Schouw-Toneel des Doods which was first published in Amsterdam in 1707.



Michael Rentz, The Cardinal

The plates are much the same as those in the Dutch editions, but they were copied in a slightly larger format with some changes in the figures and the costumes. The initial illustrations have Biblical themes. These are followed by a mixture of new and traditional subjects. Eight show the influence of Holbein (e. g., the Cardinal, the Astronomer, the Old Man). Others are genre scenes, such as a royal feast, a masked ball or a peasant dance; and others introduce new figures into the Dance of Death: a Tightrope-walker and Skaters. The frontispiece depicts Death enthroned above a Dance of the Dead; and the last illustration shows the author at his desk.

Ref.: Douce, 116-117; Massmann, 52; Minns, 263; Sears, 28.

[19]

Rentz, Michael Heinrich (1701-1758)

Geistliche Todts-Gedancken bey allerhand Gemälden und schildereyen jn Vorbildung Unterschiedlichen Geschlechts, Alters, Standes, und Würdens-Persohnen sich des Todes zu erinnern, aus dessen Lehr die Tugend zu üben.

Passau, Gedruckt bey Friderich Gabriel Mangold; Linz, Verlegts Frantz Anton Jlger, 1753.

Folio. 182 p., 52 engravings.

A first edition of Rentz's engravings accompanied by a prose text. Later editions of the plates with different texts appeared in Hamburg in 1759,

in Vienna in 1767, in Linz in 1777 and in Prague (n. d.).

The full-page engravings are arranged in the traditional order of the Dance of Death. The procession begins with the Pope and the Cardinal and ends with members of the lower classes. The final scenes of the Last Judgment and the Escutcheon of Death are similar to Holbein's designs for the last scenes in his Dance of Death.

Ref.: Douce, 135-136; Massmann, 50; Minns, 511; Sears, 29.

[20]

Abraham à Sancta Clara (1644-1709)

De Kapelle der Dooden, Of de Algemeene Doodenspiegel.

Amsterdam, Jan Roman, 1764.

8vo. 327 p., 68 engravings.

A third edition with text in Dutch of the Viennese Dance of Death. The first edition was published in the year following Abraham's death by Christoph Weigel in Nuremberg; a second edition followed in 1741 printed in Amsterdam.

The frontispiece is a portrait of Father Abraham by Christoph Weigel. The engravings to the Dance of Death, also attributed to Weigel, are illustrations to the Bible verses printed above them. The series is introduced by scenes of the Creation and a preacher in a pulpit. Several of the subjects parallel



Abraham à Sancta Clara, De Kapelle der Dooden

Holbein's designs, such as the illustration of Death and the Blind Man, however most are original.

[21]

Mechel, Christian von (1737-1818)

Le Triomphe de la Mort, gravé d'après les dessins de Jean Holbein.

Basel, 1780.

(Facsimile edition: Stuttgart, Verlag v. Konrad Wittwer, n. d.)

4to. 47 engraved plates.

A nineteenth-century facsimile of Mechel's rococo copies of Holbein's designs. The plates were first published in 1780 as Part I on Mechel's Oeuvre de Jean Holbein. Other editions appeared in 1854 and 1858. One and a half times enlarged from the wood-cut originals, Mechel's plates are embellished versions of Holbein's designs with additional details of landscape and architecture sketched in. The series includes all the scenes from the Dance of Death and the Dance of Death on a sword sheath, but omits the cherubs.

Ref.: Douce, 117-120; Massmann, 56; Minns, 266-267; Sears, 23, 25.

[22]

Schellenberg, Johann Rudolph (1740-1806)

Freund Heins Erscheinungen in Holbein's Manier.

Winterthur, Heinrich Steiner, 1785.

8vo. 165 p., 25 etchings.

The first edition of Schellenberg's Dance of Death with a text by J. L. Musaeus.

Schellenberg was a prolific Swiss artist, poet and writer on art. Despite the title his etchings are neither copies nor even variations of Holbein's woodcuts. It is the first modern Dance of Death which abandons both the series of social types and religious or Biblical motifs. The subjects of the illustrations are everyday situations into which Death intrudes or current events in which a death has occurred. The frontispiece shows Voltaire, Frederick the Great and others looking at a sculpture of a skeleton, who is Freund Hein, a German expression for the personification of death.

Ref.: Douce, 137-138; Massmann, 57; Minns, 547, Sears, 29.

[23]

Schellenberg, Johann Rudolf (1740-1806)

Freund Heins Erscheinungen in Holbein's Manier, von J. L. Musaeus.

Mannheim, 1803.

8vo. 157 p., 25 engravings.

The second edition of Schellenberg's Dance of Death with engravings copied from the original plates by J. Mansfield.

Ref.: Douce, 137; Massmann, 57; Minns, 549.

[24]

La Danse des Morts, comme elle est dépeinte dans la louable et célèbre Ville de Basle, pour servir de miroir de la nature humaine. Dessinée et gravée sur l'original de feu Mr. Matthieu Merian.

Basle, Jean Rod. Im-Hof & Fils, 1789.

4to. 190 p., 43 engravings.

The plates are copies of the engravings which Matthaeus Merian (1593-1650) made of the wall-painting in Basel. First published in Basel in 1621, Merian's plates are presumed to be the most authentic copy of the wall-painting which was heavily restored during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before being destroyed in the nineteenth century. In this edition are copies of Merian's engravings by the Swiss engraver Jacques-Anthony Chovin (1720-1776), first published in 1744. The final picture in the book is a reversable self-portrait and death's head.

Ref.: Massmann, 78.

[25]

Todtentanz wie derselbe in der lobl. u. Welt-berühmten Stadt Basel als ein Spiegel menschlicher Beschaffenheit kunstliche gemahlet und zu sehen war Nach dem Original im kupfer gebracht.

Basel, Verlag von J. L. Fuchs, n. d.

4to. 104 p., 43 engravings.

Lighter, worn impressions of the plates by Chovin after Merian in the previous edition.

[26]

Hollar, Wenzel (1607-1677)

The Dance of Death painted by H. Holbein and engraved by W. Hollar.

[n. p., n. d.] (London, Francis Edwards, 1794?)

8vo. 81 p. and 21 l., 30 engravings, and 1 folding plate.

First published in London in 1647, Hollar's plates appeared in many subsequent editions through the nineteenth century.

Born in Bohemia and a student of Merian's when he was in Basel, Hollar was a prolific and skillful engraver who lived in London for most of his life. Hollar's Dance of Death is an abridgment of Holbein's series, including only thirty scenes. These were selected and copied from the 1538 Lyons edition

and from a spurious edition published in Cologne in 1555. Holbein's Arms of Death have been adapted by Hollar for the frontispiece, entitled "Mortalium Nobilitas." In the late eighteenth century Hollar's plates were acquired by the London bookseller Francis Edwards who continued to publish them. This edition includes engraved portraits of Holbein and Hollar, a preface "On the Dance of Death" and descriptions of the plates by Francis Douce, "The Dance of Macaber" with a fold-out plate, and Lydgate's "Daunce of Machabree."

Ref.: Douce, 111-114; Massmann, 54; Minns, 249; Sears, 24.

[27]

Hollar, Wenzel (1607-1677)

The Dance of Death painted by H. Holbein and engraved by W. Hollar.

[n. p., n. d.] (1794?)

8vo. 81 p., 30 engravings on thin paper, pasted in.

Another edition with engravings and text identical to the preceding volume, lacking the title page and portraits of Hollar and Holbein.

Hollar, Wenzel (1607-1677)

The Dance of Death painted by H. Holbein and engraved by W. Hollar.

London, Printed by C. Whittingham for John Harding, 1804.

8vo. 70 p., 30 engravings and 1 folding plate.

The first edition to be published of Hollar's plates after Edwards had them re-bitten. The contents are the same as previous editions.

Ref.: Douce, 113-114; Massmann, 55; Minns, 251.

Der Todten-Tanz, wie derselbe in der weitberühmten Stadt Basel, als ein Spiegel menschlicher Beschaffenheit.

Basel, bey Gebrüdern von Mechel, 1796.

8vo., 44 l., 42 woodcuts.

A confusion of the Holbein and Basel traditions of the Dance of Death, the woodcuts in this popular guide for tourists were first issued by Huldreich Frolich in Basel in 1588. After 1715 the Mechel family continued to use the blocks in editions which appeared through the nineteenth century. Most of the woodcuts are copies of Holbein's designs

but several are based on the wall-paintings in Basel. A number of different artists seems to be responsible for the illustrations, however most can be assigned to Georg von Sichem on the basis of the monogram "GS" which appears on many of the woodcuts.

Ref.: Douce, 34, 103; Massmann, 31; Minns, 32; Sears, 32.

[30]

Der Todten-Tanz, wie derselbe in der weitberühmten Stadt Basel, als ein Spiegel menschlicher Beschaffenheit.

Basel, bey Gebrüdern von Mechel, 1842.

8vo. 47 l. and 41 woodcuts.

A late reprint of the previous edition with a new preface and a frontispiece engraving of the wall-painting at the Predigerkirche in Basel.

[31]

Deuchar, David (1743-1808)

The Dances of Death through the Various Stages of Human Life wherein the capriciousness of that tyrant is exhibited in forty-six copperplates, done from The Original Designs, which were cut in wood, and afterwards painted by John Holbein in the town house at Basle.

London, Printed by W. Smith and Co. for John Scott, 1803.

4to. 47 p., 46 engravings.

Deuchar was a Scottish etcher and engraver. His engravings of the Dance of Death were first published in Edinburgh in 1788. They are not copies of Holbein's woodcuts, but rather a mixture of copies of Hollar's plates and the woodcuts in the spurious 1555 edition of Holbein from Cologne. The engraved frontispiece, "Le Triomphe de la Mort," and the French text were taken from Christian von Mechel's edition of Holbein's works.

Ref.: Douce, 120-121; Massmann, 56; Minns, 269; Sears, 25.

[32]

Rowlandson, Thomas (1756-1827)

The English Dance of Death from the designs of Thomas Rowlandson with metrical illustrations by the Author of "Dr. Syntax."

London, Printed by J. Diggins, Published at R. Ackermann, 1815-1816.

8vo. 2 volumes, 72 colored aquatints.

The plates and text to The English Dance of Death were first published serially from 1814 to 1816 and then bound together as two volumes. The text to the illustrations is by William Combe who collaborated with Rowlandson on The Dance of Life, which was published as a sequel to this title in the following year.

Rowlandson's plates express a completely new conception of the Dance of Death which owes little to its predecessors, except for the illustrations of Schellenberg, some of whose ideas he may have expanded upon. In the Hogarthian tradition, Rowlandson's scenes incorporate humorous details from contemporary life, using the appearance of Death as a satirical twist.

Ref.: Douce, 138-139; Massmann, 58; Minns, 524; Sears, 37.

[33]

Dagley, Richard (? -1841)

Death's Doings; in Twenty Four Plates Designed and Etched by R. Dagley...with Illustrations in Prose and Verse, The Friendly Contributions of Various Writers.

London, J. Andrews, 1826.

8vo. 369 p., 24 etchings.

A first edition of Dagley's Dance of Death with an etched title-page illustration of three skeletons, "The Last of the Graces." The plates which are neither skillfully executed nor humorous were probably inspired by Rowlandson's designs.

Refs.: Douce, 139; Massmann, 58; Sears, 38.

[34]

Dagley, Richard (? -1841)

Death's Doings; Consisting of numerous Original Compositions in Prose and Verse...The friendly Contributions of various Writers; Principally Intended as Illustrations of Thirty Plates, Designed and Etched by R. Dagley.

London, J. Andrews, 1827.

8vo. 2 volumes, 30 etchings.

The second edition of Dagley's work with additional text and illustrations. An American edition was published in Boston in 1828.

[35]

Rethel, Alfred (1816-1859)

Auch ein Todtentanz aus dem Jahre 1848.

Leipzig, Georg Wigand's Verlag, [1849].

Folio. 8l., 6 woodcuts.

The first edition of Rethel's Dance of Death inspired by, although not sympathetic to, the Revolution of 1848. In the six full-page woodcuts with text in verse below each illustration Death is seen as the seducer of the common people who are taken in by talk of "Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood."

Ref.: Sears, 40.

[36]

Rethel, Alfred (1816-1859)

Auch ein Todtentanz.

Leipzig, Verlag von Clischer Nachfolger (Bruno Winckler), [1900].

Folio. 10 l., 6 plates.

The twelfth edition of Rethel's Todtentanz with the cuts colored light green and a five-page preface by Robert Reinick.

[37]

Noch ein Todtentanz. Sechs Blätter mit erklärenden Text.

Munich, Verlag von Emil Roller, [1850?]

Folio. 8 l., 6 plates.

A second edition of this anonymously published Dance of Death. The first edition of Noch ein Todtentanz appeared in the same year as Rethel's Auch ein Todtentanz. Obviously influenced by Rethel's woodcuts, this Dance of Death also takes the Revolution of 1848 as its subject, but the series has a slightly different outcome which espouses the rights of the workers. After all have been killed in a battle, Death meets Freedom who is a classically garbed woman in a graveyard; she maintains that although the victory seems to belong to Death,

the eternal rights of man will live on after the battle.

[38]

Langlois, Eustache-Hyacinthe (1777-1837)

Recueil des Planches Gravées, par Eustache-Hyacinthe Langlois, Henry Brevière, et autres artistes pour l'Essai Historique, Philosophique et Pittoresque sur les Danses des Morts.

Rouen, 1850.

4to. 59 l., 58 plates.

An edition of the plates to Langlois's Essai (published in 1852) printed in gold on black paper. Following an author's portrait on a medallion, these include reproductions of the woodcuts to various editions of the Danse macabre, Books of Hours, eight plates printed from Holbein's original blocks and other examples of the theme of death in art.

[39]

Trois Danses des Morts. Soixante-douze gravures en bois. Epreuves d'artiste.

Paris, Imprimé par Firmin Didot Frères pour Edwin Tross, 1856.

8vo. 22 l., 72 wood-engravings.

Evidently a preliminary set of proofs for Anatole de Montaiglon's L'Alphabet de la Mort de Hans Holbein published in the same year. The wood-engravings reproduce the designs for Holbein's alphabet and the bordercuts of the Dance of Death and the Accidents of Man for the Books of Hours by Pigouchet and Kerver.

Ref.: Minns, 285; Sears, 40.

[40]

La Danse des Morts composée par H Hess d'après les tableaux à fresque qui se trouvaient sur le mur du cimetière de l'église de St. Jean à Bâle.

Basel, Albert Sattler, n. d. [1860?]

4to. 42 l., 40 lithographic plates.

An edition of finely colored lithographic reproductions of the wall-painting at the Predigerkirche in Basel. The text with the plates is the original German verses preceded by translations in French and English. Both the illustrations and text are the same as those in the editions of Merian's engravings except that the initial scene of the Preacher is lacking and a few of the figures have been changed, e. g., instead of the Heathen Man and Woman there is a Chinese couple dressed in elaborate Oriental costumes.

Ref.: Minns, 36.

[41]

Der Todtentanz Gemälde auf der Mühlenbrücke in
Lucern ausgeführt von Casparus Meglinger, Pictor.

Lucern, Gebr. Eglin, 1867.

4to. 70 p., 56 plates.

Black and white line drawings of the still extant Dance of Death painted on the Mill Bridge in Lucerne by Caspar Meglinger in 1632. Preceding the illustrations is a short essay on the Lucerne Todtentanz by J. Schneller. The scenes from the wall-painting are triangular with decorative corner-pieces. Possibly because this was a late example of a wall-painting of the Dance of Death, the iconography of the scenes appears original and modernized, although traces of the medieval and Holbein traditions are still evident.

[42]

Strang, William (1859-1921)

The Doings of Death.

London, Essex House Press, 1901.

Portfolio. 13 l., 12 chiaroscuro woodcuts.

A modern Dance of Death by Strang, an English etcher and painter who specialized in portraiture and book illustration. The woodcuts are printed in tan, black and white. Strang's figure of death is

not one who leads men away nor does he surprise his unsuspecting and helpless victims; rather Death is a ghostly figure who presides and assists at the moment of death.

Ref.: Minns, 975.

[43]

Kubin, Alfred (1877-1959)

Die Blätter mit dem Tod. (Cover title: Ein Totentanz.)

Berlin, Bei Bruno Cassirer, 1918.

Portfolio. 25 l., 24 plates.

The first Dance of Death by the Austrian graphic artist. The plates are a disconnected series of scenes of death or fantastic subjects which the artist associates with death. Some of the figures included are traditional ones, e. g., the Old Woman, and the Child; others seem to have been influenced by Dürer's single scenes extracted from the Dance of Death, such as the Rider or the Last Knight. Kubin also included himself in two of the plates: "Der Zeichner" and the final one of a cemetery marker on which is written "A. Kubin."

[44]

Hermann-Paul (1864-1940)

La Danse Macabre; vingt gravures sur bois.

Paris, Chez L'Imprimeur Léon Pichon, 1919.

8vo. 20 l., 20 woodcuts.

Hermann-Paul was a French painter and graphic artist. Printed just after World War I his Dance of Death is a series of grim and cynical depictions of contemporary society in which a disguised figure of Death is the main character.

[45]

Zacharias, Alfred (1901-)

Tod und Teufel; Sechzehn Holzschnitte.

Regensburg, Frantz Ludwig Habbel Verlag, 1922.

Portfolio. 4 p., 15 l., 15 woodcuts.

Zacharias is a German woodcutter and author of children's books. His Dance of Death is a picture novel with short captions for each woodcut which depicts the partnership of Death and the Devil as they travel together through the modern world.



Frans Masereel, Danse macabre

[46]

Masereel, Franz (1889-1971)

Danse Macabre.

Berne, Herbert Lang, 1946.

Folio. 27 l., 25 plates.

A second edition of Masereel's Dance of Death; the first was published by Lang in 1941. It is a pessimistic Dance of Death inspired by World War II, showing scenes of death and devastation caused by the War, personified as a skeleton. Like Masereel's other picture novels the woodcuts have neither captions or an accompanying text. The Danse Macabre is a series of woodcuts in which the pictures speak for themselves.

[47]

Kubin, Alfred (1877-1959)

Ein neuer Totentanz.

Wien, Wiener Verlag, 1947.

Portfolio. 30 l., 24 plates.

Kubin's second series of illustrations on the subject of death, with an introductory essay by Werner Wachsmuth. Like his earlier Dance of Death, this is a series of fantastic images or hallucinations of death experienced by the artist.

Grieshaber, HAP (1909-)

Totentanz von Basel. Mit Dialogen des mittelalterlichen Wandbildes.

Dresden, Verlag der Kunst, 1966.

Folio. 129 l., 40 woodcuts.

This most recent Dance of Death was inspired by the engraved copies of one of the oldest Dances done by Matthaeus Merian. Grieshaber used the persons and verses from the Basel Dance but has created a modern Dance of abstract figures. The original text of the Basel wall-painting was also cut in wood for this edition by students at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst at Leipzig. The plates are accompanied by two commentaries on the Basel Dance and Grieshaber's modern version by Wilhelm Bock and Rudolf Mayer.

