Reflections on Medieval and Renaissance Thought

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Edited by

Darci N. Hill

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CONTENTS

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I would like to thank the contributors to this volume, some of whom are former students, all of whom have become friends.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to offer special thanks as well to Ms. Paige Ruiz, my editorial assistant. Without her cheerful assistance, this project would have never reached completion. Ms. Ruiz possesses a keen eye coupled with an attention to detail, essential qualities in an editorial assistant.

Finally, I dedicate this volume to my husband Skip. Without his constant encouragement and sense of humor, this project would have never been initiated, much less completed.

Darci N. Hill

INTRODUCTION

The collection of articles gathered in this volume entitled *Reflections on Medieval and Renaissance Thought* gladly and quite spontaneously grew out of the Second International Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Thought hosted by Sam Houston State University in April of 2016. This collection reflects the diverse fields of study represented by presenters at the conference. Although other conferences take place that concentrate on either the medieval or renaissance periods of history, this conference stands out uniquely as the second one held in Texas that encompasses both medieval and renaissance thought.

The purpose of the conference and consequently of this book of essays is partially to establish a place for medieval and renaissance scholarship to thrive in the intellectual landscape today. What many scholars of medieval and renaissance studies have experienced is that our areas of expertise have increasingly been pushed to the margins in humanities and fine arts departments across the United States and are therefore often relegated to a place not far from extinction. One of the discussions that dominated the conference began with the question: Have we lost our relevance to the humanities, simply by being medieval and renaissance scholars? In answer, we found that the conference itself had disproved this sentiment. During the conference—both through collegial exchanges and robust debate—the fields representing medieval and renaissance studies appeared to be livelier and more relevant to the humanities and fine arts than ever. In this way, as a collective body of conference speakers and attendees, we conclude that we have not lost our relevance, and that our conference—and hence this book—not only validates but indeed celebrates this relevance.

As Conference Director of the Second International Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Thought and now editor of this volume, I realized while gathering the essays for this collection something quite significant. Currently, most scholarly collections of articles are decipherable only by specialists who are knowledgeable in their various areas of expertise. However, this volume presents for generalists who wish to augment their knowledge and appreciation of a variety of disciplines an intellectual smorgasbord of philosophy, poetry, drama, popular culture, linguistics, art, history, religion, and law. As such, this

volume is not solely for scholars, but presents some quite scintillating intellectual investigations of the various aspects of medieval and renaissance literature and culture from which scholars would also benefit. Herein lies the distinction of essays in this collection: each one of them should not only be useful to the scholar but also be accessible to the generalist, offering meaningful contributions to a multitude of disciplines.

Reflections on Medieval and Renaissance Thought offers a collection of thirteen essays ranging from the excellence of rhetorical strategies used by hymnists to artistic expressions portraying the Dance of Death, Shakespeare in popular culture to medieval definitions of the self, linguistic analysis of Old English literature to monastic instructions on living the holy life—in short, a collection promising an extensive array of topics and approaches. This volume is divided into four parts containing three or four essays in each part.

Part I: Art, Hymnody, Christian Rhetoric, and Psalters opens the discussion with essays by Kaia Magnusen, John Palmer, Carolyn Cargile, and Joni Hand. Magnusen's essay entitled "'Those Who Dance in Such a Way': Linking Gesture and Judgment in the *Danse Macabre des Femmes*" is noteworthy because it analyzes the artistic expression in selected images to demonstrate how those images convey a message to viewers. As such, Magnusen's essay encourages further scholarly exploration into aesthetic expression in general and serves as a powerful contribution to the humanities. Palmer's essay entitled "Hymn as Poetry: Charles Wesley's Religious Influence and Rhetorical Excellence" establishes the hymn as a vital means of artistic expression as well as technical artistry. It also presents an analysis of Wesley's hymns in particular. Palmer's essay is also significant when considering the fact that viewing the hymn as poetry has been heretofore largely ignored as a subject of scholarly endeavor. Cargile's essay "Christian Rhetoric and Thought in Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica*" delves deeply into the monastic practice of providing instruction to novitiates; it illuminates particularly the obscure medieval monk Orderic Vitalis whose writings until now have been predominantly overlooked by scholars. Finally, Hand's essay entitled "Playing by the Rules: Monastic Orders and Religious Identity in the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg"* contributes to the study of female patronage in the middle ages, revealing the complexity of the acquisition of religious traditions. Hand's analysis of "The Six Steps to God's Love" found in the *Psalter of Bonne of Luxembourg* purports to explain the ways in which Bonne's devotional practice evolved through her life. Within this one image, Bonne's dedication to the Franciscan Order and the Poor Clares is clarified.

Part II: *Beowulf* and other Old English Poetry includes essays by John Thornburg, Brian McWilliams, and Lauren Webb Hutchins. Thornburg's essay "The Tropes of *Beowulf* as revealed by Aristotle's Theory of Metaphor, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Deep Case Roles" offers a detailed linguistic examination of the various tropes existing in the poem *Beowulf*. Thornburg's important essay encourages an in-depth analysis using Aristotelian definitions and applications. McWilliams's essay entitled "*Beowulf* as *Translatio Studii*" analyzes the poem *Beowulf* by using multiple methods to lay new foundations for the study of the epic. By grounding the research on historical texts concerning the culture of the Anglo-Saxons and that of Britain in the first millennia, McWilliams's essay illuminates our understanding of the creation of *Beowulf*, serving as an aid to analyze the epic from a new angle as well as arguing for the repurposing of the Anglo-Saxon epic tale as a Christian narrative. Webb Hutchins's essay entitled "Havelock the Dane as the Image of Christ" contributes to scholarship on Old English poetry with its consideration of Havelock as a Christ figure, a perspective as yet untapped regarding the poem "*Havelock the Dane*." As such, Webb Hutchins's essay serves as an assist to a greater understanding and appreciation of the poem and of Old English poetry in general.

Part III: Enduring Issues regarding King Arthur and the Bard contains articles authored by Brittani Sherman, Diane Dowdey, and Cynthia Greenwood. Sherman's essay entitled "Resurrecting King Arthur: An Exploration of the King Arthur Legend in Popular Culture" argues convincingly that the heroic stature of King Arthur—coupled with motifs necessarily surrounding him—endures in popular culture. But more important, this essay teases out the reasons why these motifs endure and advances research not only among medieval scholars but also among popular culture enthusiasts. Dowdey's essay entitled "@Shakespeare: Shakespeare in Popular Culture 400 Years after his Death" presents research on the enduring interest in all things Shakesperean by analyzing Twitter accounts dedicated to the Bard. In doing so, this scintillating essay explores our continuing fascination with Shakespeare. Greenwood's essay entitled "Exploring the Bawdy Court Ethos in *Measure for Measure*'s Design: Putting the Church Court's Newly Stringent Laws Governing Sex and Betrothal on Trial" posits a reinterpretation of Shakespeare's play based on the historical practices of the bawdy courts of Shakespeare's time which governed betrothal and marriage. Greenwood's essay is an important contribution to scholarship because it investigates the structure and rhetoric of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, a "problem" comedy. For decades, scholars have grappled with the play's palpable departure

from the norms and patterns of Shakespeare's festive comedies. This essay explores the possible influence of ecclesiastical ('bawdy') court hearings upon *Measure for Measure's* structure and design in order to suggest how the play would have resonated with Jacobean-era audiences. By situating the play in its contemporary legal context, Greenwood's essay elucidates the reasons that it remains less accessible to twenty-first-century audiences and continues to challenge stage directors.

Part IV: Reflections on Philosophy and History includes essays by Kathleen Andersen-Wyman, Joseph Magee, and James Early. Andersen-Wyman's essay entitled "Andreas Capellanus and the Medieval Concepts of Self," demonstrates that medieval concepts of self—such as those propounded by Andreas Capellanus— can be as philosophically and psychologically sophisticated as contemporary concepts of self. As such, Andersen-Wyman's essay contributes to contemporary psychology and philosophy, which rarely include medieval ideas, and to medieval studies, which often focus narrowly on medieval-era concerns. Magee's essay entitled "Aquinas and the Birthday Fallacy" counters St. Thomas Aquinas's argument for the existence of God based on an individual's birth. While other scholars have argued in a similar vein, Magee's essay extends the counter-argument to include other considerations. This essay contributes substantially to the field of philosophy because of this augmentation. Early's essay entitled "The Rise and Fall of the New Smyrna Colony" takes a fresh look at a promising attempt to found a colony in modern-day Florida. Although several factors combined to cause the colony's downfall, the most fundamental cause, according to Early, was mismanagement by Andrew Turnbull. Early provides a detailed and necessary account of this mismanagement.

It is with great pleasure as the editor that I present to you an opportunity to join us in numerous reflections of medieval and renaissance thought as you read the scintillating essays gathered in this volume.

Darci N. Hill
Sam Houston State University

PART I:

ART, HYMNODY, CHRISTIAN RHETORIC, AND PSALTERS

CHAPTER ONE

"THOSE WHO DANCE IN SUCH A WAY:" LINKING GESTURE AND JUDGMENT IN THE *DANSE MACABRE DES FEMMES*

KAIA L. MAGNUSEN

The *Danse Macabre des Femmes* is a fifteenth-century French illuminated manuscript probably dating between 1491 and 1519 that includes a poem in dialogue form between Death and her intended female victims; multiple images accompany the text of the poem. This manuscript is fascinating because it specifically pertains to women and, thus, provides unique opportunities to study the lives of medieval women of various professions and classes. The text of the poem contains allusions to the women's daily lives and seems to hint at the state of the women's souls. The insinuations pertaining to the women's spiritual devotion or lack thereof are subtly encoded in the images of Death and her victims that accompany each individual dialogue. The details of the women's attributes and clothing are certainly telling, but another critical aspect is often overlooked; this crucial piece of the interpretive puzzle is the medium of dance, specifically the gestures made by the women in the images. Indeed, it seems there is a distinct correlation between the grand or restrained nature of the women's movements and their implied spirituality. Furthermore, there seems to be an underlying class-based critique that also correlates with the women's gestures.

The *Danse Macabre des Femmes* survives in five manuscripts and two printed editions. The earliest of these is a manuscript dated 1482, but the undated manuscript known as "manuscript fonds francais 995" which is located in Paris's Bibliothèque National will be considered here. The original author of *the Dance of Death of Women* is unknown. However, Martial d'Auvergne, who is sometimes also referred to as Martial de Paris,[1] is likely the primary editor of the work. [2] The eight-hundred-line poem is written in the form of a dialogue between Death or Death's female representative who addresses a particular victim and the intended female

victim who replies.[3] *La Mort* is female; when Death visits the Girl (*La ieune fille*), the child calls her "the dead woman" and "she."[4] Yet, in the images, *La Mort* seems to assume the traditionally male role of the leading dance partner. Likely, this is intended to highlight the atypical nature of the dance, as rather than actually dancing, the women are really dying instead.

In total, there are thirty-six ill-fated women whom Death surprises as they go about their everyday lives. However, the manuscript begins with four skeletal musicians, split between two images. The musicians are referred to with the masculine article *le*, so they are presumably male. The first image features one skeleton playing a wind instrument and another playing a string instrument. The next illustration depicts one skeleton holding a wind instrument in one hand while playing a drum with his other hand. The fourth musician holds some kind of stringed instrument that appears to be played by turning a crank. These bony musicians are not depicted again, but their presence at the beginning perhaps implies that deathly music is heard by Death and her female victims even though the instrumentalists are not seen.

An Author (*L'acteur*) figure is depicted next, and he outlines the didactic tone of the work.[5] There are two primary and recurring themes of the *Danse Macabre des Femmes.* One is that death is the great social leveler and that everyone, regardless of her earthly station, will die one day. The other is that death often comes suddenly and without warning; thus, one should be focused on spiritual treasures and the state of one's soul rather than being preoccupied with trivial and fleeting earthly possessions. Consequently, the reader of the manuscript is exhorted to meditate upon the state of her own soul and to make sure the priorities of her own life are ordered in a way that will lead to her salvation.[6]

The earlier *Danse Macabre des Hommes* served as a model for the dance of death of women. According to tradition, the men's dance of death was a poem written by Jean Gerson—a Parisian academic who once served as chancellor of the University of Paris—to complement the fresco painted in Paris in 1425 on the outer walls of the Church of the Holy Innocents' charnel house.[7] This poem was composed in dialogue form between Death or Death's representative and a male victim. After 1482, published versions of the *Danse Macabre des Hommes* are usually accompanied by the *Danse Macabre des Femmes.* However, the roles in the women's dance of death deviate from those in the men's because, for seventeen of the male roles, there is no female equivalent; thus, the poet was apparently forced to invent new roles to achieve numerical symmetry between the male and female dances.[8]

In general, the *Danse Macabre des Femmes* presents the female participants in a fairly neutral manner and, unlike some works of the period, its tone is not misogynistic. While each woman is presented as a representative example, in general, she is neither stereotyped nor caricatured. Indeed, the faults or sins ascribed to the various women stem from their life circumstances and the temporal enticements offered by these various situations rather than from an inherently flawed nature due to their gender. The women featured in the manuscript clearly belong to different social classes as their role names indicate. However, the women's clothing does not correspond to their respective classes. Most of the women wear upper class clothing that was fashionable in the late 1400s. This includes a long robe that is fitted at the waist and has a full skirt, lined sleeves, and a square collar. Many of them also wear a rope-like belt, a black hat and flat black shoes. The women who are obviously wealthy, such as the Queen and the Duchess, wear robes that appear to be fur-lined rather than cloth-lined. In addition, the upper class women wear hats that are curved and fit tightly across the forehead but fall straight and loosely from the back of the head to the neck while some of the other women wear hats featuring a square visor at the forehead. Aside from these small details, the women are dressed fairly uniformly in upper-class clothing. In this regard, the illuminator deviates from protocols governed by social practices and from sumptuary laws, such as the one enacted in 1485 during the reign of King Charles VIII which limited silk apparel woven with gold and silver thread to those belonging to the upper echelons of the aristocratic class. Although such sumptuary laws were generally disregarded, at the time, class distinctions were encoded in the manner in which people dressed.[9] The reasons for the illuminator's decision to ignore class differences encoded in the women's clothing are unknown but, as a result of this choice, more attention is drawn to the women's gestures, which are quite distinct.

Based upon the conversations each woman has with *la Mort,* it seems the author hints at the state of the women's souls which then implies either the salvation or damnation that awaits them. For instance, in their lines of dialogue, some of the women admit to having led sinful lives, but not all of them acknowledge God's sovereignty or profess confidence in His judgment.[10] In addition to these text-based suggestions about the women's ultimate fates, the images that accompany the verses provide further clues to the ultimate positive or negative outcome for each woman. In particular, the women's gestures are quite revealing. In general, the grander the woman's gesture, the more negative the implications her dialogue with *la Mort* seem to be. The women who make the most flamboyant gestures

appear to belong to the upper classes. The implication seems to be that the women who appear to be ostentatiously dancing with *la Mort* are more likely damned while the women whose gestures are more restrained or who do not appear to be dancing at all are, apparently, saved. Thus, although the manuscript was likely created for a wealthy patroness, the manner in which the female dancers are portrayed belies sympathy for the poor and lower-class women rather than for the wealthy and powerful females who are shown.

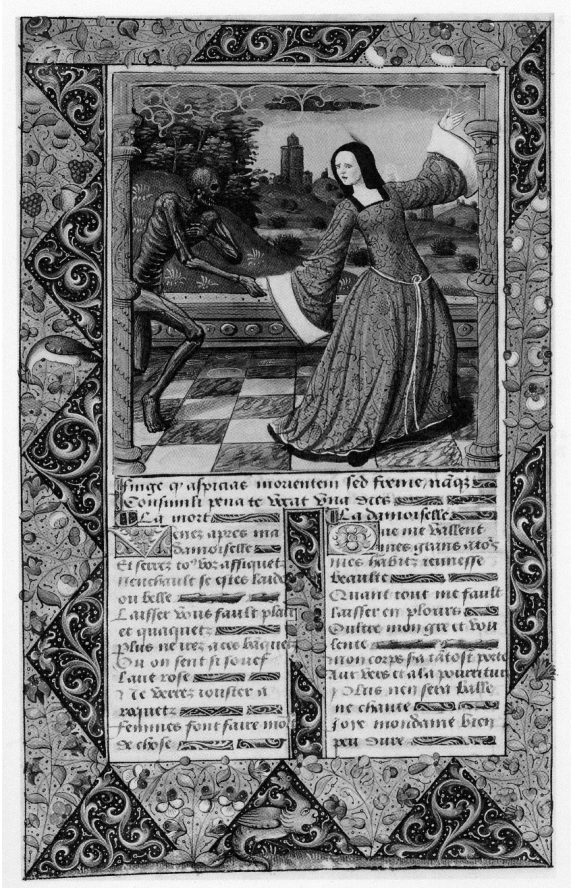

Fig. 1-1 Death (*La mort*) and the Young Woman (*Le demoiselle*), 28 verso, *Danse Macabre des Femmes*, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 995, no year available.

This linkage between the grandiosity of the women's gestures and salvation is in line with medieval attitudes regarding the links between one's physical movements and the state of one's soul. At the time, it was believed that a person's bodily movements were accurate indicators of the true nature of his or her soul. Disproportionately large or exaggerated gestures were linked with vices, excess, and moral deficiency while moderation was a mark of goodness and virtue.[11] This bias against gestures deemed excessive was in effect for a wide range of movements, but it is especially pertinent to the images included in the *Danse Macabre des Femmes.*

The gestures of the upper class *le Damoiselle* (Fig. 1) are among the most ostentatious of any of the women featured in the manuscript. In the dialogue, found below the image, *La mort* says: "Come along, my Young Woman, / And put away your brooches. / It doesn't matter if you are ugly or fair. / You must leave the talk and chatter; / And go no more to banquets, / Where you smell sweet rose cologne. / You won't watch them jousting. / Women are the cause of many things."[12] In these lines, *La mort* is referring to courtship activities in which the Young Woman would have participated. She would have attended feasts, banquets, and other social functions which would have included singing and dancing. The remark about jousting refers to the suitors whom the Young Woman would have been trying to attract with her beauty, youth, jewelry, and perfume. Ironically, the reference to "rose cologne" or rosewater has a double meaning as this was a scent that was used to disguise the odor of decomposition and to sweeten the air at funerals. [13]

In response to *la Mort,* the Young Woman says: "What are they to me, my headdresses, / My clothing, youth, beauty, / When I must leave it all in tears. / Against my wishes, against my will, / Soon my body will be taken / To the worms and to decay. / No more dancing, no more singing, / Worldly pleasure scarcely lasts."[14] The entire focus of [the Young Woman's character] is on her beauty, her clothing and accessories, and her grooming which were intended to attract a suitable husband. However, while she concedes that her physical body is going to rot and be eaten by worms, her verses are not particularly remorseful, and she does not acknowledge God's judgment or plead for mercy. She expresses no regret at the manner in which she lived her life; she is simply sad that it is over.

In the accompanying image, *la Mort,* despite being female, seems to play the role of a courtly male suitor. She takes the Young Woman's right hand with her own while drawing her own left hand to her chest. She leans forward as if bowing and seems to ask the Young Woman to dance. She appears to have just stepped into the scene; her left leg is still outside the

frame of the image, and she has not yet placed the heel of her right foot on the ground. Perhaps this sudden entrance suggests that Death has cut in on an actual chivalrous suitor with whom the Young Woman was dancing. Indeed, the Young Woman appears to be in mid-motion. Her body is slightly angled outward towards the right side of the image. She extends her left arm gracefully up above shoulder level while her right arm is outstretched downwards in a forty-five-degree angle. The elegance of this gesture is accentuated by the swooping bells of her sleeves. While dancing was an accepted part of aristocratic behavior for both men and women, dances performed by elites were to be enacted in a courtly and sedate fashion that was befitting of their courtly station. Gestures that were carried out decorously were socially acceptable while any dance featuring motions that could be considered lewd or overdone were deemed improper.[15] The Young Woman's dance gestures are very large and exuberant which have negative connotations, linking them to her implied vanity and preoccupation with worldly things.

In addition, one must remember that the Young Woman is called by no ordinary dance partner. The Young Woman is dancing with Death, which means that she is dying and *la Mort* is leading her off to her grave rather than around a ballroom. As a painted image, the representation of the Young Woman and Death is static; however, it attempts to convey not only movement but time as well. *La Mort* and the Young Woman dance and the act of dancing, obviously, has a particular duration as it is performed in time. Thus, by showing the pair dancing, the passage of time is implied. In the image, dancing indicates dying; when the dance ends, the life of the Young Woman will also end. The earthly form of dancing that she, as a Young Woman in her courtship season, had been performing is, then, starkly contrasted with the *danse macabre*. Rather than showcasing her social graces and feminine charms through her dance performance, these allurements, like her very life, are wasting away as she dances with Death. As such, the image attempts to illustrate that which is not easily representable, the act of dying.

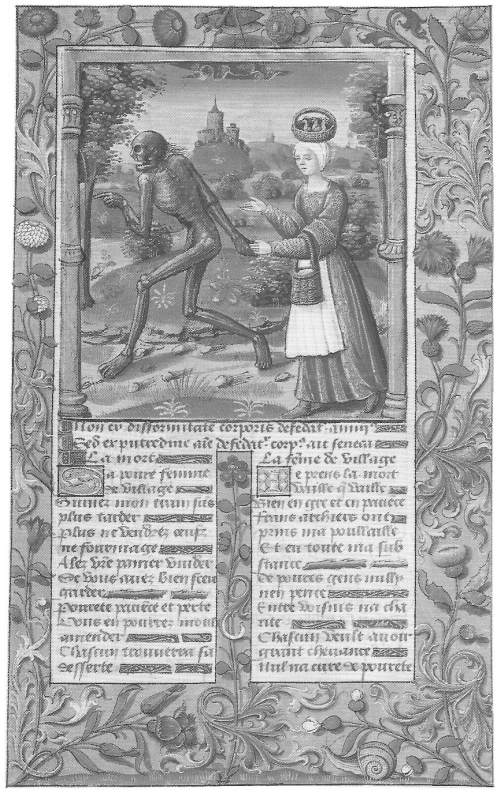

Fig. 1-2 Death (*La mort*) and the Village Woman (*La femme de village*), 36 recto, *Danse Macabre des Femmes*, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 995, no year available.

In contrast to the well-off Young Woman, the humble Village Woman (*La femme de village*) (Fig. 2) is cast in a positive light. Death grabs the Village Woman by the hand and leads her off to the left side of the image. The Village Woman does not seem to be dancing at all. She fully faces the direction in which *la Mort* is going, and she allows herself to be led away without protest. Her arms are raised in front of her body, but her gestures are small, restrained, and natural; they lack the obvious flourish of the Young Woman's movements. In the verses below the image, *la Mort* says, "Poor Village Woman, / Follow my procession without delay. / You won't sell eggs or cheese anymore. / Go empty your basket. / If you have

endured / Poverty, long suffering, and loss, / You will be satisfied. / Each will find his just desserts."[16]

The Village Woman's lack of grand gestures seems to cast her in a positive light. Indeed, her lines indicate that she is not sorry to leave earthly life behind and, thus, she accepts her fate. She states the following: "I will take Death for what it's worth, / Willingly and patiently. / Free archers have taken my chickens, / And everything I had. / Nobody thinks about the poor. / There is no charity among neighbors. / Everyone wants to be rich. / No one cares for poverty."[17] In this way, the Village Woman's small, controlled gestures seem illustrative of her acceptance of God's will for her death in contrast to the Young Woman's large, less retrained gestures which seem to indicate her vanity and love of fleeting things of the earthly world. The Village Woman is the sole woman who is depicted carrying baskets.[18] Three chicks can be seen in the basket balanced on her head. Nothing is visible in the basket whose handle rests in the crook of her left arm, but it might contain eggs or cheese, which are both mentioned in *la Mort*'s lines. Although the Village Woman carries two baskets, she does not appear unduly attached to these material possessions, and she does not lament over not being able to take them with her. The Village Woman's response is in distinct contrast to the wealthier Young Woman who specifically listed the earthly items she was distressed to leave behind. While the Young Woman laments Death bringing a seemingly premature and decidedly unwanted end to the "earthly pleasure" she was enjoying, the Village Woman welcomes Death for freeing her from the difficulties and suffering she experienced on earth.[19]

Like the Young Woman, the Darling Wife or Pampered Wife (*La femme mignote*) (Fig. 3), is negatively implicated both in her words and by her actions. *La Mort,* who has one arm raised over her head, grabs the Darling Wife by the hand and bounds toward the edge of the frame. In her call to this spoiled woman, *la Mort* evokes the indulgent life the woman leads: "Woman kept in the lap of luxury, / You sleep until dinner / Your chemise is being warmed, / It is time to have your breakfast. / You should never fast, / For you are too thin and hollow. / I come to cancel your tomorrow. / People die sooner than they think."[20]

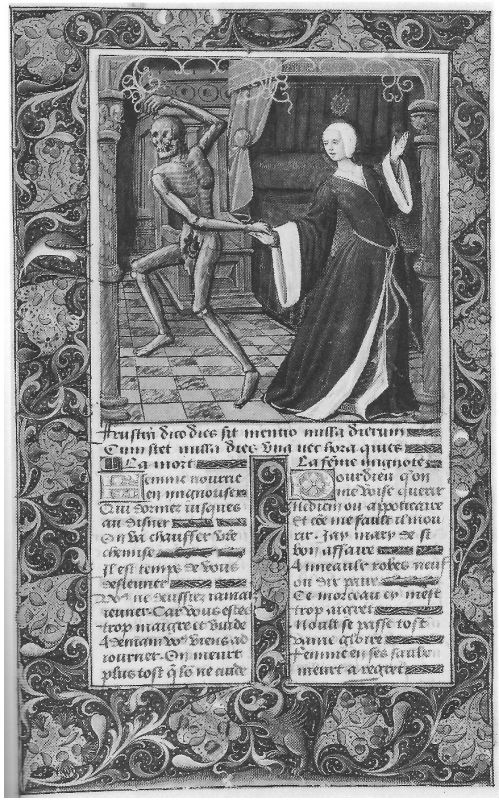

Fig. 1-3 Death (*La mort*) and the Darling Wife (*La femme mignote*), 40 verso, *Danse Macabre des Femmes*, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 995, no year available.

In response, the Darling Wife says "For God's sake, go get / The doctor or apothecary. / Why must I die? / I have a successful husband, / Rings, dresses, nine or ten pair. / This news is too harsh for me. / Vainglory goes away so soon. / A woman in sin dies with regret."[21] Much like the Young Woman, the Darling Wife is clearly preoccupied with her physical appearance, creature comforts, and earthly possessions. She is the only woman in the manuscript specifically to ask why she has to die. In addition, she is the only woman who cites her husband's accomplishments and her personal belongings as rationale for why Death should not take her. In the image that accompanies the text, the Darling Wife is shown in front of a large, curtained poster bed. To illustrate her pampered idleness,

the illustrator has depicted her wearing a nightcap and an elegant bedgown that gaps immodestly in front.[22] These details correlate with *La Mort*'s comment that the woman lounges in bed until late in the day rather than concerning herself with important duties around the house. In addition, *La Mort* makes a remark about fasting which indicates the woman diets and is concerned with maintaining a slender figure. The Darling Wife calls for a doctor or an apothecary indicating that she is affluent enough to have sought the expertise of both professions but, tellingly, she does not request a priest. Coupled with her apparent fixation on her appearance and possessions, her demand for a doctor or an apothecary rather than a religious figure further indicates that the Darling Wife is thoroughly engrossed in the cares of this world and has completely neglected the state of her soul.

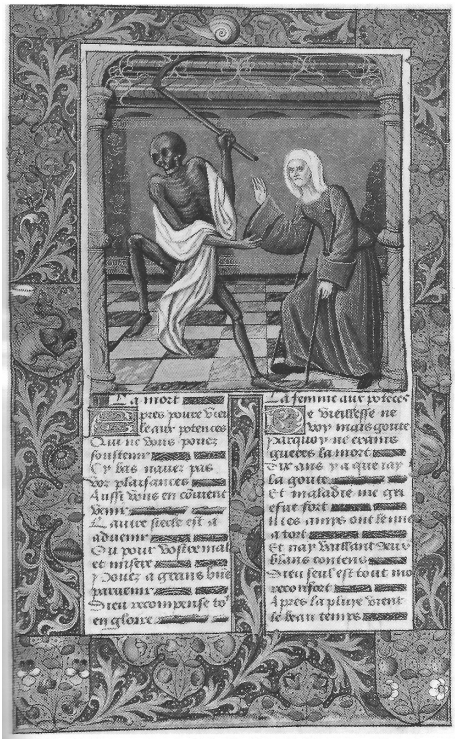

Fig. 1-4 Death (*La mort*) and the Woman on Crutches (*La femme aux potences*)*,* 35 verso, *Danse Macabre des Femmes*, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 995, no year available.

Although the Darling Wife's gestures are not as flamboyant as the Young Woman's, compared to the other women in the manuscript, her motions can certainly not be considered restrained. Her right arm is extended and the dangling cuff of her sleeve highlights that gesture, making it seem more pronounced. Her other arm is raised up near her head and, once again, the large cuff of her sleeve calls attention to it. Her body faces away from *La Mort* but her torso seems to lean back toward her; the curve of the trim which lines the opening of her gown accentuates this apparent backward sway.

In contrast to the Darling Wife, the Woman on Crutches (*La femme aux potences*) (Fig. 4) is not dancing; in fact, she can barely walk. *La Mort* performs a rather dramatic side-step by lifting her bent right leg up to her side. She swings a scythe over her head with one arm and, with her other hand, she clasps the Woman on Crutches's cuffed sleeve and leads her away. The Woman on Crutches hunches over her apparatus, which she clutches firmly with her left hand, and hobbles after Death. Her right arm is raised, but this gesture hardly reads as grand. Instead, it almost seems as though the Woman on Crutches reaches out to lay her hand on *La Mort* in order to steady herself. This interpretation is reinforced by *La Mort*'s remark to the woman that she is unable to support herself.

In the accompanying text, *La Mort* says "Come along, poor old Woman on Crutches / You can't support yourself. / You have no pleasures here on earth. / So it's best for you to come. / The other world is in the future / When for your pain and misery / You can attain great wealth. / God repays everyone in glory."[23] The Woman on Crutches responds by saying, "I see nothing good in old age / Therefore I'm not afraid of Death. / For ten years I've had gout / And I'm so troubled by illness. / My friends aren't nice to me. / And I'm not worth two silver coins. / God alone is my complete comfort. / After the rain comes the fair weather."[24]

Just as this woman's restrained, natural movements are distinct from the Darling Wife's grander movements, so, too, are the Woman on Crutches's words in stark contrast to those spoken by the pampered wife. Unlike the Darling Wife, who lists her worldly possessions and remarks on her husband's success, the Woman on Crutches admits her poverty. The Darling Wife was wealthy enough to request the attendance of a doctor or an apothecary while the Woman on Crutches indicates she has been plagued by gout for a decade. Due to her extreme penury, she has likely been unable to afford a doctor or any kind of medical treatment for her ailment, which can cause extreme pain, and, consequently she has lived with physical discomfort.[25] The Darling Wife openly objects to her demise by asking why she must die whereas the Woman on Crutches admits she

does not fear Death. She is old, infirm, and poor. Even her friends have abandoned her. However, according to the text, whereas the Darling Wife lived a life of earthly luxury but is presumably not saved, the Woman on Crutches will be vindicated by God, and her earthly misery will be transformed into glory. Thus, once again, textual clues correlate with the gestures of each woman to link small, restrained gestures with positive attributes and the promise of salvation while large, ostentatious gestures are associated with negative traits and the suggestion of damnation.

The actual performance of dance clearly plays a role in the *Danse Macabre des Femmes* manuscript as is evident when one analyzes the language used in the dialogue and the positions of the figures within the painted images. The figures within the images appear to perform the motions of partner dances; however, the nature of the dance these women perform is hardly typical. Rather than putting their power and beauty on display or celebrating good news through the act of dancing, they are all dying instead. Throughout the manuscript, the act of dancing serves as a visual metaphor for the act of dying. Certainly given the commonality with which dances were performed in the Middle Ages, tying this activity to the act of dying would have deeply affected the presumably wealthy female reader of this manuscript. Some of the ending lines spoken by another Author figure remind the reader that "Before, they [the dancing / dying women seen in the images] were as you are, / The ones who dance in such a way. / They went on about their business, they spoke, as you do. / There's no more to say about the dead…"[26] The reader is reminded that the dying women pictured in the images once did many of the activities carried out by the reader. They went about their daily routines unmindful of Death only to be caught off guard by the sudden end to their lives. The subtle, underlying class-based commentary that seems to exist in both the poem and the illustrations may perhaps serve to highlight the key theme of Death as the great leveler and to remind the reader that Death is undeterred by social status or personal fortune. Through reading this book, the reader would be reminded of the looming presence of Death and be admonished to prepare her own soul for the inevitable arrival of Death. Even when dancing, either to celebrate, to attract a suitor or to showcase social status, the reader would have surely remembered the images and verses of women dying as they dance, and would thus have connected the commonplace activity of dance not only with living but also with one's life being taken away thereby fulfilling the manuscript's intended didactic purpose.

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Notes

[1] Suzanne F. Wemple and Denise A. Kaiser, "Death's Dance of Women," *Journal of Medieval History* 12, no 4 (December 1986): 333.

[2]Ann Tukey Harrison, ed., *The Danse Macabre of Women: Ms. Fr. 995 of the Bibliothèque Nationale* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), ix-1, 7. Harris refers to the manuscript in question as F. When Death visits the Girl, the child refers to Death as "the dead woman" (*la morte*) and "she" (*elle*).

[3] Ann Tukey Harrison, "Fifteenth Century French Women's Role Names," *The French Review* 62 (February 1989): 436.

[4] Harrison, *The Danse Macabre of Women,* 106. In the French text, she refers to Death as "la morte" and "elle."

[5] Ann Tukey Harrison translates "L'acteur" to be "Authority," but I have chosen to translate it as "Author."

[6] Ibid., ix, 8.

[7] Wemple and Kaiser, "Death's Dance of Women," 336.

[8] Harrison, *The Danse Macabre of Women*, 7-8, 10. In the *Danse Macabre des Hommes,* there are thirty-one male roles.

[9] Sandra L. Hindman, "The Illustrations," in *The Danse Macabre of Women: Ms. Fr. 995 of the Bibliothèque Nationale*. Ed. Harrison, Ann Tukey, Kent (OH: Kent

State University Press, 1994), 19-21. If sumptuary laws were broken, the violator of the law could be fined and have his / her clothes confiscated.
[10] Wemple and. Kaiser, "Death's Dance of Women," 341. Wemple and Kaiser note that seventeen of the female participants admit to being "sirens" (their term) while only thirteen of these women express faith and acceptance regarding their fates. In her brief assessment of Wemple and Kaiser's article, Harrison seems somewhat skeptical about their class-based conclusions pertaining to the salvation or damnation of the women featured in the dance of death.
[11] Jennifer Neville, "Dance Performance in the Late Middle Ages: A Contested Space," in *Visualizing Medieval Performance,* ed. Elina Gertsman (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 296, 305.
[12] Harrison, *The Danse Macabre of Women*, 66. The French title given for the Young Woman is "le demoiselle." Harrison translates this as "Debutante" but I have chosen to translate "le demoiselle" as Young Woman.
[13] Ibid., 9, 66.
[14] Ibid., 66. The Young Woman uses the word *pourriture* (to rot, as in wood – dry rot) when speaking about the decomposition of her physical body.
[15] Neville, "Dance Performance in the Late Middle Ages," 301.
[16] Harrison, *The Danse Macabre of Women*, 96. The French title for the Village Woman is "La femme de village."
[17] Ibid. Harrison notes that historians often reference the Village Woman's lines when discussing the abuses inflicted on the French citizens by both the English and French armies during the Hundred Years War (1337-1453).
[18] Ibid., 96.
[19] Ibid., 66, 96.
[20] Ibid., 114. The French title for the Darling Wife is "La femme mignote."
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 94. The French term for the Woman on Crutches is *La femme aux potences.*
[24] Ibid. Harrison notes that the "two silver coins" are two *blans*, which were small silver coins' worth between five and ten deniers each; today, they would be worth a few cents each.
[25] James Wyngaarden, "Gout and Other Disorders of Uric Acid Metabolism," in Vol. 1 of *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine,* ed. Raymond Adams, et al. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), 597-606. Gout is a common metabolic disorder in which uric acid builds up to excess in the blood. As it is trying to be excreted in the urine, it can cause uric acid kidney stones that can either block urine flow (thus damaging the kidney) or can cause exceedingly painful back and flank pain as the stone tries to descend the ureter into the bladder. Uric acid can also build up in joints, inflaming them and causing degenerative gouty arthritis. The classic symptom of gout is an episode of a painful big toe. So sensitive is the pain trigger that even the lightest touch of a bed sheet causes pain. Uric acid can also build up in the ear cartilage, producing irregular lumps (tophi) under / in the overlying skin.

[26] Harrison, *The Danse Macabre of Women*, 132. The Author figure's last eight lines are as follows: "Before, they were as you are, / The ones who dance in such a way. / They went about their business, they spoke as you do. / There's no more news about the dead. / It is not worth a fig / To the heirs or friends of the departed, / Unless they get silver and plate. / Have pity on them, that's enough."

CHAPTER TWO

CHRISTIAN RHETORIC AND THOUGHT IN ORDERIC VITALIS'S *HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA*

CAROLYN CARGILE

At the end of the first quarter of the twelfth century at the Norman Benedictine monastery of St. Évroul, an Anglo-Norman monk named Orderic Vitalis began writing his ambitious historiographical project: a history of the Christian church, from the birth of Christ to his own times, which is called *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In his work, he wrote on the ecclesiastical and political history of western Christendom but focused on events in Normandy and his native England, and paid particular attention to the history of his own abbey. In one particularly interesting narrative moment, Orderic includes a miraculous story told by a former abbot of his monastery, named Thierry, and renders the story in Thierry's direct speech. The story tells of a young monk whose work as a scribe and copyist saved his soul, and it emphasizes the devotional efficacy and exculpatory power of joint oral-literate activities within the medieval monastery. In the story, Orderic includes quotations from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians and his second letter to Timothy and alludes to Augustine's treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*.

In this essay, I will show how Orderic contextualizes the story with Thierry's own background and use biblical and patristic quotation to set Thierry up as an example of the Pauline and Augustinian ideals of a Christian teacher and rhetorician. I will also explore how Orderic emphasizes the importance of oral-literate activity for the divine service—especially considering the context of joint oral-literate monastic education—and then actually creates interactions of orality and literacy within the written history itself, particularly in using Thierry's direct speech. Examining this narrative moment demonstrates how Orderic included intersections of orality and literacy in his history by creating a moment of Christian teaching, using and incorporating principles of Christian thought to elevate and strengthen his history.

The story Orderic included in his history was told by Abbot Thierry to the young monks he taught, "urging them repeatedly to avoid mental sloth which could harm body and soul alike."[1] The story concerns a monk whose work as a scribe eventually saved his soul. Orderic renders the story in Thierry's voice, presenting it through direct speech to lend it greater authority and presence within the text. The story is noteworthy because it is fundamentally concerned with the spiritual benefits of writing and copying, and also as a reproduction of orality within the text that becomes an exemplary moment of Christian teaching. The full story that Thierry gives is worth quoting at length:

> In a certain monastery there dwelt a brother who had committed almost every possible sin against the monastic rule; *but he was a scribe, devoted to his work, who had of his own free will completed a huge volume of the divine law*. After his death his soul was brought for judgement before the throne of the just judge. Whilst the evil spirits accused him vehemently, bringing forward all his many sins, the holy angels showed in his defence the book that he had written in the house of God; *and the letters in the huge book were carefully weighed one by one against his sins*. In the end one letter alone remained in excess of all the sins; and the demons tried in vain to find any fault to weigh against it. So the judge in his mercy spared this brother, and allowed his soul to return to his body for a little while, so that he might amend his life.
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> Bear this in mind, my dearest brethren, cleanse your hearts of all vain and sinful desires, and offer the works of your hands to the Lord God as a never-ceasing sacrifice. Strive constantly to avoid sloth as deadly poison, for as our holy father Benedict says: "Idleness is the enemy of the soul." Live with this precept, which an experienced doctor has written in the lives of the Fathers, that only one demon tempts the monk who is active in doing good, but a thousand demons assault the slothful monk and prick him with so many temptations that he comes to scorn the monastic cloister and longs to see the pernicious sights of the world and experience its perilous delights.[2] And since you cannot scatter generous alms to feed the poor when you yourselves have no worldly wealth, nor build great churches like kings and other princes of the world when you live enclosed in monastic seclusion and have no earthly power, at least follow the counsel of Solomon and keep your heart unspotted from the world,[3] striving with all your might to do the will of God. *Pray, read, chant psalms, write*, persevere with such things and *consciously arm yourselves with them against the wiles of the devil*.
>
> Quidam frater in monasterio quodam de multis transgressionibus monastic institutionis reprehensibilis extitit; *sed scriptor erat et ad scribendum deidtus quoddam ingens uolumen diuinæ legis sponte conscripsit*. Qui