The Triumph of Death in fourteenth-century Italy

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Statement of originality

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree or other purpose.

I further certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all sources and assistance received in the preparation of this manuscript have been acknowledged.

Stephanie Swanson

Abstract

The Triumph of Death emerged in an era dominated by mercantile prosperity and mendicant proselytising as the preeminent expression of the fourteenth-century Italian macabre. This thesis—the first study devoted to all extant Trecento representations of this novel imagery—investigates the development of this dramatic visualisation of death within the social, economic, religious, and artistic context of fourteenth-century Italy. It seeks to account for why the distinctive imagery of the Triumph of Death was created and became so popular. My study focusses on the nine surviving representations of the Triumph from the fourteenth century—in Pisa, Aufenstein, Bolzano, Siena, Florence, Subiaco, Lucignano and Merano—all of which depict a mass slaughter of humanity committed by a personification of Death. The substantial number of surviving works, the consistency of subject matter, and their broad chronological and geographic distribution offer compelling evidence that the Triumph was a widely popular image in fourteenth-century Italy. Yet no version, other than the famed example in the Pisan Camposanto, has received comprehensive scholarly attention, and no in-depth study into the entire corpus has been undertaken. Each constituent element of the Triumph is analysed in turn: Death personified and armed, the pile of corpses, and the living divided into visually opposed moral exempla. Thematic analysis allows for commonalities to receive be given detailed scrutiny while accounting for notable divergences and regional variations. Widely adopted by the clergy and vigorously promoted by the mendicant orders, the Triumph of Death gave memorable visual form to the dire warnings of preachers about the dangers of pride, avarice, and lust, levelling an aggressive censure at the sins of the urban populace. As Italy continued to grow its money economy and the balance of power shifted to urban elites and to urban spirituality, so too did Death become a citizen of the city.

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A version of this thesis underwent copyediting and proofreading by James Bean (Accredited Editor IPEd., MA) in accordance with the thesis editing guidelines of the University of Sydney and the Institute of Professional Editors, Australia. No generative AI was used in the preparation of this thesis.

Dedicated to Joe. Yea, though I walked through the valley of the shadow of the Triumph of Death, I feared no evil, for you were with me.

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154 Detail of living figures hunted by Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, 1366. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

155 Detail showing the *kruseler*, a ruffled headdress, Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini portrait*, 1434. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

156 *Triumph of Death*, *Dance of Death* and fragments, Clusone, façade of the Oratorio dei Disciplini, 1484. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

157 Detail of the *Triumph of Death*, Clusone, 1484. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

158 Shoes of the living figures hunted by Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Subiaco, 1340s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Chapter four

159 Figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Detail of figure 1.

160 Figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Santa Croce, c. 1345. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

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164 Detail of figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Detail of figure 1.

165 Figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Subiaco, 1340s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

166 Illumination of the dearth of Florence, Domenico Lenzi, *Lo specchio umano*, 1329. © Scala, Florence.

167 The personification of Mercy contrasted with the personification of Avarice, Frère Laurent, *Le somme le Roi*, detail of folio 136 verso, 1295. Photo: Artstor Collection, accessed 2024.

168 The personification of Miserliness, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, MS. Douce 332, folio 002 verso, end of the fourteenth century. Photo: © Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, accessed 2024.

169 Detail of the 'surviving' figure in the *Triumph of Death*, in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

170 Detail of the 'surviving' figures in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

171 Drawing of the 'surviving' figures in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Image: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

172 Detail of the 'surviving' figure in the *Triumph of Death*, Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, 1366. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

173 Line overdrawing of the 'surviving' figure in the *Triumph of Death*, Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, 1366. Image: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Introduction

In the fourteenth century, Italian cities were flourishing centres of commerce, populated by a new class of workers and elites, such as merchants, bankers and lawyers, whose power rested on a new money economy and their own business acumen.[1] At the same time, the mendicant orders, intent on delivering salvation to the masses through widespread vernacular preaching, had become the dominant religious influence in these burgeoning urban centres.[2] The dense population of the city provided a captive audience for their ministrations, while the wealth of city inhabitants provided a steady income for the friars.[3] During this era of mercantile prosperity and mendicant proselytising, the Triumph of Death emerged as the pre-eminent expression of the fourteenth-century Italian macabre. This thesis—the first study devoted to all Trecento images of the Triumph—investigates the development of this dramatic visualisation of death within the social, economic, religious, and artistic context of fourteenth-century Italy. In so doing, it seeks to understand why the distinctive imagery of the Triumph of Death was created and became so popular. What can the theme tell us about fourteenth-century Italian attitudes to society, mortality, death, and the afterlife?

My study focusses on the nine surviving images of the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death, all of which depict a mass slaughter of humanity committed by a personification of Death. The grim and confronting subject matter of the Triumph

[1] Albrecht Classen, "Urban space in the Middle Ages and the early modern age: historical, mental, cultural, and social-economic investigations", in Albrecht Classen, ed., *Urban space in the Middle Ages and the early modern age* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 16. Lauro Martines, *Power and imagination: city-states in Renaissance Italy* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 73-76.

[2] Joanna Cannon, *Religious poverty, visual riches: art in the Dominican churches of central Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 7. Michael F. Cusato, "The radical renewal of pastoral care in the Italian Communes, 1150–1250: prelates, secular clergy, and the mendicant orders", in *A companion to priesthood and holy orders in the Middle Ages*, ed. Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 321.

[3] Lester K. Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy in medieval Europe* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1978), 187. Philippe Ariès, *The hour of our death*, trans. Helen Weaver, 1st American ed. (New York: Knopf, 1981), 111.

places it within the genre of the macabre, which uses provocative depictions of death to create an emotional response in viewers and in which, as the early and influential scholar of the macabre Emile Mâle wrote '… death is suddenly revealed in all its horror'.[4] Since Johan Huizinga's 1919 *The autumn of the Middle Ages* (first published in English as *The waning of the Middle Ages*),[5] the macabre has been accepted as an important and influential pan-European theme in the literature and visual art of the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries. Huizinga's influential study characterises the macabre as the 'overripe' product of a culture in a stage of both decadence and decline.[6] As visual evidence, he cites three macabre motifs: the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, the Dance of Death, and the illustrated manuscripts of the *Ars moriendi*.[7] In this schema, the Triumph of Death is notable only in its absence.

Following Huizinga, studies on the macabre have sought to account for both its origins and popularity within the context of cultural histories. Philippe Ariès argued that the macabre reflected changing social constructions of death and dying, highlighting an increasing European emphasis on the biography of the individual rather than the narrative of the community.[8] Given the *longue durée* of Ariès scholarship—which covers multiple centuries, countries, and cultural practices—it is perhaps unsurprising that the Triumph of Death, largely contained to the Italian peninsula, does not appear as a serious object of study.[9] Jacques Chiffoleau, taking an anthropological approach and focussing on Avignon, correlated the emergence of the macabre with the increasing urbanisation of populations who, dislocated from the comforting traditions of ancestral mortuary practices, created elaborate new funerary

[4] Emile Mâle, *Religious art from the twelfth to the eighteenth century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 140.

[5] See translators' notes in Johan Huizinga, *The autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), ix–xviii.

[6] Ibid., xxi.

[7] Ibid., 156–72.

[8] Philippe Ariès, *Western attitudes toward death: from the Middle Ages to the present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 45–51.

[9] Ariès briefly discusses the Triumph of Death in the Pisan Camposanto in *The hour of our death* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 112, 118 and 127.

traditions to reconfirm the cohesion of familial lineages.[10] Such scholarship has substantially enriched modern understandings of the macabre. Indeed, the very absence of the Triumph from broad cultural studies offers the opportunity for rich new areas of inquiry. Does the Triumph of Death conform to or conflict with the principles of the macabre put forward by these scholars? In either outcome, what new insights—into both the Triumph and the macabre itself—might be gleaned from testing established hypotheses against this neglected imagery?

Such questions have already generated a plenitude of scholarly output on other visual themes of the macabre. The earliest of these, the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, emerged in the thirteenth century, predating the Triumph of Death. Although some scholars had argued that the Encounter originated in Italy, this has been disproven.[11] Instead, based on the work of literary scholars, it is now agreed that the Encounter first appeared in medieval French poetry.[12] Images of the Encounter are found in both illuminated manuscripts and monumental art, and usually depict three hunters coming across three corpses. A representative Italian version from 1275 is to be found in the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Atri, Abruzzo (below, figure 10). The corpses—in later examples a nearby hermit—explain to the hunters that as the hunters are now, the corpses once were; and as the corpses are now, the hunters will be. This vivid depiction of revenants reminding their living *doppelgängers* of their own mortality was used by Ariès as substantive evidence for his thesis on the macabre, and has been recognised as the characteristic motif of the macabre by scholars such as Paul Binski and Elina Gertsman.[13] Other strands of

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[10] Jacques Chiffoleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2011), 153–211.

[11] Pietro Vigo, *Le Danze Macabre in Italia* (Bergamo, Italy: A. Forni, 1901), 82; Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du Triomphe de la Mort dans la peinture Italienne* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1950), 40, 48–57; Hellmut Rosenfeld, *Der mittelalterliche Totentanz: Entstehung, Entwicklung, Bedeutung* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1968), 37; Chiara Frugoni, *Il tema dell'Incontro dei Tre Vivi dei Tre Morti nella tradizione medioevale Italiana* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1967), 147–8; Ferdinando Bologna, *I pittori alla corte angioina di Napoli, 1266–1414* (Rome: Bozzi, 1969), 60–62.

[12] Stefan Glixelli, *Les cinq poèmes des Trois Morts et des Trois Vifs* (Paris: Libraire Ancienne H. Champion, 1914); Willy Rotzler, *Die Begegnung der Drei Lebenden und der Drei Toten: Ein Beitrag zur Forschung über die Mittelalterlichen Vergänglichkeitsdarstellungen* (Winterthur, Switzerland: Verlag, 1961), 21–22.

[13] Paul Binski, *Medieval death: ritual and representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 134; Elina Gertsman, "Visualizing death: medieval plagues and the macabre", in *Piety and plague: from*

scholarship into the Encounter have located its origins in the secular courts, particularly of Frederick II, and in the widening influence of eastern religious traditions.[14] The result has been to firmly establish that the macabre impulse was a dynamic and vibrant response to contemporary trends, in contrast to Huizinga's view that it was merely an ossified expression of a fading culture. This new interpretation of the macabre certainly suggests that further investigation of the Triumph of Death is well overdue.

While scholarship that is focussed on the Encounter cannot be expected to discuss the Triumph *per se*, one might expect that the appearance of the Encounter alongside images of the Triumph of Death would have provoked the curiosity of researchers. Yet, when Huizinga (incorrectly) suggested that the version of the Encounter in the Pisan Camposanto was the earliest representation of that theme in formal art—a moment of some note—he did not mention that it shares the same fictive landscape as an image of the Triumph of Death (figure 1).[15] Perhaps deliberately following Huizinga's example, Binski's discussion of the Pisan version of the Encounter, written nearly a century later, similarly fails to mention how the two themes are presented in parallel.[16] In these influential accounts, the Triumph is rendered bizarrely invisible, occasioning no comment. Yet it is worth considering what the intention behind the juxtaposition of the two macabre themes was. How does their collocation modify the impact or message of each in turn and cumulatively, seen as they are side by side?

Byzantium to the Baroque, Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester, eds, (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2007), 72.

[14] Paul Peeters, "La première traduction latin de 'Barlaam et Joasaph' et son original grec", *Analecta Bollandiana* 49 (1931): 276–312; Charles Diehl, *L'Illustration du roman de Barlaam et Joasaph* (Paris: Boccard, 1937); Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Le Moyen Âge fantastique: antiquités et exotismes dans l'art gothique* (Paris: A. Colin, 1955), 235–49; Rotzler, *Die Begegnung der Drei Lebenden und der Drei Toten*, 21–22, 269; Frugoni, *Il tema dell'Incontro*, 148; Ariès, *The hour of our death*, 112; Pavel Chihaia, *Immortalité et décomposition dans l'art du Moyen Âge* (Madrid: Fondation Culturelle Roumaine, 1988), 43–70; Binski, *Medieval death*, 135; Pierroberto Scaramella, ed., *Humana fragilitas: the themes of death in Europe from the 13th century to the 18th century*, trans. Mary Rogers (Clusone: Ferrari, 2002), 28–29; Christine M. Kralik, "A matter of life and death: forms, functions and audiences for 'The Three Living and the Three Dead' in late medieval manuscripts" (PhD diss., Ann Arbor, University of Toronto, 2013), 69.

[15] Huizinga, *The autumn of the Middle Ages*, 164.

[16] Binski, *Medieval death*, 137.

The absence of the Triumph of Death from scholarship on the macabre can be attributed in part to the focus on the leitmotif of the *doppelgänger* first seen in the Encounter. The *doppelgänger* motif also appears in some iterations of the late fourteenth-century *transi* tombs, where the same decedent can be represented twice. In examples of these 'double-decker' tombs, the higher sculpture shows the dead person in an idealised form, wearing garments and holding attributes that express the high status that they enjoyed in life.[17] The lower sculpture meanwhile presents the same person as a rotting corpse, in a shocking refutation of worldly pride.[18] The twin representations of the same decedent found in *transi* tombs were first linked with the mirroring effects of the Encounter by Jurgis Baltrušaitis.[19] Other scholars have also linked the *doppelgänger* motif to the fifteenth-century Dance of Death (see below, figure 12), the *Danse Macabre*, whose series of dancing couples consisting of a skeletal figure of Death and a living person are seen as the final articulation of the mirroring motif. In all three of these macabre themes, the Encounter, the *transi*, and the Dance, the confrontation of the living with the gruesome spectacle of a rotting *doppelgänger* evokes not just the inevitability of death, but the uncanny and disarming feeling of seeing one's own reflection. Scholars have argued that this eerie quality is evidence that the macabre was more than a simple reminder of mortality, but instead was a psychologically nuanced articulation of the fear of death.[20]

The strength of the *doppelgänger* motif and its uncanny characteristics has led some prominent scholars on the macabre, most notably Binski and Gertsman, to demarcate 'true' representations of the macabre as being defined by the pairing of a corpse (or Death) with a living (or dying) figure.[21] This narrow definition restricts the

[17] Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb sculpture: its changing aspects from ancient Egypt to Bernini* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), 65.

[18] As in the effigy of John FitzAlan, figure 11, 1435.

[19] Baltrušaitis, *Le Moyen Âge fantastique*, 240.

[20] John Aberth, *Contesting the Middle Ages* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 323.

[21] Binski states that the macabre is characterised by its 'most important' structural features, including dialogic interchanges between two partners, or two moral types, particularly when the dialogue is represented via the doubled self as Other. Binski, *Medieval death*, 134. For Gertsman, the 'most salient features' of the macabre are themes of doubling, repetition, emphasis on the physicality of the decomposing body, and a preoccupation with spectacle and display. Gertsman, *The dance of death*, 23.

macabre to only three iconographies: the Encounter, the *transi* tombs, and the Dance. Because the Triumph of Death has only one figure of personified Death and many victims—and thus does not easily fit into a definition of the macabre that sees mirroring as the genre's essential motif—it has been summarily excluded by these scholars.[22] This exclusion implies that the Triumph does not operate with the same level of sophistication as other macabre motifs, an implication that this thesis seeks to challenge. Indeed, that the Triumph of Death was, in some ways, substantially different from other macabre iconographies should signal that the macabre impulse was more complicated and varied than the limited framework of the mirror motif allows us to understand.

In fact, research conducted outside of this unduly restrictive definition of the macabre has been both plentiful and insightful. Kathleen Cohen—who first defined the *transi* tomb in a fundamental study of 1973—included in her definition of the *transi* tomb all sculptural works that depicted the decedent as a corpse, whether or not they also showed an unspoiled *doppelgänger gisant*.[23] The importance of geographic locality has been emphasised by more specialised studies into *transi* tombs: Nigel Saul has shown how the English *transi* expressed not a horror of death, but Christian themes of bodily resurrection and salvation of the soul through Christ; Marian Bleeke has argued that a group of French *transi* tombs depicts a monstrous femininity through macabre representations of pregnancy; while Marisa Bass has examined Netherlandish *transi* tombs as sites for the display of artistic innovation and skill, to note but a few examples.[24] Because the Triumph of Death only appeared on or

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[22] In his otherwise comprehensive survey of on medieval death imagery, Binski's avowed focus is the 'most characteristic forms' of the macabre, a category from which he excludes the Triumph of Death. The subject does not appear in the index and the theme is mentioned only briefly in two passing references to the Camposanto frescoes in Pisa: on the cycle's redating to before the Black Death (*Medieval death*, 128), and on Death's unusual feminine gender (ibid., 158). Gertsman mentions the Triumph of Death only as a gruesome allegory which 'lurks on the margins of the macabre': *The Dance of Death*, 25–26.

[23] Kathleen Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a death symbol: the* transi *tomb in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 9.

[24] Nigel Saul, *English church monuments in the Middle Ages: history and representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 311–34; Marian Bleeke, "'The monster, Death, becomes pregnant': representations of motherhood in female *transi* tombs from Renaissance France", in Carlee Bradbury and Michelle Moseley-Christian, eds., *Gender, otherness, and culture in medieval and early modern art* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 151–78; Marisa Anne Bass, "The *transi* tomb and the

near to the Italian peninsula, scholarship into the theme can offer historians rich insights into fourteenth-century Italian society. In what ways does the expression of the macabre found in the Triumph reflect or seek to shape local cultural or religious views about the meaning of death?

Notwithstanding her focus on the mirror motif, Gertsman's authoritative 2010 study on the Dance—a welcome update to James Clark's 1950 monograph—has compellingly shown the power of an interdisciplinary approach that concentrates on the cultural contexts of the image.[25] Gertsman situates the Dance 'at the intersection of visual imagery, vernacular literature, and pastoral theology', drawing innovative and important connections between modern viewer-response theories and the medieval macabre.[26] The near-contemporaneous publication in 2011 of *Mixed metaphors: the Danse Macabre in medieval and early modern Europe*, edited by Sophie Oosterwijk and Stefanie Knöll, has likewise buoyed the already vast body of literature on the pan-European Dance with a broad syncretic approach to the topic. Contributors emphasise the diversity of its representation, set the motif into context with other macabre forms (although the Triumph of Death is absent), and consider both the performative aspects and the spatial contexts of the theme.[27]

Scholarship on the final macabre motif of the medieval period, the *Ars moriendi*, is similarly vibrant. The *Ars moriendi*, literally the Art of Dying, are late fifteenth-century texts which sought to provide lay people with a step-by-step guide spelling out how to die a good Christian death in order to achieve salvation. Illustrated scenes show the dying protagonist (Moriens) facing the temptations of unbelief, despair, impatience, pride, and avarice from his deathbed, dramatised by the presence of demons and angels who vie for his soul. Huizinga characterised the *Ars moriendi* as essentially consolatory because an angel always appears to help Moriens fend off

genius of sixteenth-century Netherlandish funerary sculpture", *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 67 (2017), 160–87.

[25] James M. Clark, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1950).

[26] Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 163.

[27] Oosterwijk and Knöll, eds., *Mixed metaphors*, 2011.

Satan.[28] The comforting quality of the *Ars moriendi*—which 'simplifies' the process of dying into a series of steps—caused Binski to argue that the theme should not be considered part of the macabre.[29] Highlighting the fruitlessness of such strict definitions, Donald Duclow has suggested that the theme can be both macabre and consoling.[30] Conversely, Alberto Tenenti saw the *Ars moriendi* texts and images as symptomatic of an anxiety that was rooted in the idea that the quality of one's death immutably reflected the quality of one's own life.[31] Extending Tenenti's position, Ariès and Caroline Bynum have argued that the *Ars moriendi* substantiates the thesis that the Middle Ages saw an increasing emphasis on the individual, for in these illustrations it is Moriens himself, as a locum for the reader, who must take personal responsibility for experiencing a good death and thus attaining salvation.[32] A similar impulse can also be found in the Triumph of Death, although, as will be shown, the immediacy of death in the Triumph takes on a more confronting emotional tenor.

Yet although research into the medieval macabre is flourishing, scholarship on the Triumph of Death is languishing. Most work on the theme concentrates on the most famous version, that frescoed c. 1330–35 on the south-west corner of Pisa's

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[28] Huizinga, *The autumn of the Middle Ages*, 167. On the *Ars moriendi*, see also: Rudolf Rainer, *Ars Moriendi: Von der Kunst des heilsamen Lebens und Sterbens* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1957); Nigel Palmer, "Ars Moriendi und Totentanz: Zur Verbildlichung des Todes im Spätmittelalter", in Arno Borst et al., eds., *Tod im Mittelalter* (Konstanz, Germany: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1993), 313–34; Roger Wieck, "The Office of the Dead', in Roger Wieck et al., eds., *Time sanctified. The Book of Hours in medieval art and life* (New York: George Braziller, 2001), 124–48; Andrea Braunberger-Myers, *Ars Moriendi: Die Kunst des gesegneten Sterbens* (Frankfurt: Haag und Herchen, 2004). One strand of scholarship has considered how the theme of the *Ars moriendi* persisted through the Reformation, furthering current understandings of how images of death respond to changes in the religious *status quo*. For this aspect of the theme, see: Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, "The final moment before death in early modern England", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20, no. 2 (1989), 262 and 266; David W. Atkinson, "The English Ars moriendi: its Protestant transformation", *Renaissance and Reformation* 6, no. 1 (1982), 1–10; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 151–200; Jacob S. W. Helt, "Memento mori: death, widowhood and remembering in early modern England", in Allison Levy, ed., *Widowhood and visual culture in early modern Europe* (Aldershot, England: Burlington, 2003), 39–54.

[29] Binski, *Medieval death*, 39–41.

[30] Donald Duclow, "Everyman and the ars moriendi: fifteenth-century ceremonies of dying", *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 6 (1983), 93–113.

[31] Alberto Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento: (Francia e Italia)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 41–3.

[32] Ariès, *The hour of our death*, 95–139; Caroline Walker Bynum, "Death and resurrection in the Middle Ages: some modern implications", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 142, no. 4, (1998), 589–96.

imposing cemetery, the Camposanto (figure 1). In the centre of the scene appears a personification of Death wielding an enormous scythe. She flies over a pile of dead bodies towards a group of young and worldly pleasure-seekers gathered in a garden to the right. In so doing, Death has ignored a crowd of poor, elderly, and ill people behind her, who call out to Death and reach their hands towards her in longing. Above this scene, angels and demons vie for the souls of the dead. Throughout the image, and in the fictive frame that originally bordered the scene, a number of figures hold up scrolls that contain didactic texts. The Pisan *Triumph of Death* has understandably drawn the attention of scholars because of its significant location, arresting size, innovative iconography, and skilful composition.

Because a full review of everything written on the Pisan *Triumph of Death* would fill its own book, in this introduction I focus on the key moments in its historiography.[33] Three main points recur in discussions of this fresco: its dating and authorship, the purpose of the texts within the image, and the social and economic contexts within which it appeared. The Pisan imagery was first brought under academic scrutiny in art history's foundational text, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (published in 1550 and 1568) written by Renaissance painter, architect, and author Giorgio Vasari. Vasari attributed the fresco to Florentine artist Andrea di Cione (known as Orcagna).[34] His discussion of the Pisan *Triumph of Death* focusses predominantly on the appearance of the many texts within it, a technique that he characterised as clumsy.[35] Yet the texts would prove to be historiographically consequential. In the late 1890s, Italian philologist Salomone Morpurgo discovered a fifteenth-century codex with transcriptions of the scrolls, which were by his time already faded and hard to read.[36] The codex, named the *Lives of the holy fathers*, compiled and translated into the vernacular in the early fourteenth century by

[33] Further literature on the Pisan *Triumph* is integrated at appropriate points throughout this thesis.

[34] Giorgio Vasari, "Vita d'Andrea di Cione Orgagna: pittore, scultore et architetto Fiorentino", in Rosanna Bettarini, ed., *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1966–87), 217–221.

[35] Ibid., 171.

[36] Salomone Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari in rima del 'Trionfo della Morte,' del 'Giudizio Universale e Inferno' e degli 'Anacoreti' nel Camposanto di Pisa", *L'Arte* 2, no. 1 (1899), 51–87.

Dominican Domenico Cavalca (1270–1342), was the source for the scene of the *Thebaid* which depicts the lives of the desert fathers and completes the fresco cycle.[37] Morpurgo's own analysis of the transcriptions, and his reconstruction of the relationship between the texts and passages of the fresco, became indispensable after the roof of the Camposanto was hit by explosive projectiles in 1944 during World War II, starting a fire that severely damaged the work.[38]

The Pisan *Triumph of Death* was brought to the attention of modern scholarship by art historian Millard Meiss, first in a 1933 essay and subsequently in his enormously influential 1951 study of Tuscan painting in the second half of the fourteenth century.[39] Meiss argued that the fresco should be attributed to local painter Francesco Traini and dated it after the Black Death of 1348, suggesting that the image of mass death was evidence of a gloomy pessimism in a country harrowed by the pestilence.[40] In 1950 the first serious modern study of the Triumph and the Italian macabre was undertaken by Liliane Brion-Guerry. Following Meiss's hypothesis, Brion-Guerry viewed the Pisan *Triumph* through a post-plague lens.[41] Although this dating would prove to be incorrect, Brion-Guerry was nonetheless prescient for linking the texts within the image to the influence of the Pisan Dominican convent of St Catherine, and in particular to the work of Cavalca.[42] Brion-Guerry's work was also groundbreaking for initiating a chronological examination of the Triumph of Death iconography within Tuscany and Lazio.[43]

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[37] Ibid., 54.

[38] Ibid., 51–87; Lina Bolzoni, *The web of images: vernacular preaching from its origins to Saint Bernardino of Siena*, Histories of Vision (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 12–3. Although many accounts in the literature attribute the damage to a bomb or an incendiary, recent research into military records by Cathleen Hoeniger shows that the Camposanto was most likely caught in the crossfire of an artillery battle. See: Cathleen Hoeniger, "The Camposanto of Pisa in the wake of World War Two: loss and discovery", in *Art and experience in Trecento Italy*, ed. Holly Flora and Sarah S. Wilkins (Turnhout, Brepols, 2019), 319.

[39] Millard Meiss, "The problem of Francesco Traini", *The Art Bulletin* 15, no. 2 (1933), 97–173.

[40] Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death: the arts, religion, and society in the mid-fourteenth century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 74–93.

[41] Liliane Guerry, *Le thème du 'Triomphe de la Mort' dans la peinture italienne* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1950), 24.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 113–62.

This accepted chronology and any association between the Pisan *Triumph of Death* and the 1348 plague were dramatically disproven when art historian Joseph Polzer convincingly proposed that the image should be redated to the 1330s, owing to the appearance of a number of historical figures in the adjoining fresco of *Hell*.[44] A key figure identified by Polzer is Nicholas V, who was elected antipope by German emperor Ludwig of Bavaria in 1328. Both the emperor and his antipope found refuge in Pisa before the waning of imperial power forced Ludwig's retreat from Italy in February 1330. Nicholas V died in Avignon in 1333. The fresco of *Hell* groups Nicholas V with other heretics, possibly also Ludwig. In Polzer's reading, the fresco thus acts as a powerful instance of politically expedient propaganda for the Pisans, who adopted an anti-imperial position in the wake of Ludwig's ebbing influence. Polzer's 1964 redating cast the conclusions of earlier scholarship into doubt and raised significant questions about the imagery: the image of mass death no longer had a clear historical catalyst in the Black Death, and the iconography of the Triumph of Death was much older than originally supposed. There is now scholarly consensus placing the Pisan *Triumph* around 1330–35.[45]

Broadening the interpretation of the Triumph of Death away from the catastrophic 1348 plague, Chiara Frugoni concentrated her observations not on the macabre, but on how the fresco reflected the intersection between affluent, urban cosmopolitanism and the Christian ideals of eremitical ascetism. This viewpoint came into focus in Frugoni's analysis of the combined representation of the *Encounter* and the *Triumph* at Pisa, where she highlighted a number of significant modifications to the standard iconography of the Encounter. Firstly, a hermit is added to the *Encounter*. He has descended from a mountaintop retreat in the top left of the fresco to impart the message of the dead to the living. In Frugoni's analysis, the inclusion of the hermit shifts the emphasis away from the confrontation with death, and places it

[44] Joseph Polzer, "Aristotle, Mohammed and Nicholas V in Hell", *Art Bulletin* 46, no. 4 (1964), 463–66.

[45] As well as Polzer, see: Luciano Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974); John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2011), 153–55; Cannon, *Religious poverty, visual riches*, 193–4.

instead on his sermon.[46] The redating of the fresco allowed Frugoni to expand on Brion-Guerry's insights into the relationship between the message of the fresco and the written traditions of the Pisan Dominicans, fortifying this view by pointing out that the whole program was created under the auspices of a Dominican archbishop, Simone Saltarelli (b. 1261, archbishop from 1323, d. 1342).[47] Moreover, the fresco's redating meant that Cavalca himself was still alive and active in Pisa.[48]

Frugoni also highlighted two innovations in the Pisan *Encounter*: the dramatic expansion of the 'three living' into a hunting party now numbering at least twelve and the inclusion of women among their ranks.[49] Frugoni parallels the expansion and diversity of the 'three living' with the many characters who populate the *Triumph of Death*, suggesting that they are designed to represent the cosmopolitan populace of contemporary Pisa.[50] She thus argues that, set in the context of these themes, the Pisan *Triumph* is not just a meditation on the horror of death, but an example of death being used as a didactic tool by the Dominicans in the form of a figurative sermon directed at the lifestyles of the mercantile elite and nobility.[51]

It was Lina Bolzoni's insightful scholarship into the texts within the fresco that confirmed the full extent of the relationship between the *Triumph of Death* and Dominican vernacular sermons, particularly those created in the orb of the convent of St Catherine in Pisa.[52] Bolzoni showed that in the Pisan *Triumph of Death* the new modes of vernacular preaching developed by the Dominicans found sophisticated visual articulation. In her interpretation, the *Triumph* is a multimedia sermon whereby the illiterate could listen to or remember preaching while viewing the images. The images themselves helped to fix the sermon in the listeners' minds, and literate

[46] C. Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso (il ciclo di Buffalmacco nel Camposanto di Pisa e la committenza Domenicana)", *Annali della Scuola normale superiore di Pisa, Classe di Lettere e filosofia* 18, no. 4 (1988), 1562.

[47] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1576; Cannon, *Religious poverty, visual riches*, 348.

[48] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1565 n14.

[49] Frugoni, *Il tema dell'Incontro*, 215; Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1562.

[50] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1562.

[51] Frugoni, *Il tema dell'Incontro*, 216.

[52] Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 11–40.

viewers of the fresco received extra guidance from the texts. This network of signifiers drew on Cavalca's writings, and particularly his translation of the *Lives of the holy fathers*, thus undoubtedly linking the image of the Pisan *Triumph* to the proselytising of the Dominicans.[53]

While the sustained attention on the Pisan fresco is warranted, eight other fourteenth-century images of the Triumph of Death have not attracted the same degree of scholarly attention. The continued popularity of the Triumph of Death into the fifteenth century, combined with the vagaries of fate and fashion, offers a tantalising sense that other fourteenth-century examples may have been lost.[54] The large number of surviving works, the consistency of their subject matter, and their broad chronological and geographic distribution offer compelling evidence that the Triumph was a significant and popular iconography in the fourteenth century. Yet none of the other surviving images of the Triumph has received such comprehensive attention as Pisa has, and no dedicated, in-depth study into the whole corpus has been undertaken.[55]

Research into the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death has been stymied not only because of the misdating of Pisa, but also because of the conflation of the iconography with images illustrating humanist Francis Petrarch's *I Trionfi* poems. Written from 1351 until a few months before Petrarch's death in 1374, the poems consist of six successive triumphs by allegorical figures: Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Eternity. Historians borrowed from Petrarch's poetry the title 'the Triumph

[53] Cannon, *Religious poverty, visual riches*, 287.

[54] Two well-known monumental fifteenth-century examples are the 1440–5 version now housed in the Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo, Sicily, see: Jane Bridgeman "The Palermo Triumph of Death", *The Burlington Magazine* 117, no. 868 (1975), 480–84; and Vincenzo Abbate and Michele Cordaro, *Il 'Trionfo della Morte' di Palermo: l'opera, le vicende conservative, il restauro: Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1989); and the 1485 version on the façade of the Oratorio dei Disciplini, Clusone, Lombardy, see: Valerio Terraroli, "Il ciclo dei temi macabri a Clusone: problemi critici e iconografici", *Arte Lombarda* 3–4, no. 90/91 (1989), 15–41.

[55] Limited discussions of a number of fourteenth-century images of the Triumph are found in: Louis Edward Jordan III, "The iconography of death in Western medieval art to 1350". PhD, diss., The University of Notre Dame, 1980; Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 25–98; and Ingrid Völser, "The theme of death in Italian art: the Triumph of Death". Masters diss., McGill University, 2002.

of Death' for the images discussed in this thesis.[56] Although sometimes inaccurately discussed as equivalents, the Triumph of Death iconography predates Petrarch's work and maintains a clear visual distinction.[57] Indeed, it has been suggested that Petrarch himself was inspired by the visual theme.[58] All surviving versions of the non-Petrarchan Triumph of Death share the same visual motifs as the Pisan example: Death personified and armed, a pile of corpses beneath Death, and the living divided into visually opposed moral exempla.[59] In this thesis I consider all surviving, non-Petrarchan, Trecento images of the Triumph, directly addressing the gap in scholarship. This thesis responds to my curiosity about the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death. What is the definition of the Triumph of Death as a Trecento iconographical theme? Is the Pisan example the model of this theme or an exception to it?

The chronological ordering of the earliest images of the Triumph of Death, and thus the development of the iconographical theme, is more nuanced and complex than the scholarly focus on Pisa has so far indicated. Indeed, the general art historical bias towards central Italy has obscured from general knowledge the existence of two versions of the Triumph that may precede the Pisan example. The first of these appears on the east wall of the chapel of St John in the Dominican church at Bolzano,

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[56] Karl Siegfried Guthke, *The gender of death: a cultural history in art and literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1999, 68.

[57] The Petrarchan *I Trionfi* are mingled with the Triumph of Death in ibid., 58; Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 25–26; among others. At least three authors have suggested alternate titles for the Triumph. Paul Watson proposed the somewhat less engaging *Exposition of Death*, while Lorenzo Carletti and Francesca Polacci recommended that the works be known as the *Allegory of Redemption* after the panel painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, discussed below. It seemed to me that changing the name of the images will only cause further confusion, and so I have retained the Triumph of Death. See: Paul F. Watson, *The garden of love in Tuscan art of the early Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1979), 52–53; Lorenzo Carletti and Francesca Polacci, "Transition between life and afterlife: analyzing the Triumph of Death in the Camposanto of Pisa", *Signs and Society* 2, no. S1 (2014), 114.

[58] Sandro Sticca, "Petrarch's *Triumphs* and its medieval dramatic heritage," in Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare A. Iannucci, eds., *Petrarch's* Triumphs *allegory and spectacle* (Toronto: Dovehouse, 1990), 49.

[59] The Triumph of Death differs from illustrations of Petrarch's *Trionfi* for two main reasons: the appearance of other, equivalent, personifications in a triumphal parade and the passivity of Death. One example of a characteristic visualisation of the Petrarchan *Trionfi* exists in the Bentivoglio Chapel, San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna. To the left of the altar are two large frescoes executed by Lorenzo Costa, a *Triumph of Death* to the right and a *Triumph of Love* to the left. As in other Petrarchan *Trionfi*, the personifications of Death and Love sit passively on huge chariots: Death's is drawn by two black bulls and Love's by two elephants.

South Tyrol (Italy) (figure 2).[60] Although the church was constructed in the thirteenth century, the chapel was endowed by the Florentine Giovanni de Rossi (d. 1324).[61] Most of the extant decorative scheme was executed under the patronage of Giovanni's son, Nicolò de Rossi, and is dated by scholars c. 1329–35.[62]

A second early Triumph of Death in the Tyrol is found in the church of St Kathrein, a badly damaged remnant of the chapel from the now-demolished Castel Aufenstein at Matrei am Brenner in the North Tyrol (present-day Austria). Only fragments survive of what must have been an extensive series of murals in the castle's original chapel, but *sinopia* on the south wall displays the *Triumph of Death* (figure 3). Bolzano and Aufenstein are about 100 kilometres apart and are linked by the Brenner Pass, a major north–south crossing of the Alps.[63] Although early studies dated the Aufenstein underdrawings to the 1340s, it is now generally agreed that the paintings were more likely already in place by the time the chapel was consecrated in early 1330.[64]

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[60] Nicolò Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi della Capella di S. Giovanni a Bolzano", *Cultura Atesina* 3 (1949), 82–102; de Marchi, Andrea, ed., *Atlante Tr3cento: pittori Gotici a Bolzano* (Trent: Temi, 2003), cat. 3.7, 78–103.

[61] After moving to the Tyrol, Giovanni de Rossi was documented under many variant spellings of his name, including Bannino / Giovannino / Vannino and Botsch / Botzo / Bambocci / Bamberossi / die Rubei. For clarity, I use de Rossi to refer to the family throughout this thesis. See: Robert Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz: Vierter Teil 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler, 1908), 348, 356; Rasmo, "Gli affreschi", 92; Andrea de Marchi, "Il momento sperimentale. La prima diffusione del giottismo", in Andrea de Marchi, Tiziana Franco and Silvia Spada Pintarelli, eds., *Tr3cento: pittori gotici a Bolzano: catalogo*, (Trent: TEMI, 2000), 47.

[62] Nicolò was also called Boccio or Boccione. See: Rasmo, "Gli affreschi", 92; Nicolò Rasmo, *Storia dell'arte nell'alto Adige* (Bolzano: Studio Bibliografico Adige, 1980), 74; de Marchi, "Illusionismo nordico e spazialità giottesca a Bolzano. L'interferenza di due culture in un case esemplare", in de Marchi et al., eds., 19; Waltraud Kofler Engl, "Il Gotico lineare", ibid., 30–31.

[63] The Tyrol is a historical region that is now divided into administrative zones across northern Italy and southern Austria. The County of Tyrol emerged in the twelfth century and was dissolved after World War I. See David Kaplan, "Conflict and compromise among borderland identities in northern Italy", *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 91, no. 1 (2000). During the fourteenth century, the Brenner Pass was in high use as the only alpine crossing suitable for wagons transporting bulky goods, see: Carola Metzner-Nebelsick et al., "Transalpine mobility and trade since the Mesolithic", in Gisela Grupe, Andrea Grigat and George C. McGlynn, eds., *Across the Alps in prehistory: isotopic mapping of the Brenner Passage by bioarchaeology* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017); Joseph F. Patrouch, "Brenner Pass", in Robert E. Bjork, ed., *The Oxford dictionary of the Middle Ages*, (Online: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[64] Josef Weingartner, "Die frühgotische Malerei Deutschtirols", *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Institutes* 10 (1916), 20; Nicolò Rasmo, *Affreschi medioevali atesini* (Florence: Electa, 1972), 137; de Marchi, "Illusionismo nordico e spazialità giottesca a Bolzano." 18; Waltraud Kofler Engl, "Il gotico

Until a date more precise than the current consensus of the 1330s is established for the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, it is impossible to specify just which of these three surviving versions in Tuscany and the Tyrol represents the earliest example. Thus far, all that can be said for certain is that three closely similar versions of the Triumph of Death appeared in diverse geographic locations in the same decade, namely the 1330s. While fixing exact dates to any of the images will probably prove elusive (though historical data might favour Aufenstein as the earliest, if its association with the 1330 consecration is accepted), the near-contemporaneous appearance of this dramatic new rendition of the macabre in multiple sites widely separated across, and indeed beyond, the Italian peninsula is highly suggestive. One resolution to the dilemma is to propose the existence of an earlier, now-lost exemplar. Strikingly, a possible predecessor for the iconography of the Triumph is even to hand: the *Allegory of death* created by Tuscan notary and poet Francesco da Barberino (1264–1348).[65] Three versions of this *Allegory* are known: in his illustrated book of hours the *Officiolum* (completed c. 1304–9), in his allegorical poem the *Documenti d'amore* (completed c. 1315), and on the pediment of the tomb of Bishop Antonio d'Orso (sculpted by Tino di Camaino after da Barberino's design as executor of d'Orso's will, and completed c. 1321).[66] In the *Allegory of death*, Mors fires arrows into a large crowd surrounding it (figure 13, figure 14, figure 15).

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lineare", ibid., 30. Execution coincident with or prior to the consecration is also more plausible in light of the castle's unsettled history after 1334, when Count Conrad III (Konrad von Aufenstein) died without heirs. Over the next five years the castle was twice besieged and passed through multiple owners before being sold in 1349 to the Katzenstein family, after which it fell into disrepair. Such troubled times were hardly propitious for the commissioning of an elaborate fresco cycle. For this later history see: Paul Molajoni, "Burg Aufenstein und St. Kathrein", *Tiroler Heimatblaetter* 16, no. 11/12 (1938); and Georg Clam Martinic, *Österreichisches Burgenlexikon: burgen und ruinen, ansitze, schlösser und palais* (Linz, Austria: Landesverlag, 1992), 382.

[65] Da Barberino is suggested as a possible origin for aspects of the Triumph of Death by Jordan, "The iconography of death", 126–34.

[66] For a discussion on all of da Barberino's personifications, see: Shelley MacLaren, "'*Or guarda tu … desta donna la forma*': Francesco da Barberino's poetic and pictorial invention" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2007); for da Barberino's *Officiolum*, see: Kay Sutton, "The lost 'Officiolum' of Francesco da Barberino rediscovered", *The Burlington Magazine* 147, no. 1224 (2005); for the *Documenti d'amore*, see: Catherine Harding, "Speaking in pictures: reading, memory and interpretation in Francesco da Barberino's advice to women in his *Reggimento e costumi di donna*", *RACAR: revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 36, no. 1 (2011); for the d'Orso tomb, see: Giovanni Freni, "From terrific death to the angels' care: the program of the tomb of Antonio d'Orso and Francesco da Barberino" *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 36 (2009).

These personifications of Death committing a massacre, created within thirty years of the earliest surviving images of the Triumph, could have been influential in the development of the theme. Da Barberino's designs were certainly known in the Tyrol, as evidenced by the frescoes in the *Camera d'Amore* (1350s) in the Castle of Sabbionara d'Avio, which are indebted to the illuminations in his *Documenti d'amore*.[67] Yet, as I will discuss in detail throughout this thesis, da Barberino's designs are not sufficient as the sole archetype of the Triumph because many of the standard components of the theme do not appear in any version of his *Allegory of death*. Nonetheless, the reach of da Barberino's influence and the presence of the Florentine de Rossi family in Bolzano are evidence of active communications between Tuscany and the Tyrol. If no new exemplar or missing link is discovered, it may be that the earliest designs of the Triumph of Death—found some 600 kilometres apart—are the results of a vibrant artistic exchange along a major trading route connecting Italy to northern Europe.

The Triumph of Death imagery proved influential, and rapidly spread in the vicinity of the Pisan and Tyrolean examples. In Tuscany, the Pisan fresco was quickly followed by a Sienese panel painting known under the modern title of the *Allegory of Redemption*, painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (figure 4, c. 1338).[68] The panel is unique in the Triumph of Death corpus because it is the only known fourteenth-century version that is not a fresco, and because of its presentation of the iconography. In the *Allegory*, Lorenzetti inserts the personification of Death into established Christian narratives, refiguring Genesis as the birth of Death, the Crucifixion as the Triumph of Death, and the Last Judgement as Death's defeat. While the provenance of the *Allegory* remains contested, current scholarship suggests that it most likely belonged

[67] Anne Dunlop, *Painted palaces: the rise of secular art in early Renaissance Italy* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 133–37.

[68] For an overview of the most recent state of state of scholarship on this panel, see: Marco M. Mascolo, "L'Allegoria della Redenzione", in Alessandro Bagnoli, Roberto Bartalini and Max Seidel, eds., *Ambrogio Lorenzetti*, (Siena: Silvana, 2018), 290–97.

to a Sienese lay confraternity, the Compagnia dei Disciplinati, who displayed the panel in their meeting room.[69]

Around the middle of the century, two more versions of the Triumph of Death were created in central Italy. One is found above the Scala Santa in the Benedictine Monastery, Sacro Speco, Subiaco, Lazio, (figure 5). Because the community in and around the monastery had been devastated by the 1348 plague, and the buildings had been badly damaged by a series of earthquakes over 1348 and 1349, many art historians had dated this *Triumph* to the 1360s, when major reconstruction work is known to have occurred.[70] However, a more rigorous analysis of the entire Subiaco complex in the 1990s by art historian Serena Romano showed convincingly that reconstruction activities were undertaken in the 1340s, when the monastery was experiencing a period of wealth.[71] Romano's stylistic analysis of the frescoes corroborates the 1340s as a likely period for the works.[72]

The remaining extant examples date from the second half of the fourteenth century, beginning with the nearly destroyed version originally in the nave of Santa Croce, Florence (figure 6); now detached and displayed in the refectory. Created

[69] Maria Corsi, "Una nota di inventario per una provenienza da recuperare: l'Allegoria della Redenzione di Ambrogio Lorenzetti", *Iconographica: studies in the history of images* XII (2013), 69; Mascolo, "L'Allegoria della Redenzione", 290; Andrew H. Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art, 1260–1610: ritual and experience* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 95–97. Other suggestions for the provenance have included as a study for a larger work, as proposed by Alessio Monciatti, Chiara Frugoni and Maria Monica Donato, *Pietro e Ambrogio Lorenzetti*, Monografie d'Arte (Florence: Le Lettere, 2002), 261 n75. However, this is improbable as no other comparable studies have been found. Others have identified it as the predella for the *Purification of the Virgin*, 1342, by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, see: Elizabeth H. Beatson, Norman E. Muller and Judith B. Steinhoff, "The St. Victor altarpiece in Siena Cathedral: a reconstruction", *The Art Bulletin* 68, no. 4 (1986), 621, n67; Diana Norman, *Siena and the Virgin: art and politics in a late medieval city state* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 73–74. Yet the measurements of the panel and the altarpiece do not align.

[70] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1637 n134; Paolo d'Achille, *Parole: al muro e in scena. L'Italiano esposto e rappresentato*, (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2012), 49; Luciano Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte: chiesa di S. Francesco, Lucignano, Arezzo", in C. Forte, ed., *Il Trionfo della Morte e le Danze Macabre* (Clusone: Atti del VI Convegno Internazionale, 1997), 148.

[71] Serena Romano, *Eclissi di Roma: pittura murale a Roma e nel Lazio da Bonifacio VIII a Martino V (1295–1431)* (Rome: Àrgos, 1992), 347–49.

[72] Ibid., 347–49; D'Achille, *Parole: al muro e in scena*, 48.

by Florentine artist Orcagna, the fresco has been dated to c. 1345.[73] Unfortunately, the *Triumph* and any surrounding images were almost totally obliterated in the 1560s when Vasari installed large altarpieces directly on top of them.[74] The remaining fragments of this *Triumph* and the adjoining scenes of the *Last Judgement* and *Hell* suggest that the whole cycle was a close copy of the decorative scheme at Pisa.

Similarly, renovations have severely damaged the version of the Triumph found in the chapel of St Kathrein at Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, South Tyrol (figure 7, 1366). Mostly reduced to *sinopia*, this version of the Triumph has the distinction of being commissioned by the same patron as the St John chapel in Bolzano, Nicolò de Rossi. Inclusion of the *Triumph* in the decorative scheme at Cornedo was a part of a fresco cycle designed to assert legal ownership of the castle. Only 5 kilometres from the centre of Bolzano, and the St John chapel, Castel Cornedo belonged to the Velser family until the marriage of Nicolò de Rossi to Kathrein Velser in 1366.[75] After the marriage, Kathrein's widowed mother passed the *gericht* of the castle to de Rossi, who made it his main residence.[76] Art historian Louis Jordan has convincingly proposed that the St Kathrein chapel was constructed and dedicated for the wedding of Velser and de Rossi.[77]

Two final, little-studied versions survive from the end of the century. In Tuscany, a fresco in the nave of San Francesco, Lucignano, Val di Chiana (figure 8) was originally attributed to Bartolo di Fredi (b. 1330–still active 1401) but has more recently been recognised as the work of an unidentified Sienese painter.[78] Based on its style,

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[73] Miklòs Boskovits, "Orcagna in 1357—and in other times", *Burlington Magazine* 113, no. 818 (1971), 244; Gert Kreytenberg, *Orcagna, Andrea di Cione: ein universeller Künstler der Gotik in Florenz* (Mainz, Germany: P. von Zabern, 2000) 39–61.

[74] Richard Offner and Kalara Steinweg, *A critical and historical corpus of Florentine painting*, section 4, vol. 1: Andrea di Cione (Orcagna) (New York: Institute of Fine Arts New York University, 1962), 43.

[75] Louis Jordan, "The chapel of St. Kathrein at Castle Karneid: iconography and patronage of a fourteenth century Südtirolean fresco cycle", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 51, no. 4 (1988), 496–97.

[76] Ibid., 506.

[77] Indeed, Jordan's analysis of the decorative scheme of the chapel shows that it largely relates to the marriage of Kathrein and Nicolò: there are scenes depicting the marriage of Mary and Joseph, scenes from the life of St Kathrein, and some evidence of scenes from the life of St Nicholas, see: Ibid., 506–7.

[78] Attribution to di Fredi has been rejected in both recent monographs on the artist. See: Patricia Harpring, *The Sienese Trecento painter Bartolo di Fredi* (London: Cranbury, 1993), 160. Harpring refers to Raimond van Marle, *The development of the Italian schools of painting*, vol. II (Springer Dordrecht,

the fresco can be dated to the late fourteenth century.[79] The second late-century Triumph is on the external south wall of Santa Maria del Conforto in Merano, South Tyrol (figure 9). The fresco is dated to the 1380s, when repairs and renovations were undertaken on the church.[80] These were the outcome of a bad flood in 1372, when the nearby Adige River burst its banks and seriously damaged the original frescoes (the floodwaters were so high that the altars were ruined).[81] Indeed, the pictorial field next to the *Triumph of Death* represents saints Elmo and Nicholas, both patrons against floods. Their inclusion, as well as the distinctive clothing worn by figures in the *Triumph* (discussed in chapter three of this thesis), supports the dating.[82] Because of Merano's proximity to Bolzano—about 30 kilometres—as well as the characterisation of Death and those it hunts (to be discussed below), it is highly likely that this *Triumph* is based on the St John chapel version (echoing the relationship between the Santa Croce copy of the Pisan image).

With this catalogue of the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death it is possible to now apply the questions put to the Pisan example to the entire *oeuvre*. Firstly, we can see that any causal relationship between the plague and the creation of the Triumph of Death iconography is definitively disproven, because the majority of the nine extant images are dated to before the 1348 pestilence. Indeed, the iconography of the Triumph is substantially stable across the whole of the fourteenth-century and images created after the Black Death show no meaningful differences to those painted beforehand. More interesting is how the key role of local Dominicans in shaping the layout and imagery of the cycle inside the Pisan Camposanto is replicated elsewhere.[83] Notably, almost all the fourteenth-century images of the Triumph of Death were created under the auspices of either the Dominican or Franciscan orders. The St John

1924), 505. The fresco is not listed in Gaudenz Freuler, *Bartolo di Fredi Cini: ein Beitrag zur sienesischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Disentis, Switzerland: Desertina, 1994).

[79] Marle, *The development of the Italian schools of painting*, 505; Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 41 fig 21.

[80] Rasmo, *Storia dell'arte*, 48.

[81] Nicolò Rasmo, "La chiesa di Santa Maria del Conforto a Maia Bassa: note preliminari sui restauri in corso", *Cultura Atesina* 19 (1965), 28.

[82] Ibid., 34.

[83] Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 12; Cannon, *Religious poverty, visual riches*, 193–4, 272–3.

chapel fresco, which appears in the Dominican church in Bolzano, is distinguished by the scholarly references in the many scrolls depicted. Almost all quote the Bible, and one cites a Dominican antiphon.[84] It is therefore likely that the friars were involved in the choice of texts and the design of the program. In Florence, the local Franciscans commissioned copies of the Pisan fresco cycle for the nave of their church, Santa Croce. Later in the century, another Tuscan Franciscan convent followed suit, ordering a smaller version of the Triumph for the nave wall of their church in Lucignano.

The prestige and influence of the mendicant orders may perhaps also explain the single Benedictine commission among this corpus, in the monastery at Subiaco. According to historian Lester Little, by the fourteenth century the Benedictines were making a concerted effort to imitate the success of the Franciscans.[85] Serena Romano has demonstrated that the earlier frescoes in the Subiaco complex, executed around 1280 by the Roman painter Consolo, were based on the cycle in the upper church at Assisi.[86] In this context, the Benedictines' adoption of the striking Triumph of Death iconography—vigorously promoted by the Dominicans and Franciscans—is perhaps not surprising. Meanwhile, the confraternity that likely commissioned Lorenzetti's *Allegory* included an unusual number of mendicants as members: a tenuous influence to be sure, but not improbable.[87]

Like Pisa, all of these representations of the Triumph of Death were accessible to the laity, and most were presented in spaces used for funereal or mortuary purposes. The frescoes in Pisa, Subiaco, and Merano all appear above or on the route to cemeteries. The entire decorative scheme of the St John chapel, including the *Triumph*, articulates its endowment as a funerary chapel. Other images of the Triumph appeared in spaces that supported the instruction of the laity in salvation history:

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[84] Discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

[85] Lester K. Little, "Imitatio Francisci: the influence of Francis of Assisi on late medieval religious life", in John V. Fleming, Michael Cusato, and Guy Geltner, eds., *The medieval Franciscans, defenders and critics of Franciscan life: essays in honor of John V. Fleming* (Leiden, Brill, 2009), 205.

[86] Romano, *Eclissi di Roma*, 127–33.

[87] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 89–97.

those in Aufenstein and Cornedo are in the chapels of their respective castles, the Lorenzetti panel was likely displayed in a confraternity meeting room, while the Santa Croce and Lucignano examples appeared in the naves of mendicant churches. The consistent placement of images of the Triumph in such settings strongly suggests that the didactic and penitential rhetoric of the Triumph was carefully targeted to an envisaged audience of laity rather than clergy. It is the relationship between the commissioners of the Triumph of Death and their intended audiences that forms the basis of my interpretation of this iconography.

The structure of this thesis reflects my interest in examining the Triumph of Death from a whole-century perspective. The organisation of the material in this thesis is thus modelled on the motifs of the Triumph of Death iconography itself. Each chapter concentrates on one constituent element of the Triumph in turn, allowing room for every extant version to be brought under analysis equally, and avoiding the overemphasis on the achievements of Tuscan art that colours too much Trecento scholarship.[88] This chapter design is also crafted in response to the lack of linear developments within the Triumph imagery over the course of the fourteenth century. As we shall see, some visual elements are marked by an impressive continuity across all extant versions, while others present surprising innovations. The stability of the Triumph of Death imagery risks rendering either a monument-by-monument or strictly chronological approach repetitive and redundant, while also obfuscating clear discussion about the irregular visual links between the different iterations.

The consistency of the Triumph never flattens into homogeneity and each example of the imagery presents unique and individualised aspects. I seek to privilege the most interesting questions of meaning and intent behind each of the characteristic elements of the Triumph. By dedicating each chapter to one key motif in turn, I can subject common expressions of each element to more detailed scrutiny while still accounting for notable divergences and regional variations. This thesis thus develops a

[88] A critique against an overly narrow focus on Tuscan art is found in Hayden B. J. Maginnis, *Painting in the age of Giotto: a historical reevaluation* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 192–205.

wholistic understanding of what and how the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death was intended to communicate, and to whom, without losing the rich detail of individual examples. Because the macabre relies on shocking depictions of death to deliver its message, chapter one critically investigates the personifications of Death and chapter two considers the pile of corpses beneath Death. Chapters three and four consider how the living figures that frame the central scene of Death and the corpses—and are either ignored or targeted by Death—served the salvific didacticism of their mendicant authors. In so doing, this thesis asks how the intersection of mendicant influence and mercantile wealth shaped the production of an iconography that would come to dominate the expression of the macabre in fourteenth-century Italy.

Chapter one

Corpus
Death personified

All macabre images rely on provocative depictions of death to create an emotional response in their viewers. This response is used to drive home Christian teachings on the inevitability and universality of death. By the late Middle Ages, visual images were crucial devotional tools designed to emotionally connect beholders with the exemplary deaths of the saints and the salvific death of Jesus.[1] The macabre, however, generally used the deaths of ordinary people to deliver its message.[2] Thus, in the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, the corpses are either anonymous figures in burial shrouds, or, rarely, figures of secular and ecclesiastical authority (kings and popes) who are nonetheless not especially different from the living who encounter them. While each version of the Triumph includes a large pile of dead bodies, to be discussed in chapter two, the emotional valence of the imagery is heightened because Death itself is anthropomorphised, often larger than life-size, and is armed with weapons and aggressively pursues its next victims.[3] This chapter considers how this dramatic and threatening personification of Death advanced the visual impact and didactic messages of the Triumph.

While Death is one of the most discussed components of the Triumph of Death, no sustained and systematic analysis of the figure has yet been undertaken. Most scholarship that addresses the personification of Death in the Triumph deals with the figure at a relatively superficial level, tending to describe rather than analyse its appearance, attributes, and actions. The most in-depth discussion remains Louis

[1] For the crucial role of images in fostering late medieval devotion in Italy, see, for example: Holly Flora, *The devout belief of the imagination: the Paris* Meditationes Vitae Christi *and female Franciscan spirituality in Trecento Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 83.

[2] Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 23.

[3] Carletti et al., "Transition between life and afterlife", 89.

Jordan's 1980 doctoral dissertation on the development of the iconography of personified Death in Western medieval art from the ancient world, which culminates with the Triumph.[4] Although still a valuable resource, Jordan's study is now over forty years old and is overdue for re-examination. Furthermore, Jordan restricted his study to works of art created before 1350, and thus several surviving representations of the Triumph of Death are absent from his survey. A key finding of Jordan's research is that in the early fourteenth century, representations of Death undergo a dramatic change. Earlier representations characterised Death as the defeated foe of Christ or of a personification of Life.[5] However, by the early fourteenth century, Death is frequently shown as an independent, active, and violent force. Jordan's arguments were reiterated in Karl Guthke's cultural history on the gender of Death from the Middle Ages to the postmodern period.[6] In both studies, the Triumph of Death is just one iconography among many discussed, so it is not surprising to find that both authors fail to account for why Death in the Triumph took on this newly belligerent stance.

As demonstrated by Chiara Frugoni and Lina Bolzoni, the Pisan Triumph of Death operates as a multimedia sermon executed under the oversight of the local Dominican friars.[7] The mendicants had developed a more effective means of proselytisation via public preaching in the vernacular, deploying carefully designed rhetorical techniques to make their messages both accessible and memorable.[8] As a painted sermon, the rhetorical effectiveness of the Triumph rests on the figure of Death because it is Death's speech, appearance, attributes, and actions that set the stakes and drive the narrative of the Triumph, not just in Pisa, but in all examples of the theme. Thus, to account for the purpose and popularity of the Triumph of Death as a didactic tool, it is crucial to start by understanding the figure of Death.

[4] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 122–56.

[5] Ibid., 157–8.

[6] Guthke, *The gender of death*, 40–61.

[7] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1576; Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 11–40; Cannon, *Religious poverty, visual riches*, 348.

[8] Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 20–26.

Jordan identified Francesco da Barberino's (1264–1348) *Allegory of death* images as an important predecessor for the Triumph because both versions of Death are shown armed and surrounded by many potential and actual victims. Yet Mors is an idiosyncratic creation with four faces (of which only three are visible) four arms holding two bows, a furry body, and clawed feet, standing atop a snarling dragon (figure 13, figure 14, figure 15). Mors's monstruous body matches its terrifying ability to see everywhere and kill everyone.[9] Although in the Triumph Death's body is similarly designed to communicate its power and its purpose, it ultimately shares little resemblance to da Barberino's Mors.[10] Despite being the central protagonist of the Triumph, Death finds no consistent physical form in the fourteenth century, testifying to the remarkable iconographic adaptability of this representational theme. This chapter is thus structured thematically, considering how the differing forms of Death nonetheless communicate a univocal refutation of human worldliness.

I begin with two of the earliest versions of the Triumph, those in Pisa and in Lorenzetti's panel, in both of which Death is shown to be the calamitous consequence of human sin. In the Pisan Camposanto, Death is represented as an old, demonic woman whose attack is carefully directed as she flies on taloned bat wings towards her targets (figure 16, c. 1330–35). The link between death and women finds its origins in biblical stories coupling the advent of death with Eve's transgression, as in Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 25:33: 'From the woman came the beginning of sin, and by her we all die.' Although there are only two female figures of Death in fourteenth-century representations of the Triumph—the second is in Lucignano, to be discussed later in this chapter—they follow a long Christian visual tradition linking women to death.[11] Jordan identifies the oldest existing representation of a female Death in the illustration of the Apocalypse in the *Berlin Beatus* (figure 19, 1100).[12] In the thirteenth century, three more examples of a female apocalyptic Death astride a horse appeared in France:

[9] Ibid., 128.

[10] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 126–134.

[11] Guthke, *The gender of Death*, 60–75.

[12] Beatus of Liébana, *Commentary on the Apocalypse (Berlin Beatus),* MS theol. lat. fol. 561 (1100). Held at the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, folio 47 recto; Jordan, "The iconography of death", 69.

relief sculptures on the west façade of Notre-Dame, Paris (figure 20, c. 1210), at Amiens (figure 21, 1220s), and in Reims (figure 22, 1260). The nudity of all three French sculptures of Death allows the figures' breasts to be exposed, emphasising their female sex and creating a link with the sin of Eve.[13]

The same theme is expressed in the thirteenth-century representations showing the serpent from the Garden of Eden with a woman's head and sometimes with breasts.[14] In all of these images, and in Pisa, Death's femininity reminds viewers of human sin. St Augustine's influential interpretation of original sin located its cause in Eve's pride and a desire to put herself above God.[15] Eve's transgression catalyses the death of the soul, because her sin of pride has come between her soul and God.[16] The body of the sinner, now liberated from the guidance of the righteous soul, faces the consequences of pride and is subjugated by the dictates of the flesh, namely, concupiscence and lust.[17] Indeed, lust is a major theme in the *Triumph of Death* at Pisa, as well as in the other frescoes in the cycle.[18] Although I will analyse Death's victims in a later chapter, two figures underscore the relationship between the sin of lust and the female body of Death.

Among the ten people that Death pursues in the Pisan fresco, two are particularly and unluckily marked by *putti* (nude winged figures). The *putti* hold inverted torches above a courting couple in the garden scene to signal their deaths

[13] Guthke, *The gender of Death*, 61.

[14] Henry Kraus, "Eve and Mary: conflicting images of medieval woman", in *Feminism and art history: questioning the litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Routledge, 1982), 80; Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 43.

[15] Jill Bradley, *'You shall surely not die' (2 Vols.): the concepts of sin and death as expressed in the manuscript art of northwestern Europe, c. 800–1200* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 171.

[16] Mary M. Keys, "The City of God XIII–XIV: being-toward-life, being-toward-death", in *Pride, politics, and humility in Augustine's City of God*, ed. Mary M. Keys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 143–5.

[17] Biernoff, *Sight and embodiment in the Middle Ages*, 29–30.

[18] For the frescoes of Judgement and Hell see: Cordelia Warr, "The devil on my tail: clothing and visual culture in the Camposanto Last Judgment", in *Medieval clothing and textiles 11*, ed. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Boydell & Brewer, 2015). For the Thebaid see: Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1618.

(figure 23).[19] The couple sit together in close unchaperoned conversation on either side of a tree in an echo of countless representations of Adam and Eve beneath the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, strengthening the reading of Death as the consequences of Eve's misdeed. The man holds a falcon, a symbol of his virility, and the woman wears a highly-fashionable pink *cotta* (a type of dress) which exposes her *décolletage* (figure 24). On her lap she inserts her fingers into the mouth of a small white dog, *una cagnolina*, a slang word for female genitalia.[20] The pair are clear representations of lust, among other sins.[21]

By pursuing the couple, the Pisan Death fulfils a similar role to the birdlike Mors from the *Allegory of chastity* in Assisi (figure 25, c. 1315). There, Mors works with the angels to hound the elements of lust, personified as Immunditia (unchasteness), Ardor (a burning carnal passion), and Amor away from Chastity's castle.[22] The inclusion of a version of the *Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead* to the left of the fresco in Pisa immediately underscores Death's power in the *Triumph* (figure 17). Earlier Italian images of the Encounter, as in Santa Maria Assunta, Atri, Abruzzo (figure 10, 1275) and in Santa Margherita, Melfi, Potenza (figure 18, 1290) show the dead standing and talking with the living.[23] In Pisa, however, the three dead are passive. They are shown in progressive states of decomposition and are laid out in their tombs. Thus a deliberate contrast is created with the vital and threating figure of Death.

While the Pisan Death's feminine appearance was designed to evoke links with traditional views of woman as especially culpable for the Fall and for Death's entry into the world, her representation is quite different to the youth and eroticised nudity

[19] Carletti and Polacci, "Transition between life and afterlife", 100. Downturned torches held by *erotes*, winged *putti*, were a funerary symbol in ancient Rome, see: Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman banquet: images of conviviality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 120.

[20] Paoletti and Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, 155.

[21] These figures are discussed at length in chapter three of this thesis.

[22] I was reminded of these figures by John Renner, "Giotto's wit revisited", in *Andrew Ladis Memorial Trecento Conference* (Online 2022). See also: Julian Gardner, *Giotto and his publics: three paradigms of patronage*, The Bernard Berenson Lectures on the Italian Renaissance (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 100.

[23] Ibid., 100; Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 29.

of the French sculptures and the bared chest of the feminised snake in thirteenth-century representations of the Garden. Instead, at Pisa Death is portrayed as an old woman, and as she flies towards her quarry, her long grey-and-white hair sails loose behind her, showing her wrinkled face and hollowed cheeks. She wears a full-length gown from which only her taloned feet were originally visible. The Pisan Death's appearance and flight has sometimes led historians to classify her as a witch.[24] Although witches are represented flying and with unbound hair, they do not start appearing in Italian art until the late fourteenth century at the earliest.[25] Further, images of witches were notable for the depiction of a grotesque nudity, quite at odds with the modest clothing shown in Pisa. Perhaps, instead, the Pisan representation of Death inspired the later visions of witches.

Pisan Death's unfastened hair and bare feet seem designed to create an association with demonic powers. In most cases, unbound hair was an indicator of a woman's youth and unmarried status. For example, the group of women found in the lower right corner of the *Road to salvation* fresco in the Spanish Chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence (c. 1366, Andrea Bonaiuti da Firenze) includes a young woman with loose long blonde hair wearing perhaps a coronet, an older woman with her hair bound up in a braid around her head, a matron with her hair covered by a hood, and a nun.[26] In comparison, Death's unbound hair in Pisa, as well as in Cornedo and Lucignano as discussed later in this chapter, connects her to depictions of demons whose own wild tresses signify their uncontrollable natures.[27] Demons with wild hair appear throughout the decorative scheme in both the nave of the Benedictine and

[24] Luciano Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte", 150; Scaramella et al., *Humana fragilitas*, 40.

[25] Patricia Simons, "The crone, the witch, and the library: the intersection of classical fantasy with Christian vice during the Italian Renaissance", in *Receptions of antiquity, constructions of gender in European art, 1300–1600*, ed. Marice Rose and Alison C. Poe, (Boston, United States: Brill, 2015), 265.

[26] White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, 563–66. For hairstyles as symbols of age and social rank in the fifteenth century, see: Evelyn Welch, "Art on the edge: hair and hands in Renaissance Italy", *Renaissance Studies* 23, no. 3 (2009), 246.

[27]Louise Marshall, "God's executioners: angels, devils and the plague in Giovanni Sercambi's illustrated Chronicle (1400)", in *Disaster, death and the emotions in the shadow of the Apocalypse, 1400–1700*, ed. Jennifer Spinks and Charles Zika (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 184. Wild hair is also linked to personifications of Ira, which I discuss in conjunction with the Lucignano *Triumph of Death* later in this chapter.

Cluniac Monastery of Vézelay Abbey, France, 1120–1150, and in the Cathedral of Saint Lazarus of Autun (figure 26, 1120–32).[28] Meanwhile, Death's bared feet show her long taloned toenails, and her improbably long and pointed fingernails. Above Death fly a number of demons, many of which have taloned feet and hands, just like Death herself (figure 27). Both the demons and Death fly on bat wings, although Death's are particularly vicious in that each wing bone ends in an enormous claw, echoing the shape of her scythe. Such demonic attributes further cement Death as the horrific consequence of human sin.[29]

Death's clothing, loose hair, and age are in stark contrast to the pulchritude of the woman in pink. Where the woman's dress is made of luxuriant and eye-catching materials, Death's dress is a rough, plain cloth in humble colours.[30] Likewise, the woman's dress features decorative and impractical sleeves, while Death's sleeves have been pushed up to the elbows in a workaday manner to allow better movement for deploying her scythe. The woman's low-cut neckline displays her *décolletage*, while Death wears a white neckcloth to cover her chest. In the Pisan version, Death is the opposite of those she hunts, because she is the consequence and corrective for their sinful behaviour.

The themes embodied by the personification of Death in Pisa are repeated in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Redemption* (figure 4, c. 1338).[31] Yet the

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[28] In Vézelay, 1104–1215, see for example:
- nave north aisle, 8th pier, east face of the capital: *St Anthony tormented by demons* (figure 28)
- nave north aisle, 7th pier east face of the capital: *Temptation of St Benedict* (figure 29)
- south aisle, 6th pier: *Profane Music and the Demon of Impunity* (figure 30)

Luther Link, *The Devil: a mask without a face* (London: Reaktion, 1995), 49. In Autun, see for example the nave capital Suicide of Judas (figure 26, 1120–32), ibid., 64.

[29] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1583–4.

[30] Although some parts of Death were damaged by the bombing and fire in 1944, photographs taken before any restorations were made (such as those taken in 1945 and now held by the Frick Art Reference Library, in particular negative number S30006) show that Death's current appearance closely accords with its pre-restoration state. The use of crosshatching on Death's dress is very unusual and I have assumed that the crosshatching is meant to show that the fabric of Death's dress is of a rough and unrefined cloth. Yet, I have not been able to find another comparable example of this technique and such crosshatching does not appear in contemporaneous depictions of the poor. For a discussion of the clothing of the indigent and voluntary poor in the fourteenth century, please see chapter four of this thesis. For a full analysis of the expensive gowns worn by the wealthy women in the Pisan *Triumph*, please see chapter three of this thesis.

[31] Carletti and Polacci, "Transition between life and afterlife", 114.

personification of Death is markedly different in the panel painting. This can be explained by Death's differing roles in the two images. In Pisa, the *Triumph of Death* is a self-contained image wherein Death itself is the protagonist. In contrast, in Lorenzetti's panel the full scope of humanity's history is depicted in three acts: scenes from Genesis and the creation of Death, the *Crucifixion* and the *Triumph of Death*, and the *Last Judgement* and defeat of Death.[32] Within the panel, Death's role as the antagonist to Christ Himself is illustrated by its body.

While the Pisan *Triumph* alludes to Eve's transgression by gendering the figure of Death as female, in the *Allegory* the connection between death and sin is made explicit by the inclusion of some rarely depicted biblical scenes.[33] In the upper left corner is a sequence of three miniatures from chapter 3 of Genesis (figure 31).[34] We witness God prohibiting Adam and Eve from eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve succumbing to temptation, and finally their shame after the fall.[35] God's punishment swiftly comes to pass, as beneath Eden the sequence culminates in Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise. As the red angel drives them down a hillside with a flaming sword, Death itself appears before the group. Here Death is a dark skeletal wraith with clawed feet, a shadowy horror that contrasts with the bright colours of the angels and the pearlescent bodies of Adam and Eve. Although the figure of Death is unseen by Adam and Eve, who look back at the angel with a pleading glance, viewers of the panel know that the tragic results of human pride and disobedience has manifested.[36] Death has entered the world.

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[32] Marco M. Mascolo, "L'Allegoria della Redenzione", in *Ambrogio Lorenzetti*, ed. Alessandro Bagnoli, Roberto Bartalini, and Max Seidel (Siena: SilvanaEditoriale, 2018), 292.

[33] Ibid., 292.

[34] Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte", 153.

[35] Maria Corsi, "Una nota di inventario per una provenienza da recuperare: l'Allegoria della Redenzione di Ambrogio Lorenzetti", *Iconographica: studies in the history of images* XII (2013), 70.

[36] The red colour of the angel, and its two wings, are somewhat puzzling. In the Middle Ages the colour red signified the angelic order of the Seraphim who burn with the love of God, while blue signified the Cherubim. The red of the angel in this panel thus visually indicates that it is a Seraph. Yet Genesis 3:24 says: 'After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden *cherubim* and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life' (my emphasis). This is not a mistake on Lorenzetti's behalf as, in the Last Judgement scene on the other side of the panel, he correctly depicts the six wings that characterise the red Seraphim rather than the four wings that characterise the blue Cherubim. A 1425 fresco of the Expulsion by Masaccio also depicts the angel

Below the expulsion, in the bottom left corner of the panel, is a scene of Cain murdering Abel. The consequences of human sin are thus speedily demonstrated. This leitmotif occurs in conjunction with two other images of the Triumph. In Pisa, Cain and Abel were in the now-destroyed frame of the *Triumph of Death*.[37] A skeleton, Abel, held up a cartouche that read: 'Abel, the second to be born, the first to die'. His brother responded 'Cain, the first to be born, the first to murder'.[38] Cain and Abel also feature prominently in Castel Cornedo near to the *Triumph of Death*. On the east wall of the chapel is a triumphal arch framing the altar and the remains of the damaged apse.[39] Conspicuously displayed on the arch, Cain and Abel hold their offerings overhead, towards the missing apex.[40] On the viewer's left, Abel offers a lamb to the hand of God (figure 32, 1366). On the right, Cain offers a bushel of grain and is rebuffed (figure 33).[41] The brothers are thus depicted at the inception of their quarrel. A small dark-skinned demon clings to Cain's back, whispering in his ear. Soon Cain, like Eve, will succumb to the temptations of pride and disobey God. In all three instances, the reference to Cain and Abel suggests a persistent connection between the first sin and representations of Death in the Triumph.[42]

Returning to Lorenzetti's panel, I move to the central drama of the panel. In this unique visualisation, Lorenzetti's *Allegory* directly juxtaposes the black body of Death with the pearlescent body of the crucified Christ in the centre of the panel (figure 34). While the female Death in Pisa particularly references Eve's culpability in the Fall, in Lorenzetti's panel the contrast between the appearance of Death and of Christ expresses a broader spiritual battle between good and evil. Indeed, the Death of the *Allegory* is not attacking mere picnickers in a garden, but the Son of God himself.

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expelling Adam and Eve as red with only two wings. I have not found an explanation for Lorenzetti's choice in the *Allegory*. Meredith Jane Gill, *Angels and the order of heaven in medieval and Renaissance Italy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 27, 34, and 57.

[37] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1583–4.

[38] Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 29.

[39] The cliff face supporting the apse collapsed during the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Jordan, "The chapel of St. Kathrein", 481.

[40] Identified by ibid., 485.

[41] The origin of their offerings is Genesis 4:2–8.

[42] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1584.

In placing the figure of Death in opposition to Christ, Lorenzetti is drawing on a much older visual tradition that reimagined the Crucifixion as a moment of combat between Christ and Satan.[43] For example, the c. 820 illumination of Psalm 91:4–6 in the *Stuttgart psalter* shows a dark skinned, naked Satan–Mors with clawed feet and hands, armed with a long club, or spear, attacking a figure of Christ, who is protected within a mandorla (figure 35, c. 820).[44] Christ, pale-skinned and dressed in bright robes of blue and gold, opposes Death visually as well as spiritually. In Lorenzetti's panel, Death flies above the Crucifixion in apparent victory, and the club/spear has been replaced with the scythe that sweeps down to harvest Christ's life.

But this is, as contemporaneous viewers well knew, a pyrrhic victory. In the *Allegory*, Christ's blood flows down to the bodies below the cross, referencing the Eucharist and the life-giving power of his own body. Blood oozes thickly from the wounds in Christ's hands, dripping from his forearms and elbow. The wound on his side, in contrast, gushes forcefully. The bleeding of Christ belies the truth of his death, and his body is still filled with a life-giving power. The vital life force of Christ's blood combats the black and desiccated body of Death above him. Christ's blood evokes his agency: He is still actively the source of salvation for those around him. Several miracles attested to the ability of the Eucharist (that is, of Christ's body) to protect the

[43] This was a popular theme in the early Middle Ages, see: Kathleen M. Openshaw, "Weapons in the daily battle: images of the conquest of evil in the early medieval psalter", *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 1 (1993). In the *Tiberius psalter* (c. 1050) a winged and naked version of Mors drawn in dark ink appears beneath a haloed Vita, dressed in a long blue-and-red robe (figure 36). Vita's cross-nimbed halo clearly links it with Christ. British Library Cotton MS. Tiberius C.Vi, folio 6 verso. See: Jordan, "The iconography of death", 40; K. M. Openshaw, "The battle between Christ and Satan in the Tiberius psalter", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 52 (1989), 27. In the *Stammheim missal* (c. 1170), a dark-skinned Mors is positioned opposite a pale Vita, both in portrait medallions at either end of the horizontal bar of the cross (figure 37). *Stammheim missal*, Ms. 64 (97.MG.21), folio 86 recto. J. Paul Getty Museum (https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/107V3T). See: Bradley, '*You shall surely not die*', 517–816.

[44] *Stuttgart psalter*, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart Cod.bibl. fol. 23, (c. 820), folio 107 recto. (https://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/index.php?id=6&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=8680&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=1). This illumination illustrates Psalm 91:4–6: 'He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. / Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; / Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday'. There is some debate about the meaning of the image: some scholars see the figure as Satan or the devil, while other consider it to be a personification of Death. The latter seems more likely because of the presence of the six serpents, Death's sons, which are also shown in other manuscripts. See: Jordan, "The iconography of death", 37.

dead from rotting.[45] While dying on the cross, Christ is still filled with eternal life, which he can distribute to those who receive his blood. In the *Allegory*, the blood flows down to the pile of dead bodies below the Cross, cleansing and absolving them of sin.[46] Indeed, multiple fourteenth-century accounts of the Eucharist describe its taste as of Christ's blood.[47]

The promise of Christ's sacrificial death comes to pass in the third part of Lorenzetti's *Allegory*. Here an image of the *Last Judgement* shows Christ triumphantly returning in glory at the end of time, appearing in the air over his cross with the other instruments of the Passion, which are held aloft by angels. Whereas Death hovered over Christ's Crucifixion, Death is entirely absent in Christ's return, and it is Christ who appears above the cross, supplanting Death.[48] God's promise to the faithful has likewise come to pass as the elect, dressed in white gowns, ascend to heaven.

In both the Lorenzetti and the Pisan images of the Triumph, Death flies above the fictive landscape on large wings. The figures of Death depicted in Lorenzetti's *Allegory* and the Pisan *Triumph* are the only two extant fourteenth-century images of the Triumph of Death in which Death itself is flying.[49] Indeed, they are the earliest known representations anywhere of an aerial figure of Death.[50] Although birds inhabit the expansive landscape settings of both these Tuscan works, none of the birds are in flight. Instead, only supernatural agents—Death, angels, and, in Pisa, demons—are

[45] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The resurrection of the body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*, Lectures on the History of Religions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 221.

[46] Kornelia Imesch, "The altar of the Holy Cross and the ideal of Adam's progeny: 'ut paradysiace loca possdeat regionis'", in *Death and dying in the Middle Ages*, eds. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick, Studies in the Humanities (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 78.

[47] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful blood: theology and practice in late medieval northern Germany and beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 4.

[48] Scaramella identifies the shadowy figure pushing the figures of the damned into the hell-mouth as Death, but I do not agree. The figure near the hell-mouth is stocky, with thick limbs and a broad chest. I think this may have been an angel, like the armed angels pushing figures into hell in Pisa, or a muscular demon, such as those found in Padua. Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 36.

[49] The Pisan composition was the model for Orcagna's frescoes in Santa Croce, so it is likely this also featured a flying Death, but this section of the cycle has not survived.

[50] As noted by Jordan, "The iconography of death", 143.

shown flying. Flight itself has become symbolic of Death's power to strike anywhere with great speed.

In both images, Death's wings are differentiated from the angels'. In Lorenzetti's panel, angels appear in the panel's first and last sections. A red angel-with red wings chases Adam and Eve from the garden (figure 31), and then there are six angels around the Judging Christ in blue and red (figure 38). Two golden angels appear below Christ's mandorla, displaying the instruments of the Passion. And a golden angel appears at ground level, guiding the saved upwards towards heaven. All of these angels have feathered wings, brightly coloured to match their robes. The careful colour differentiation indicates a range of angelic orders.[51] Of course, Death's wings are black like its body, aligning it with demons and setting it as the opposite of the heavenly host. Yet, while Death is fearful and terrible, it is a divinely willed punishment of sinful humanity, as made clear by the Genesis portion of the panel. Death's wings are the same shape as the wings of the golden angels that hold the cross, suggesting that just as angels are emissaries from God, so too is Death ultimately part of God's plan.

In Pisa, we likewise find a range of angels in flight, although here they are collecting somatised souls from the dead and sometimes fighting with the flying demons. The angels have pale skin and neat brunette hair, but their feathered wings are in a panoply of pinks, reds, blues, and greens, as well as variegated combinations of these colours (figure 39). Each colour is emphasised by the angel's gown, as they are dressed to match their wings. In contrast, the demons appear mostly in variations of brown, ranging to green and a dark red (figure 27). Death's dull *morello* gown and dun-coloured wings group her visually with the demonic. However, the *putti* that assist Death by marking out her next victims have variegated feathered wings, visually echoing the angels' wings (figure 23). Indeed, the angels and demons are not enemies, but colleagues working as interlocutors between God and humanity.[52] Just as in the Lorenzetti panel, Death's actions ultimately have divine sanction.

[51] David Keck, *Angels and angelology in the Middle Ages* (Cary, United States: Oxford University Press, 1998), 66.

[52] Gill, *Angels and the order of heaven*, 16.

The figures of Death in the Tyrolean versions of the Triumph at Castel Aufenstein and in the St John chapel diverge significantly from the Tuscan representations, even though all were produced in the 1330s (figure 40, 1330s; figure 2, 1329–1335). In both images, Death is a rotting corpse riding a horse. For fourteenth-century audiences Death as a horseman would certainly have evoked the iconic Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse:

> And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:7–8).

The Four Horsemen were one of the most prominent themes represented in medieval apocalyptic art.[53] Furthermore, Revelation 6 was the basis for most visual depictions of embodied Death.[54] In some readings of the text of Revelation, Death is the epitome of all the previous horsemen and represents a culmination of their destruction.[55] Like Lorenzetti's panel, these two Tyrolean frescoes use biblical sources to bring forward specific interpretations of the figure of Death within the Triumph. Apocalyptic Death is an immutable Christian fact that will not be countered. That the figure of Death in the Aufenstein *sinopia* and the frescoed Death in the St John chapel are both riding suggests a universal finality to their actions.

Nearly the full decoration of the St John chapel remains intact, and we can see that the *Triumph* shares the same bay as the cycle of St John the Evangelist (figure 41, 1329–1335). The final fresco in the second register of the Evangelist's cycle depicts John's vision of God at the end of time in Revelation 1:12–16, with the seven

[53] Richard K. Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated: the visual exegesis of Revelation in medieval illustrated manuscripts* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), 2.

[54] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 21.

[55] Ibid., 19.

candlesticks around him and seven stars above his right hand (figure 42).[56] Since the *Triumph of Death* is the next image in the Evangelist's cycle, it was clearly meant to be linked with St John's vision of the end of the world. Strikingly, in the St John chapel *Triumph*, Death's horse is also a corpse (figure 43). The horse has exposed ribs, a bony rump, and a collapsed face. Likely Death's steed in Aufenstein would have been similarly emaciated. Death rides a dead horse, expressed through the clear depiction of the animals' bones, in both the Paris and Amiens apocalyptic sculptures. In all examples, the rotting bodies of Death and its horse show what will happen to Death's victims.

Death as the fourth rider in the apocalyptic cavalcade appears in numerous depictions of Revelation. However, in these representations Death normally accompanies the first three riders, with all four riders represented in human form and fully dressed.[57] Death's singularity and nudity in Aufenstein and the St John chapel is a notable divergence from this visual tradition. I have found only a few other versions of a nude Death riding a horse, the earliest of which are from the twelfth century: in the *Haimo Apocalypse* (figure 44, c. 1150) and in the *Liber floridus* (figure 45, c. 1090–1120).[58] In both of these illustrated manuscripts the figure of Death is depicted in demonic bestial form, while the other riders are shown as fully dressed humans. Death in the *Haimo Apocalypse* is separated from the other riders, appearing one line below,

[56] 'And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; / And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. / His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; / And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. / And he had in his right hand seven stars … '

[57] Suzanne Lewis, *Reading images: narrative discourse and reception in the thirteenth-century illuminated Apocalypse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 78.

[58] Death in the *Liber Floridus* (c. 1090–1120) is a hairy beast with a long beard. Lambert of Saint Omer, *Liber Floridus*, Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel Cod. Guelf. 1 Gud. lat., folio 11 verso. (https://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=1-gud-lat&lang=en). Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 90; Hanns Swarzenski, "Comments on the figural illustrations", in *Liber floridus colloquium: papers read at the international meeting* (University Library Ghent: Story-Scientia, 1967). In Haimo of Auxerre's *Commentary on Revelation* (early twelfth century) Death is shown as a black-skinned demon who rides backwards on a horse that has a serpent tail. *Commentary on Revelation* (*Haimo Apocalypse*), Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford MS. Bodl. 352, folio 6 verso. (https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/3585of24-d386-4012-ac6d-eae474685da2/surfaces/10fa5b6d-c91f-4ba1-8b45-ea0b48db1ed5/). Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 83–88.

underscoring the contrast between Death and the rest of the cavalcade.[59] Richard Emmerson notes that this distinction serves to illuminate Haimo's interpretation of the figure of Death as the Devil.[60] The nudity of these two examples serves to display their bestial bodies, which evokes a specific interpretation of Death as a demonic and evil figure. Similarly, the French relief sculptures of Death on a horse discussed earlier in this chapter use nudity to display Death's female body and create a link with the sin of Eve.

In Aufenstein and the St John chapel, Death's body is particularly emphasised. Unlike the Death in Lorenzetti's panel, the Death in these two Tyrolean images is the largest single figure in the composition and is placed close to the centre of the fresco. There is no attempt to hide Death's rotting body as it is not clothed like the figure in Pisa. A nude, corpse-like Death astride a horse appears for the first time in the border of the crossing vaults in San Francesco, Assisi (figure 46, c. 1305).[61] One of the apocalyptic Four Horsemen depicted on the ribbed vaulting, this Death rides bareback astride a galloping horse. The Assisi Death has a number of remarkable similarities to the Aufenstein and St John chapel figures. They all depict a human body in a late stage of decay: the flesh has receded, the body appears dry, and any remaining skin clings close to the skeleton. In Assisi, Death raises its right hand, gripping a now-missing weapon, and exposing its ribcage, where each bone is visible. Death's face is only a bare skull. In Aufenstein, the fresco is terribly damaged, but the remaining *sinopia* outlines an emaciated figure whose bony knee joint and pelvis give the impression of taut skin stretched over the skeleton (figure 40, 1330s).

Like the Aufenstein figure, the St John chapel Death appears emaciated, its ribcage visible through its skin and its knee and hip joints bony. While in Aufenstein only the *sinopia* remains, the St John chapel retains almost the whole of the *intonaco*, and Death's body there is an unpleasant grey-brown colour, evocative of rotting flesh. The dark colour of the body and receding flesh is a reasonably accurate representation

[59] Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 86.

[60] Ibid., 88.

[61] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 110.

of a late stage of decomposition, or of a natural mummification of the corpse.[62] Death's rotting body reflects the processes of death; thus, the figures in Aufenstein and the St John chapel are both the cause and effect of their own power.[63] The gruesome sight of Death's body forcefully reminds the viewer of the transitory nature of flesh and the inevitability of death itself.[64]

Representing death by using a human corpse has its earliest precedents in the skeletons found in Egyptian and Roman funerary contexts.[65] In Middle Ages Italy, more immediate precedents are found in the tradition of representing the corpse of Adam as a skull beneath the crucifix, or in images of the resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany.[66] Unlike the skeleton of Adam, who is shown as passive and long dead, depictions of the arisen Lazarus show him standing upright, still wrapped in his burial shroud, before an amazed crowd, some of whom cover their faces in revulsion at the smell of a four-day-old corpse (figure 47, 1305; figure 48, 1309–11).[67] Closer to the depiction of Death itself as a corpse are the animated figures in the earlier macabre iconography of the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead. As discussed earlier in this chapter, in images of this widely known theme the dead stand and talk with the living (figure 10, 1275; figure 18, 1290). Although Lazarus and the Three Dead cause shock and revulsion in those who encounter them, they nonetheless are passive when compared to the awful powers of the Aufenstein and the St John chapel figures.

Two mechanisms evoke Death's power: its steed and its wings. The large horses ridden by Death in the frescoes in Assisi, Aufenstein, and the St John chapel suggest Death's speed and power. In the fresco in Assisi, the large charger gallops, whipping

[62]Diane Lyn Cockle and Lynne S. Bell, "The environmental variables that impact human decomposition in terrestrially exposed contexts within Canada", *Science & Justice* 57, no. 2 (2017), 109. For mummification see ibid., 111. The Australian Museum website has photos and a video of the decomposition of a piglet: "Stages of decay", https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/science/stages-of-decomposition/. Accessed 19 March 2020.

[63] Binski, *Medieval death*, 134.

[64] Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 23.

[65] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 91.

[66] Guthke, *The gender of death*, 40–41; Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 24.

[67] John 11:39: 'Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days'.

back its mane and tail, its jockey Death leaning close over the horse's neck, urging it forward. In the images of the Triumph in Aufenstein and the St John chapel, the horses are captured in the moment of take-off, with forelegs raised and a streaming mane, demonstrating their speed. Their hind legs press forcefully down, powering their jump over a pile of dead bodies. Death's steed is thus a baneful warning of the inevitability of both death and the coming Apocalypse.

While Death in the Aufenstein and the St John chapel versions of the Triumph are astride a horse, they retain the large wings that characterise Death in the Lorenzetti and Pisan images. The versions of Death in the Aufenstein and the St John chapel images of the Triumph echo earlier depictions of winged Death astride a horse, such as the apocalyptic horsemen in the twelfth-century *Liber floridus* (figure 45) and in the border of the crossing vaults in Assisi (figure 46).[68] In the Aufenstein *sinopia*, the lacuna of lost plaster has unfortunately destroyed a large part of Death's upper body, but the tips of its enormous feathered wings are visible on the edge of the remaining *sinopia* (figure 49). I am confident that these are the remains of wings, because of close similarities with the St John chapel version of Death. The image of Death in the St John chapel also has feathered wings, associating it with the winged angels that appear in that version of the Triumph. Thus, Death and the angels appear broadly as the same class of being (figure 50). As in the versions in Pisa and Lorenzetti's panel, Death's wings bespeak its role as a divinely sanctioned emissary.

However, while in the St John chapel fresco both the angels and Death have variegated wings, the angels' wings are pure white, or ombre blends of white-to-red or white-to-gold, while Death's wings fade white-to-black. The progression from angelic white to demonic black evokes the fall of the rebel angels, and might have been designed to suggest evil and Satan. Another possible interpretation is that the white represents day and the black night, signifying that Death hunts the living ceaselessly. The symbolism may have had its roots in the popular story of Barlaam and Josaphat. In this story a man chased by death falls into a pit representing the world, but clings to

[68] *Liber Floridus* Cod. Guelf. 1 Gud. Lat., folio 11 verso. Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 90; Swarzenski, "Comments on the figural illustrations".

a shrub (life). The roots of the shrub (life) are being eaten by two small animals, one white, symbolising day, and one black, symbolising night.[69] The story was first written in Latin in the twelfth century, and was revived in Italy during the thirteenth century.[70] The colour of Death's wings evokes its ambivalent role as a mediator between life and death.

I turn now to the *Triumph of Death* in the private family chapel of St Kathrein, Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, because it was commissioned by the same patron as the St John chapel fresco, the de Rossi family (figure 7, 1366). This is the only example we have of two images of the *Triumph of Death* made for the same patrons. Yet while the St John chapel depicts Death as a rotting corpse, the version of Death depicted in Cornedo takes on demonic attributes. While much of the fresco's detail has been lost owing to the damage of several renovations and a layer of limewash, we can see that Death is largely humanoid, with a disproportionately enormous head, probably unruly hair and beard, and a large nose.[71] Death's body and wings are black, much like the figure in Lorenzetti's *Allegory*. In contrast to the thin, angular Death of the Lorenzetti panel, the Cornedo Death evokes an animalistic brute (figure 51).

Its horrific body associates this version of Death with demons and expresses their violent, brutal, and unrestrained nature. Demons with disproportionately large, almost spherical heads appear throughout the decorative scheme in both the nave of the Benedictine and Cluniac monastery of Vézelay Abbey, France, 1120–50, and in the Cathedral of Saint Lazarus of Autun, 1120–46.[72] Like these figures, the unruly hair of the Cornedo Death evokes terrifying and violent uncontrolled rage as in

[69] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1628.

[70] Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in iconology: humanistic themes in the art of the Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 1967), 80; Simona Cohen, "The early Renaissance personification of time and changing concepts of temporality", *Renaissance Studies* 14, no. 3 (2000), 323.

[71] Accounts of the damage to the chapel are found in: Jordan, "Chapel of St. Kathrein", 482; Carlo Trentini, *Castel Cornedo* (Vienna/Bolzano: Folio Editore, 2009), 28.

[72] In Vézelay, see for example: *St Anthony tormented by demons* (figure 28), *Temptation of St Benedict* (figure 29), *Profane music and the demon of impunity* (figure 30). See: Link, *The devil: a mask without a face*, 49. In Autun, see for example the nave capital *Suicide of Judas* (figure 26, 1120–32), ibid., 64.

personifications of Ira.[73] Wild hair was associated with Satan, who is described in 1 Peter 5:8 as 'a roaring lion, [who] walketh about, seeking whom he may devour'. The biblical image of Satan as lion influenced the appearance of his minions: one fourteenth-century sermon describes a dying man visited by demons with lion-like manes of hair.[74] Later Dante, in Canto 34, described Satan has having a 'black snout' and 'shaggy flanks'. [75] Thus, the images of Death in Cornedo reminds humanity of sin and incites guilt alongside fear. Just as the two earlier Tyrolean images of mounted Death evoked the Apocalypse, so too does the Cornedo Death. Comparable bestial apocalyptic riders appear in the *Liber floridus*, in which Death sports a thick beard and extravagant curled and bushy hair (figure 45), and in the *Manchester Rylands Beatus*, where Death has a big nose and spiked hair (figure 52, c. 1175).[76] The Cornedo *Triumph* uses terrifying imagery to urge beholders to consider their coming deaths and to reform.

Although the de Rossi family commissioned both Bolzano versions of the Triumph of Death, it is interesting that Death is shown as a bestial demon in the Cornedo chapel, rather than repeating the rotted corpse of the St John chapel (and nearby Aufenstein). The two Bolzano images of the Triumph are otherwise very similar, because in both, Death rides astride a horse, while firing ahead with bow and arrows and passively dragging the scythe. I suggest that the differences can be explained in the light of the differing purposes of each chapel. The St John chapel was dedicated as a funerary chapel by Nicolò de Rossi for his father Giovanni, who was

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[73] Jennifer O'Reilly, *Studies in the iconography of the virtues and vices in the Middle Ages*, Outstanding Theses in the Fine Arts from British Universities (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), 51.

[74] Gary D. Schmidt, *The iconography of the mouth of hell: eighth-century Britain to the fifteenth century* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1995), 37.

[75] Dante Alighieri, "Inferno 34", Columbia University Libraries, https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-34/.

[76] The *Manchester Rylands Beatus*, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester MS lat. 8, folio 103 verso, (c. 1175). (https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/MS-LATIN-00008/1). In two further versions of the Beatus Apocalypse, Death is accompanied by a personification of Hell: a huge, black-winged creature with a large, curly beard, bushy hair, and a large nose (figure 53, 1047) and (figure 54, 1220). Beatus of Liébana, *Codex of Ferdinand I and Doña. Sancha* (*Facundus Beatus*), Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid Ms. Vit. 14.2 (Vitr/14/2), folio 135 recto, (1047). (https://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000051522). *Las Huelgas Apocalypse*, Morgan Library & Museum, New York MS M.429, folio 71 verso (1220). (https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/112348).

buried there in 1324.[77] Befitting its purpose, the decorative scheme of the St John chapel emphasises death. The vision of a rotting corpse in the *Triumph* expresses a bad death, which is contrasted with the good deaths of the saints, whose bodies are depicted in neighbouring cycles as whole and without decay.

In contrast, the Cornedo Chapel of St Kathrein was dedicated when Nicolò de Rossi married Kathrein Velser.[78] Death's appearance as a bestial demon with a large, hairy head may have been a reference to the popular motif of the wild man. The figure of the wild man was imagined as a violent and lustful character with untamed hair covering his entire body, and acted as an antagonist to the ideal of the chivalrous knight.[79] A 1310–30 ivory *coffret* shows a knight rescuing a lady from the wild man (figure 55). From its earliest incarnation in Italy, a 1208 'great play about a certain wild man', the wild man was a popular character for shows.[80] Attendance and performances involving 'wild men' characters were particularly popular for wedding celebrations.[81] Perhaps the most famous example was at the 1393 wedding of Charles VI of France. There, *charivari* dancers performing as wild men, dressed in long tatter coats to represent hairy bodies, famously and tragically burned to death in their costumes in what came to be known as the *Bal des ardents*.[82]

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[77] Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi", 92; Jordan, "Chapel of St. Kathrein", 497; de Marchi, "Il momento sperimentale", 70 n13; Enrica Cozzi, "3.7.2 Storie della Vergine, martirio di San Bartolomeo, Madonna tra San Domenico e San Pietro martire, storie di San Giovanni Battista, Cristo di dolore e donatori, santi, storie di San Nicolò, storie di San Giovanni Evangelista, Trionfo Della Morte, sacrificio di Isacco." in *Atlante Tr3cento: pittori Gotici a Bolzano*, ed. Andrea de Marchi (Trento: Temi editrice, 2001), 83–102.

[78] As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, although Velser's family owned Castel Cornedo, her mother was widowed and after the marriage of her daughter Kathrein to de Rossi, Nicolò obtained the *gericht* of the castle and made it his main residence. Jordan posits that the St Kathrein chapel was constructed to support de Rossi's legal claim to the castle. Much of the decorative scheme of the chapel, consisting of cycles depicting the marriage of Mary and Joseph and the life of St Kathrein, supports Jordan's thesis. Jordan, "Chapel of St. Kathrein", 496–7.

[79] Richard Bernheimer, *Wild men in the Middle Ages: a study in art, sentiment, and demonology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 122.

[80] 'magnus Ludus de quodam homine salvatico'. Patricia Lurati, "'To dust the pelisse': the erotic side of fur in Italian Renaissance art", *Renaissance Studies* 31, no. 2 (2017), 250.

[81] Ibid., 253.

[82] Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 96.

The Tyrol had a long tradition of the wild man. He appears in the poem *Der seele rat*, from the same region as Cornedo, written c. 1300 by friar Heinrich von Burgus:

> Sweet penitence, thou shalt tame me; I have been wild … I have been wild and not read many prayers.[83]

Two late-thirteenth-century Tyrolean epics, *Der Wunderer* and *Virginal* / *Dietrichs erste Ausfahrt*, contrast a gentle woman with a wild man pursuer.[84] In *Virginal*, the wild man is called Orkise, and, like all representations of the wild man, was associated with death.[85] In the Tyrol, it was traditional for a 'wild horde' to descend on wedding celebrations; the leader, or *Schimmelreiter*, would arrive astride a horse.[86] It is quite possible that such a performance occurred at the wedding of de Rossi and Kathrein. The Cornedo fresco combines the iconography of bestial demons and the tradition of the *Triumph* with local Tyrolean wild-man nuptial traditions. Thus, the unique depiction of Death as a wild man expresses de Rossi's new status as a Tyrolean noble.

Despite the innovation shown in Cornedo, the final Tyrolean Triumph returned to picturing Death as a rotting corpse, reprising the themes found in Aufenstein and the St John chapel. This fourth Tyrolean Triumph appears on the outside wall of Santa Maria del Conforto, Merano Maia Bassa (figure 9, 1380–90). Sadly, the body of Death in Merano is mostly missing owing to damage to the fresco.[87] The intact areas of the Merano *Triumph* show the rump of Death's horse and the lateral flank of Death's torso. Merano and Bolzano are geographically close to each other, so the authors of the Merano *Triumph* would likely have had access to at least the St John chapel fresco. Rasmo argues that the Merano *Triumph* was a direct copy of the figure in the St John chapel, although executed by a less skilful hand.[88] Indeed, they share many characteristics. Like the St John chapel Death, the Merano figure has a belt

[83] Bernheimer, *Wild men in the Middle Ages*, 137.

[84] Ibid., 130.

[85] Ibid., 130; Roger Boase, "The 'penitents of love' and the wild man in the storm: a passage by the night of la Tour-Landry", *The Modern Language Review* 84, no. 4 (1989), 824–5.

[86] Bernheimer, *Wild men in the Middle Ages*, 168.

[87] Giorgio Recla, *Santa Maria del Conforto: Merano–Maia Bassa* (Padova: ADLE Edizioni, 1998), 28.

[88] Rasmo, "La chiesa di Santa Maria del Conforto a Maia Bassa", 34.

around its waist holding the scythe, and fires arrows (Death's weapons are discussed at the end of this chapter). Finally, in both images Death's horse is a light gold-cream, recalling the description of Death's mount in Revelation 6: 'I looked, and behold a pale horse'.[89]

The Merano Death's flesh is not the sickly dark grey-brown of the St John chapel version but a bright brick red, which matches its reddish mahogany hair. Although unusual, red discoloration has been observed in decomposing human bodies.[90] Like the Aufenstein, St John chapel, and Subiaco corpse figures, the Merano Death seems to have been almost entirely naked so that its rotting body would have been displayed clearly. Unlike the other Tyrolean Deaths, the Merano figure does not have wings but instead sports a long green cloak which streams over Death's right shoulder as it gallops forward. In my survey of images of personified Death, the colour green does not appear with enough frequency to suggest a strong association.[91] However, the Merano Death does bear a particularly strong resemblance to the figure of Death found in the nave of the abbey church at Pomposa (figure 56, 1350). The Pomposa figure is a man with flowing red hair wearing a fitted red gown, with a green cloak dramatically flying over his right shoulder.[92] The Pomposa Death has bent his right arm to lean on the rump of his golden horse, echoing the posture and steed of the Merano figure. Unfortunately, owing to the damage to the fresco, little more can

[89] The light golden cream of Death's horses in the Tyrolean images of the Triumph is the same as the colour that dominates the herds of the native mountain horses of the area, of which the Haflinger breed is now the main descendant.

[90] Cockle and Bell, "The environmental variables that impact human decomposition", 111.

[91] I found the following examples of Death with the colour green; all are representations of Death as the fourth rider of the Apocalypse.
Astride a green horse:
- 800–824 Bibliothèque municipale de Valenciennes *Apocalypse of Valenciennes*, MS 99, folio 13 recto,.
- c. 1150 *Commentary on Revelation* (*Haimo Apocalypse*), MS. Bodl. 352, folio 6 verso.

With green wings:
- 1090–1120 *Liber floridus*, Cod. Guelf. 1 Gud. lat., folio 11 verso.

Wearing green:
- 1300–25 British Library The *Queen Mary Apocalypse*, Royal MS 19 B XV, folio 10 verso.
- 1325–50 Spencer Collection, New York Public Library The *Spencer Apocalypse*, Spencer Coll. MS. 57, folio 21 recto. (https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/bible-apocalypse-with-gloss#/?tab=about)

[92] John White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, Third ed., Pelican History of Art (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1993), 432–3.

be said about the Merano Death other than that it continues the themes found in the Aufenstein and St John chapel versions.

Returning to central Italy, and some fifty years earlier, we find the strikingly innovative version of Death in the Triumph above the Scala Santa in the Benedictine Monastery, Sacro Speco, Subiaco, Lazio, (figure 5, 1340s). The Subiaco *Triumph* is the only fourteenth-century version that depicts Death as a skeleton: the figure is bare bones and not a desiccated corpse. Since Roman times, skeletons and human bones had signified the dead and they continued to be a standard icon of death into the medieval period.[93] From the thirteenth century on, walking and speaking skeletons appear in European illustrations of the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead. In two of the surviving thirteenth-century frescoes of the Encounter, those in Atri (figure 10) and in Melfi (figure 18), discussed earlier in this chapter, the dead are animated skeletons who appear to be speaking to the living. In Atri, this effect is achieved by tilting one skeleton's face towards the living. In Melfi, the front skeleton holds up its hands as if beseeching the falconer opposite it, while the second skeleton puts a hand on the first skeleton's shoulder in apparent support. Similarly active ghouls are found in the *Encounter* in Montefiascone as the skeletal dead climb out of their tomb while the living recoil in horror and alarm (figure 57, 1320).[94]

A version of the *Encounter* faces the Subiaco *Triumph of Death* (figure 58, 1340s). In the Subiaco *Encounter*, as in the Pisan example, the three dead are shown at different stages of decomposition: first dead, then maggoty and rotting, and finally as a bare skeleton.[95] As in the Pisan version, the three Subiaco dead do nothing: they do not rise from the grave, speak, or move. The Death of the *Triumph* is thus designed to be very clearly different to the three dead. The rampaging figure of personified Death is threatening because it is in active pursuit of its victims. In contrast to both the animated skeletons in the thirteenth-century images of the Encounter, and to the

[93] Dunbabin, *The Roman banquet: images of conviviality*, 133; Maureen Carroll, *Spirits of the dead: Roman funerary commemoration in western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 54; Guthke, *The gender of death*, 43.

[94] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 104.

[95] The Australian Museum, "Stages of decay".

dead skeleton in the Subiaco *Encounter*, the figure of Death in the *Triumph* retains its eyes. The disturbing fixed gaze of Death reaffirms that it is not killing randomly; its attack is targeted.

In Lucignano, the targeted nature of Death's attack in the *Triumph* is similarly confirmed by her appearance (figure 8, 1380s). While Lucignano repeats the formula established in the Tyrol of Death on horseback and armed with a scythe and bow and arrows, here she once again appears as a woman. Lucignano is the first instance of a female Death in representations of the Triumph since Pisa. In the Pisan and Lucignano versions of the Triumph, Death is an old woman, evidenced by long grey–white hair and her wrinkled face. In the Lucignano fresco, an old woman dressed modestly in a dark gown and a white wimple, likely a nun or a widow, stands behind Death in the crowd of people pleading to die.[96] This figure is visually connected to Death through her garments and through her posture. Both the widow and Death have their left arm extended, the widow in a gesture of pleading, and Death to hold her bow. The Lucignano Death specifically evokes the poverty of an older woman. In the Middle Ages, the poverty caused by old age was painful and frightening.[97] This fear is embodied by Death in Lucignano and confirmed by her quarry: two wealthy young men who are in every way her opposite. Death as an old and poor woman embodies everything that they have to lose.

However, while the Pisan version of Death and the pleading woman in Lucignano are dressed in decent widow's clothes, in the Lucignano *Triumph*, Death is dressed in rags (figure 59). She wears a tattered black gown which is ripped at the cuffs and rides up at her ankles, exposing her bare feet and long toenails. She does not have the modest neckerchief of the Pisan figure but instead her gown is open at the neck, revealing a bony chest. Indeed, the version of Death in Lucignano is not even fitted out with the sword belt of the St John figure; instead she has made do with a white rag tied around her waist.

[96] Margaret Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, (London: The British Library, 2007) 112.

[97] Bronisław Geremek, *Mendicanti e miserabili nell'Europa moderna (1350–1600)*, trans. Paolo Procaccioli, Quadrante Laterza (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 1989), 93.

Images of personified Ira (wrath) may have influenced the appearance of the Lucignano Death. Early images of this vice draw on ideas of the classical Furies and show Ira with wild hair, ripped clothing and a bared chest.[98] Ira bares her chest after being thwarted in her attack on Patientia, when her uncontrollable anger turns inwards and she commits suicide.[99] In Giotto's personification of Ira in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, 1305–13, Ira simply rends her gown in her fury as she throws back her head in rage, with her unbound hair hanging behind her (figure 60).[100] Here Ira represents unreasoning anger that results in a loss of self-control: physically, intellectually, and spiritually.[101] The personification of Death in Lucignano with streaming long, grey hair, exposed chest, and a damaged gown bears a marked resemblance to those precedents. Death is armed and aggressive, a destructive, wrathful force unleashed by human sin.

Death had been imagined as a horsewoman before the Triumph of Death iconography, as previously discussed. The three thirteenth-century sculptures of Death as an apocalyptic horsewoman, in Paris (figure 20), Amiens (figure 21), and Reims (figure 22), also show active and aggressive figures. In those images, Death disembowels her victims as her steed rears: both rider and horse are primed to fight. Similarly, the figure of Death in Lucignano rides astride a galloping horse, facing her victims. Her stallion has pinned back its ears, lowered its head, and bared its teeth in a show of aggression: it lunges forward in an effort to bite Death's next victim. Far from the contemporary ideal of the chivalrous rider as a model of self-control, with the horse representing base passions bridled, Death's aggressive horse expresses uncontrolled rage and violence, underscoring the threat of Death herself.[102]

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[98] Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the virtues and vices in mediaeval art: from early Christian times to the thirteenth century* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc, 1964), 6.

[99] Lester K. Little, "Anger in monastic curses", in *Anger's past*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 10.

[100] White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, 311.

[101] James H. Stubblebine, *Giotto: the Arena Chapel frescoes*, Norton Critical Studies in Art History (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc, 1969), 89.

[102] Patrice Régnier and Vanina Deneux-Le Barh, "Équitation et violence(s) du Moyen Âge au XXIe siècle: évolution et situation des pratiques équestres en France du point de vue du processus de civilisation", *STAPS* 2, no. 128 (2020), 85.

In the Lucignano *Triumph*, Christ emerges from a cloud in the sky behind and above Death. He points towards Death with both hands, saying:

> Oh you who read, be careful of the blows of this one who killed me, I am her Lord.[103]

The use of the vernacular in Lucignano serves the same purpose as the vernacular texts in the Pisan *Triumph*, described by Bolzoni as a 'formidable instrument of mass communication' and characteristic of fourteenth-century mendicant preaching and writing.[104] The appearance of Christ within the frame of the *Triumph* itself is very unusual. As Frugoni points out, it echoes the opposition of Death and Christ in Lorenzetti's panel.[105] Christ's words explain the meaning of the *Triumph*. Viewers should fear the inevitability of death and follow the teachings of Christ, through whom they can reach eternal life. Christ undercuts the power of death and is almost mocking. The implied sparring between Christ and Death echoes the representations of Ira and Patiencia as armed foes. Indeed, Patiencia was a virtue explicitly associated with Christ's death on the cross.[106] Some personifications of Patiencia show her wearing symbols of Christ's Passion: a rose, a lamb, or a finch.[107] Thus, just as wrath can only be overcome by patience, so too can the evil of Death only be alleviated by the sanctity of Christ.

Having considered Death's appearance and steed in the fourteenth-century Triumph, I now turn to its weaponry. In every extant fourteenth-century Triumph of Death, Death carries a scythe. The scythe had been a symbol of Death since 1100 and was iconographically inherited from Saturn, Roman god of death and agriculture.[108] Although Death in the Triumph wields the scythe as its weapon against humanity,

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[103] 'O tu che leggi pon chura ai cholpi di chostei ch'ocise me che so signior di lei'. Translation from Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 40–1; transcription from Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1630.

[104] Bolzoni, *The web of images*. 18.

[105] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1630.

[106] Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the virtues and vices in mediaeval art*, 38.

[107] O'Reilly, *Iconography of the virtues and vices*, 65–6.

[108] On the scythe as a symbol of Death, see: Panofsky, *Studies in iconology*, 77. On Saturn, see: Cohen, "The early Renaissance personification of time", 305.

scythes were never formally used as weapons and were exclusively agricultural tools.[109] Thus, in all images of the Triumph, Death's scythe also operates allegorically. The scythe particularly recalls Revelation 14:15–16, which describes Christ reaping the earth with a sickle:

> Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe … And he that sat on the cloud thrust his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

This passage was pictured in numerous manuscripts, including the *Morgan Anglo-French Apocalypse* (c. 1255–60) on folio 13v (figure 61) and in the Harley *Bible moralisée* (c. 1325–50) on folio 139r (figure 62).[110] In both images, Christ has bent over to grip the stems with his left hand while he cuts them with the sickle in his right hand. His actions are clearly drawn from close observation of the real world because Christ's posture is the same as in the illustration of peasants harvesting wheat in the late fourteenth-century *Tacuinum sanitatis* on folio 54r (figure 63).[111] A depiction of Christ holding a scythe was visualised by Giotto in a 1320 fresco in Santa Croce, Florence, where Christ appears seated on a cloud in the sky above St John the Evangelist. Christ holds a scythe horizontally over his knees, with the tip of the blade pointing downwards. The ability of the blade to mow down whole fields of grain swiftly and thoroughly is turned to humankind, an appropriate metaphor for the power of Christ and of Death.

The Aufenstein *Triumph* is the only version of the Triumph that depicts a scythe being used correctly by Death, that is, in the manner of mowing grain or grasses. As I will argue throughout this thesis, Death does not kill indiscriminately like the figure of Mors in da Barberino's *Allegory of death*, nor does it kill universally. Instead, the

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[109] In 1396 the Perugian army was equipped with scythes, but only to harvest their enemies' grain and starve them. William P. Caferro, "Warfare and economy in Renaissance Italy, 1350–1450", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39, no. 2 (2008), 173.

[110] Morgan Library & Museum, New York *Morgan Anglo-French Apocalypse*, MS M.524, (1255–60). (https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/110814). Lewis, *Reading images*, 149–51; Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 118–9. British Library *Bible moralisée*, Harley 1527, (thirteenth century). Lewis, *Reading images*, 149–51; Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 100–102.

[111] 1380–99 Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Vienna *Tacuinum sanitatis*, Cod. Ser. N. 2644. (https://onb.digital/result/10020524).

Death of the Triumph moves with purpose towards its targets while ignoring others. This directionality forced the scythe's all-encompassing functionality to be adapted to fit the message of the Triumph. In the Aufenstein *Triumph*, the long wooden arm of the scythe, called the snath, is ergonomically fitted to Death's body, and Death correctly holds the grips low over its hips (figure 40, 1330s).[112] Death twists its body to the right, moving the scythe blade back to the start of a mowing stroke.[113] Four dead bodies are framed by the blade of Death's scythe, indicating that they will be reaped when Death swings the scythe forward (figure 64, 1330s). I suggest that the correct use of the scythe in the Aufenstein *Triumph* can be attributed to the fact that the figures hunted by Death are not within the frame of the *Triumph* itself and because they are spread over five pictorial fields on the adjoining wall. There is no way for Death to directly target any future victim. However, in all other versions of the Triumph, Death is notable for the specificity of its assault.

For instance, in the Pisa *Triumph*, Death flies over the pile of dead bodies without physically interacting with them (figure 16, c. 1330–35). She is focussed on her next targets who are clearly marked out by the downturned torches of the *putti*. Here Death does not hold the scythe in the way it is meant to be used: with the blade sweeping along the ground.[114] Instead, she brandishes it in the air as if it is an axe about to fall. While the heavy weight of the metal blade would make this posture impossible for a person to maintain, Death's supernatural power is substantiated by this visually compelling pose. The blade curves dramatically over Death and echoes the shape of her ribbed wings so that the scythe seems to be an extension of her awful power. Death's outstretched wings and flowing hair combine with her hold on the scythe to create a sense that Death is caught in the moment before her blow strikes her next victims. It is not the practical mechanics of the scythe familiar to fourteenth-century viewers that is expressed here, but the awesome and terrifying

[112] For the components of an Austrian scythe, see: Ian Miller, *The scything handbook: learn how to cut grass, mow meadows, and harvest grain with a scythe* (British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 2016), figure 1, 18. For a diagram of the basic neutral posture with a scythe, see ibid., figure 14, 24.

[113] For a diagram of a mowing stroke, see ibid. fig. 18., 26.

[114] Ibid., 22.

violence of Death, which can pick out even the young and beautiful in the prime of their lives.

Similarly, in Lorenzetti's panel Death does not interact with the dead bodies. At first, in the Genesis portion of the narrative, Death holds the scythe overhead like the figure in Pisa (figure 31, c. 1338). However, this is not because Death is about to strike. Adam, who is following Death down the hillside, leans a hoe on his shoulder. There is a visual pun here between the two figures and their agricultural tools. Both the scythe and the hoe are held at rest as Adam and Death enter the world to do their work: Adam to plant and Death to harvest. In the centre of the panel, however, Death's scythe swings downwards over the crucified Christ (figure 34). As in Pisa, Death's scythe does not come into contact with the dead bodies; instead it picks out its target with care.

In all other images of the fourteenth-century Triumph, Death carries both the scythe and a second weapon. The first example of this in is the St John chapel *Triumph*, in which Death is armed with the scythe and a bow and arrows (figure 43, 1329–35). In the Aufenstein *sinopia*, a demon just above and in front of Death's head wields a bow and arrows, firing ahead of Death (figure 65, 1330s). Given the other close similarities between these two images of the Triumph, this may have been one inspiration for the St John chapel archer. In the St John chapel *Triumph*, Death holds the bow with an extended left arm while its right arm is bent at the elbow. Death is pictured as actively in the midst of loosing an arrow. This action twists its chest towards the viewer, giving it a similar posture to the Death in the Aufenstein *Triumph*, and allowing its body to be better displayed. Between the fingers of Death's right hand appear thin strips of fabric, likely the finger tabs worn by archers to protect the hand from abrasion (figure 43).[115] This accurate and rare depiction of archery hand protection (I have not been able to find any other contemporaneous representations) bespeaks both a careful observation of material reality and a desire to ground the personification of Death in the lived experiences of the contemporary viewer.

[115] Charles E. Grayson, Mary French, and Michael J. O'Brien, *Traditional archery from six continents: the Charles E. Grayson collection* (Columbia, United States: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 8.

Bows like the one wielded by Death were common all over Europe and used by peasants for hunting or by archers during warfare.[116] Although the bow is conceptually linked with the scythe as a means of sustenance, the practical application of the two tools creates two quite different symbolic narratives. In the St John chapel *Triumph of Death*, the scythe is not wielded, but dragged. Death wears a sword belt through which the snath of the scythe is threaded.[117] Perhaps befitting its grim task, Death's belt is plain and the scythe is passively dragged behind Death and the horse. The blade of Death's scythe frames the faces of the dead piled below its horse. The scythe is thus less targeted than those wielded by Death in the Pisan and Lorenzetti versions of the Triumph. In the St John chapel *Triumph*, the scythe is more like a plough: thorough, mechanistic, and impersonal. Death, like its scythe, is ineluctable and universal.

In the *Allegory of death*, da Barberino's Mors fires arrows in multiple directions at once, showing that death is both ubiquitous and random (figure 13, figure 14, figure 15). In contrast, the Death found in the St John chapel *Triumph* fires arrows directly ahead as it gallops in the wake of the arrows' flight. The bow and arrows thus convey a sense of specificity: Death is depicted as a purposeful archer who singles out choice shots. As a weapon, bows and arrows could be astonishing implements of death. An experienced longbowman could fire twelve times a minute with deadly accuracy.[118] Death probably wields a composite bow, whose shorter length made it ideal for firing from horseback, and this would have been understood by contemporary viewers as a deadly weapon with unsurpassed speed and accuracy.[119] The terrifying potential of mounted archers to wreak havoc had been forcefully demonstrated by the incursion of the Mongols into Europe in the thirteenth century.[120] The invading Mongol forces

[116] Bert S. Hall, *Weapons and warfare in Renaissance Europe: gunpowder, technology, and tactics*, Studies in the History of Technology (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 18.

[117] Kristen Brooke Neuschel, *Living by the sword* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022), 101–102.

[118] Frank Tallett, *War and society in early–modern Europe, 1495–1715*, War in Context (London: Routledge, 1992), 23.

[119] Grayson, French, and O'Brien, *Traditional archery*, 217.

[120] Colleen Ho, "Thirteenth and fourteenth century European-Mongol relations", *History Compass* 10, no. 12 (2012), 950.

stoked fears about satanic agents of the Apocalypse.[121] An arrow's swift, silent flight and capacity to kill from a long distance made it an ideal metaphorical device to communicate sudden death and disaster.[122] Italian chronicler Jacobus de Voragine described the advent of plague in Rome 590 C.E. as a rain of arrows.[123] Arrows are attested as weapons of God in the Bible; Psalms 7:11–13 is one example:

> … God is angry with the wicked every day … he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death …

In the St John *Triumph* Death's arrows hit a city tower on the far right-hand side of the fresco. It is very unusual for Death to be shown firing at buildings. The falling tower brought down by Death's bolt resonates with the biblical descriptions of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven (Genesis 19:23–25) and the destruction of Babylon by earthquake at the end of time (Revelation 14:8). Death from collapsing buildings was a real and present threat to life for the viewers of the St John *Triumph*. In Italy, earthquakes are frequent. Emanuela Guidoboni's research suggests that a catastrophic seismic event has occurred on the Italian peninsula about every seven years for the last five centuries.[124] The contributors to the *Catalogue of strong earthquakes in Italy* have found records detailing forty-four seismic events in Italy during the fourteenth century alone.[125] Thus, Death's attack is terrifying in its multifaceted power.

The combination of the scythe with the bow and arrows successfully depicts Death's synchronous effects. The arrows will strike home before the arrival of the

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[121] Natalie E. Latteri, "Jewish apocalypticism: an historiography", in *A companion to the premodern apocalypse*, ed. Michael A. Ryan, Brill's Companions to the Christian tradition (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 92.

[122] Marshall, "God's executioners", 186.

[123] Joseph Polzer, "Aspects of the fourteenth-century iconography of death and the plague" (paper presented at The Black Death: the impact of the fourteenth-century plague: papers of the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, Binghamton, N.Y, 1982), 114.

[124] Emanuela Guidoboni, "When towns collapse: images of earthquakes, floods, and eruptions in Italy in the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries", in *Wounded cities: the representation of urban disasters in European art (14th–20th centuries)*, ed. Marco Folin and Monica Preti, Art and material culture in medieval and Renaissance Europe (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 34.

[125] E. Guidoboni et al., "Catalogue of strong earthquakes in Italy 461 B.C.-1997 and Mediterranean area 760 B.C.-1500", An advanced laboratory of historical seismology, http://storing.ingv.it/cfti/cfti4/#. Accessed 30 October 2020.

scythe, so although Death is eventually a universal experience, it may hit upon individuals at any time in the form of disease or disaster. Although the scythe drags across the corpses below its horse, in the St John chapel fresco, as in Pisa and Aufenstein, Death attacks only the figures of the worldly, while ignoring the two elderly people standing behind it, thus making the didactic narrative of the Triumph explicit. The combination of the actively aimed bow and arrows and the more or less passively dragged scythe proved to be a popular articulation of the Triumph of Death iconography. The same composition is repeated with little variation in the images of the Triumph in Cornedo (figure 51, 1366), Lucignano (figure 59, 1380s), and Merano (figure 66 1380–90). Damage to the Tyrolean images has obscured some of the details, however. The figure of Death in the Cornedo fresco has hooked the scythe almost casually over its left shoulder, so that it once again drags along the ground, reaping the corpses. Unfortunately, the installation of a vaulted ceiling in the sixteenth century irreparably damaged the section of the fresco that would have included the bow (figure 7).[126] However, the fallen knight on the far left of the image shows that Death was shooting arrows ahead of itself. Like the St John chapel Death, the Merano figure has a belt around its waist, from which descends a long wooden handle (figure 66). Without doubt this was the snath of the scythe, attached to Death's waist and dragged beneath its horse. Death's bent right elbow is reminiscent of the posture of the skeletal figure of Death in the Subiaco fresco (figure 67, 1340s), so perhaps the end of the snath was also held by Death's right hand. An alternative explanation for the bent right arm is that it may have been depicted just loosing the bow, as arrows are shown hitting the figures of the living in front of Death (figure 68).

Finally, in the *Triumph of Death* in the Benedictine monastery in Subiaco, the skeletal Death rides astride a pale horse, equipped with a saddle and stirrups, and wields not only the familiar scythe but also a sword (figure 5, 1340s). The scythe is in a similar position to that in the St John chapel, although in the Subiaco fresco Death does not use a sword belt. Instead, this Death anchors the scythe awkwardly by gripping the end of the snath with its left hand pressed against its pelvis. This unlikely

[126] Jordan, "Chapel of St. Kathrein", 481.

grip was possibly a compositional solution to occupy Death's left hand and arm without obscuring the attacking thrust of the sword with the right arm. As in versions of the Triumph where Death wields both scythe and bow, in Subiaco the *Triumph* seeks to express Death's power in two modes: the scythe will collect everyone in due course, while others may be cut down in unanticipated and violent ways.

The Subiaco *Triumph* thus takes on a martial attitude. In so doing, it evokes St Benedict's exhortation to his followers to take up 'arms of obedience' and 'fight' under Christ.[127] In Subiaco, the figure of Death is attacking two young hunters. Such figures regularly appeared in eremitical images to signify the imposition of the secular world into the seclusion of hermits' sanctuaries.[128] Thus Death's appearance might be interpreted as a monk's duty to fight off the temptation to stray from God's path. It also draws out associations with the fourth rider of the Apocalypse, while investing it with a new aggression. In Revelation 6:8, the Fourth Horseman is given the power 'to kill with sword'. Indeed, when Death is armed in illuminated manuscripts of the Apocalypse, it is usually with a sword.[129] In these images, Death often holds the sword upright in a passive display. One example is in the twelfth-century *Liber floridus*, in which Death rests the sword on its shoulder (figure 45).[130] In the c. 1234 version of the *Bible moralisée*, Harley 1527, Death holds a sword and a sickle, both upright (figure 69).[131] In contrast, in the French thirteenth-century relief sculptures of apocalyptic female Death already discussed, Death actively wields her sword to gruesome effect. On the west façade of Notre-Dame, Paris, Death holds a sword in each hand, while her disembowelled victim collapses behind her (figure 20, c. 1210).[132] Similarly, on the west façade of Notre-Dame Cathedral, Amiens, Death's sword is still lodged inside her victim (figure 21, 1220s). As she drags it up, the viscera fall loose of the corpse. Both

[127] Openshaw, "Weapons in the daily battle", 24.

[128] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art, 1260–1610*, 946.

[129] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 160.

[130] *Liber floridus*, Cod. Guelf. 1 Gud. Lat., folio 11 verso. Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 90; Swarzenski, "Comments on the figural illustrations."

[131] *Bible moralisée*, Harley 1527, folio 128 verso. Jordan, "The iconography of death", 160; Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 95.

[132] Paris, c. 1210, Notre Dame, west façade, Last Judgement portal, 2nd voussoir on right.

examples show particularly horrific and painful deaths, intimately dealt out at close quarters.[133]

In the fourteenth century, such explicit violence seems to abate. An ink drawing in the only extant illustrated version of Brunetto Latini's didactic poem *Il tesoretto* (Strozzi 146, c. 1310–1325) shows a clothed Death riding a horse while holding a sword so that the blade is horizontal over the horse's head (figure 70).[134] She gallops over a supine victim, but it doesn't seem likely that the sword itself inflicted any damage. Created in the same decade as the Subiaco *Triumph of Death*, a skeletal Death armed with a sword also appears in the *Biblia pauperum apocalypsis* (figure 71, 1340–50).[135] This manuscript was produced in a Benedictine abbey and is an illustrated version of the book of Revelation. As in the *Liber floridus*, Death in the *Biblia pauperum apocalypsis* rests its sword on its shoulder. The rest of the image is very different to the *Triumph* because Death rides a crowned lion and holds the tail of a dragon that is flying overhead.

In contrast, the Death in the Subiaco *Triumph* wields its sword with intent and accuracy to deliver a killing blow. Death's sword is probably an arming sword, the most common type of sword used by knights on horseback.[136] The pommel, hilt, and grip of Death's sword in the Subiaco fresco are very similar to other contemporaneous images of swords: see, for instance, the sword of Timor, a personification of fear, flying above the landscape in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of bad government*, in the Sala de' Nove, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena (figure 72, 1340s); or Death's sword in *Biblia pauperum apocalypsis* (figure 71); or the many swords wielded by knights on horseback

[133] Amiens, begun 1220, Amiens, west façade, central Last Judgement portal, voussoirs.

[134] Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana Brunetto Latini, *Il tesoretto*, Strozzi 146, folio 23 recto. Unfortunately, the artists who created the illustrations are unknown. Jordan, "The iconography of death", 88; Catherine Harding, "Visualizing Brunetto Latini's Tesoretto in Early Trecento Florence", *Word & image (London. 1985)* 19, no. 3 (2003), 242–3.

[135] Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Herzog Anna Amalia Bibliothek *Biblia pauperum apocalypsis* (*The Weimar Manuscript*), Cod. Fol. max. 4. Jordan, "The iconography of death", 116.

[136] James B. Tschen-Emmons, *Artifacts from medieval Europe* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2015), 31.

in various illuminated manuscripts, such as the *Grandes chroniques de France* (figure 73).[137]

Death's saddle and stirrups may have been closely related to its use of a sword. Medieval cavalry used a combination of stirrups and saddles featuring a rigid cantle (the raised backplate visible in the Subiaco fresco) to lock riders into place on the horse's back, allowing the weight and momentum of the animal and rider to be transferred into a powerful strike, delivered either by sword or lance.[138] Although the earliest surviving Italian treatise on the art of sword-fighting, *Il fior di battaglia* (*The flower of battle*), was written by famed swordsman and fencing master Fiore dei Liberi (c. 1350–1420) in the first decade of the fifteenth century, its observations and detailed pictorial program drew on fourteenth-century practices..[139] Surviving versions of the manuscript include depictions of mounted knights executing a range of offensive and defensive moves. In the earliest known manuscript, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library (c. 1410–20), the drawing on folio 7r shows the same offensive attack as that used by the Subiaco Death.[140] In *Il fior di battaglia*, this attack is shown as a close-contact killing blow, striking the head or neck of the opponent (figure 74).

The only known detailed technical equestrian skills manual from medieval Europe is the *Book of Horsemanship* (*Livro do Cavalgar*) written c. 1437–40 by Eduarte I of Portugal (1391–1438, reigned 1357–67).[141] In the text, Duarte (as he is now known) recommends that when a rider intends to deliver a blow from horseback, their

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[137] 1332–50 British Library *Grandes chroniques de France*, Royal MS 16 G VI, folio 4 verso.

[138] Andrew Ayton, "Arms, Armour, and Horses", in *Medieval warfare: a history*, ed. Maurice Keen, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 188.

[139] For Fiore and his text, see: Giorgio Ravegnani, "Liberi, Fiore de'", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 65 (Online: Instituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2005); and Ken Mondschein, "The Italian schools of fencing: art, science, and pedagogy", in *Late medieval and early modern fight books: transmission and tradition of martial arts in Europe (14th–17th centuries)*, ed. Daniel Jaquet, Karin Verelst, and Timothy Dawson (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 293.

[140] Fiore dei Liberi, *Il fior di battaglia*, MS M.383 (c. 1410–20). Held at the Morgan Library & Museum, New York, folio 7 recto. (https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/77302 ; see also https://www.themorgan.org/collection/renaissance-fighting-manual).

[141] MS portuguais 5, folios 99r–128r (c. 1437–40). Held at the Bibliothèque national de France, Paris. (https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b60004002). For a critical edition, see Duarte I of Portugal, *The Book of Horsemanship by Duarte I of Portugal*, trans. Jeffrey L Forgeng, (Martlesham, England: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), with a discussion of Duarte's text in the "Introduction", 1-13.

legs should be kept as straight as possible using strong stirrups to help lift the hips. The blow should be struck while in motion, first extending the arm and then 'bearing down behind it', all the while being careful to avoid hitting the horse's face.[142] His instructions accord with posture of Death in the Subiaco *Triumph*, where Death's sword-tip has just touched the collar of its victim, and the momentum of the horse will drive the blade home in the next instant (figure 67).Both of these sources help clarify the realism and visual impact of the Subiaco fresco, demonstrating that Death's posture depicts a feasible attacking stance for a sword-wielding knight of the Trecento. Certainly, mounted swordsman were a well-known threat in fourteenth-century Italy. The peninsula was wracked with regular outbreaks of war, and during interwar periods marauding bands of unattached mercenaries warranted the maintenance of mutual defence leagues by cities and towns.[143] The Subiaco *Triumph* thus draws on representations of the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse, while reimagining Death as a contemporary knight: highly trained and skilled, and capable of killing with accuracy at great speed.[144]

The personification of Death in the Triumph expresses its power in two ways: it is both inevitably universal and viciously unexpected. The universality of Death could conceivably render its killing as meaningless and without moral weight, yet images of the Triumph are careful to invest Death's effects with purpose. In both the Pisan and Lorenzetti panel versions of the Triumph, Death is linked to the calamitous consequences of human sin. In all other images, Death's appearance as an apocalyptic rider foreshadows coming judgement. Thus, Death's very body imbues its presence with meaning: Death represents God's will on earth. Beyond a discussion of Death's gender, or the spectacle of Death's rotting corpse,[145] in this chapter I have argued that

[142] Duarte, *The Book of Horsemanship*, 60, 133 and 135.

[143] Caferro, "Warfare and Economy in Renaissance Italy", 176.

[144] While swords were sometimes used as hunting weapons by equestrians, this was rare and normally performative. See: Howard L. Blackmore, *Hunting weapons: from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 2000), 2.

[145] Guthke, *The gender of death*, 40–54; Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 33.

the depiction of Death in all fourteenth-century images of the Triumph of Death is notable for the way it carefully targets its victims.

Although the Triumph of Death shows a mass of causalities in the pile of dead bodies, Death notably ignores a group of living figures who plead to die. Thus, although the scythe, held by all figures of Death in the Triumph, functions as an apt metaphor for the universality of dying, in most images of the Triumph the scythe is supplemented with a weapon that requires careful aim. The bow and arrows, and in the Subiaco fresco the sword, represent Death's power as highly skilled and carefully directed. In two images of the Triumph where only the scythe is used, the Pisan fresco and the Lorenzetti panel, Death handles the scythe unconventionally in order to better direct its blade. While the earliest versions of the Triumph show Death flying above the landscape, the most popular personification of Death is astride a galloping horse. Like a knight or hunter, Death charges down its next victims in a targeted attack. In the Triumph of Death, it is Death's directionality that provides the moral structure of the iconography's narrative. The identities, and the sins, of those who Death has killed, those who Death targets, and those who Death ignores are the subjects of the following chapters.

Chapter two

Memento mori
On the corpses piled beneath Death

A visceral depiction of a pile of heaped corpses appears in every extant fourteenth-century version of the Triumph of Death. The mound of corpses is shocking not only for the large number of bodies, but because of the apparent lack of any funerary care given to the dead, in violation of both cultural and religious norms. This highly emotive macabre imagery confronted viewers with the consequences of Death, and of ignoring the message of the Triumph itself. Yet, despite the multitude of bodies, each corpse is given a clear social identity by virtue of their clothing and attributes. This chapter considers how the representation of the dead directed the message of the Triumph towards its intended audiences.

Although Chiara Frugoni argued in a 1988 article that the dead bodies in the Pisan *Triumph of Death* were designed to represent the cosmopolitan populace of the city itself, this premise has never been tested against the rest of the oeuvre.[1] Other studies on images of the Triumph often focus simply on surveying the demographics of the depicted corpses, eschewing any investigation into their deliberately provocative treatment.[2] There are no studies that adequately contend with all versions of the mound of corpses.[3] Yet research into other macabre motifs has demonstrated how explicit depictions of death could function as an invitation to audiences to associate themselves with the dead, and thus to interpolate themselves into the didactic narrative of the image.[4] This chapter begins with an analysis of which

[1] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1562.

[2] Binski, *Medieval death*, 32; Rasmo, "La chiesa di Santa Maria del Conforto a Maia Bassa", 34 n11; Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte", 152.

[3] Völser's masters thesis does look at many of the images of the Triumph but provides only superficial analysis of the dead. Völser, "The theme of death in Italian art".

[4] Baltrušaitis, *Le Moyen Âge fantastique*, 240; Binski, *Medieval death*, 134; Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 23.

demographic groups were included in, and, perhaps more importantly, excluded from, the pile of dead in the Triumph, asking whether the urban focus noted by Frugoni is found throughout the whole corpus. It then seeks to account for the disturbing treatment of the dead and for the representations of judgement shown in four versions of the Triumph.

In the Middle Ages, one's appearance communicated political and religious affiliations and social and economic status, as well as occupation and gender.[5] An innovative aspect of the Triumph of Death is that the dead can be characterised as particular social character types. To take just one example from the Pisan fresco, on the far right of the pile of dead bodies is a Pope recognisable by his papal tiara and episcopal gloves (figure 75, c. 1330–35). The earliest image comparable to the Triumph of Death is found in the early twelfth-century *Berlin Beatus*, an illustrated bible produced in southern Italy (figure 19).[6] In this drawing, a personification of Death rides over about ten naked humans and about eight animals. The nudity of the dead people suggests that their social status, occupations, or religious affiliations were irrelevant. Indeed, their mingling with animals undermines even their humanity.[7] In thirteenth-century images of the macabre Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, which predate the Triumph, the dead are depicted either as naked skeletons or as corpses draped in rotted fabrics, as, for example, at Santa Maria Assunta, Atri, Abruzzo (figure 10, 1275); or at Santa Margherita, Melfi, Potenza (figure 18, 1290).[8] In both the Encounter and the *Berlin Beatus* the nudity of

[5] Cordelia Warr, *Dressing for heaven: religious clothing in Italy, 1215–1545* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 13.

[6] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 69. On this manuscript see also: John Williams, *Visions of the end in medieval Spain: catalogue of illustrated Beatus commentaries on the Apocalypse and study of the Geneva Beatus*, ed. Therese Martin, Late Antique and Early Modern Iberia (Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 119; Roger E. Reynolds, "Apocalypses new: the recently discovered Beneventan illustrated Beatus in Geneva and its south Italian context", *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 3, no. 4 (2012), 33–43; Peter K. Klein, "Introduction", in *Beatus a Liébana: in apocalypsin commentarius / Manchester, the John Rylands University Library, Latin Ms 8*, Codices Illuminati Medii Aevi (München: Helga Lengenfelder, 1990), 10–11.

[7] By the Middle Ages animals were killed during human executions in order to humiliate and debase the victim. Mitchell B. Merback, *The thief, the cross and the wheel: pain and the spectacle of punishment in medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 187.

[8] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 100; Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 29.

the corpses was designed to show the ephemeral nature of material goods, which are ultimately meaningless in the face of death.[9] The choice in the Triumph to represented the piled dead as fully dressed in contemporary clothing is thus a significant and meaningful change from earlier images of mass death.

Moreover, this same impulse to characterise the dead as social beings is also extended to representations of the Encounter, when this motif is combined with the Triumph. In the enormous *Triumph* of the Pisan Camposanto, where the *Encounter* takes place on the far left of the fresco, Frugoni has noted how the dramatic expansion of the 'three living' for the first time into a hunting party numbering at least twelve, including women, parallels the many characters who populate the Triumph of Death.[10] In the same way, the three dead, laid out in three sarcophagi (figure 17), are thoughtfully depicted. The body furthest from the viewer, in the highest sarcophagus, is a bloated corpse dressed in cardinal's red, and the central sarcophagus contains a shrivelled corpse wearing a crown. (The third corpse is a skeleton in the rags of a burial shroud.) The two dressed corpses thus signify both spiritual and worldly power brought low. In Subiaco, the corpses in the *Encounter*, which faces the *Triumph* across the stairwell, are likewise displayed in three sarcophagi (figure 58, 1340s).[11] As at Pisa, a skeleton lies closest to the viewer. The other two bodies are dressed in a red robe with a white collar and a white coif, possibly identifying them as doctors of canon law.[12] The modification of the representation of the dead to recognisable character types in these versions of the Encounter further heightens the emphasis put on the identity of the dead within the Triumph proper.

It is important to note here that I do not suggest that any of the figures among the dead in any version of the fourteenth-century Triumph were intended to represent

[9] According to Scaramella the figures of the nobles may have originated in the illuminated manuscript *De arte venandi cum avibus* from the court of Frederick II of Sicily. Scaramella thus identifies one possible interpretation of the Encounter as a criticism of courtly life. *Humana fragilitas*, 28. See also: Binski, *Medieval death: ritual and representation*, 134.

[10] Frugoni, *Il tema dell'Incontro*, 215; Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1562.

[11] I discuss these figures in chapter three of this thesis. A complete description and thorough dating of all works in the Subiaco complex can be found in Romano, *Eclissi di Roma*, 127–31 and 345–49.

[12] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 110.

specific historical individuals. Certain figures of the damned in the adjacent fresco of *Hell* are explicitly labelled as recently deceased famous figures, but there is no visual evidence in any of the images of the Triumph that would support such an identification.[13] Instead, the dead should be understood as a chorus of stock characters made identifiable for viewers by the care taken in the depiction of their costumes, often from their distinctive headwear, and sometimes by the objects that they hold. In Pisa, for example, the man holding a moneybag is probably a merchant (figure 76) and the man lying above the pope wears the distinctive hat and red garments of a cardinal (figure 75). This strategy is likely derived in part from innovative visual developments in other collective representations; for instance, Giotto's vision of hell in the Arena chapel shows usurers hung with their money bags.[14]

As with the personifications of Death discussed in the previous chapter, the most significant precursors to the dead in the Triumph are found in Francesco da Barberino's (1264–1348) *Allegory of death* images.[15] In all versions of this image, a blindfolded Death shoots deadly arrows into groups of standing figures. Some of these figures are identifiable through their costumes, headwear, and props. In the *Officiolum* (1304–09), I count twelve dead and can identify: one crowned king; two knights in full armour (one on a dead horse); and two soldiers (one who falls from a parapet and one

[13] Polzer's crucial identification of the antipope Nicholas V and German emperor Ludwig of Bavaria in the fresco of *Hell* in the Pisan cycle is supported by labels within the fresco. The figures in *Hell* are also grouped with other heretics, making their inclusion a pointed commentary on recent Pisan political events. In contrast, as I will argue later in this chapter, the dead in the Triumph are given a highly ambivalent moral position. Polzer, "Aristotle, Mohammed and Nicholas V in Hell", 463–6. Three of the four remaining figures of the dead in the Santa Croce *Triumph* (figure 77) have been identified as historic individuals by M. and Piotr Skubiszewski. I find their thesis improbable. As Frugoni points out, their analysis requires that the Santa Croce *Triumph of Death* be dated earlier than the Pisan version and they do not, or cannot, account for the fourth dead figure. M. Skubiszewski and Piotr Skubiszewski, "The poor in the frescoes of the Campo Santo at Pisa and Santa Croce in Florence", in *Symbolae historiae artium: studia z historii sztuki Lechowi Kalinowskiemu Dedykowane*, ed. Lech Kalinowski and Jerzy Gadomski (Warszawa: Warschau, 1986), 280–81; Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1577.

[14] Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, "Barren metal and the fruitful womb: the program of Giotto's Arena Chapel in Padua", *The Art Bulletin* 80, no. 2 (1998), 275; Jérôme Baschet, *Les Justices de l'au-delà: les représentations de l'enfer en France et en Italie, XIIe–XVe siècle*, Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'athènes et de Rome (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1993), 287.

[15] The *Officiolum* (1304–09) (figure 13), the *Documenti d'amore* (c. 1315) (figure 14) and the tomb of Bishop Antonio d'Orso (Tino di Camaino, completed around 1321) (figure 15). Sutton, "The lost 'Officiolum' of Francesco da Barberino rediscovered"; MacLaren, "'*Or guarda tu … desta donna la forma*'; Freni, "From terrific death to the angels' care"; Harding, "Speaking in pictures".

who appears alongside the knight) (figure 13). The remaining dead are six interchangeable figures in long, loose robes (probably men) and one figure who is likely a woman, as her hair is covered with a veil. They are joined by a skeleton and three skulls among some loose bones. In the *Documenti d'amore*, the scene is nearly the same (figure 14, c. 1315).[16] Notable here is that only the military characters and the kings are made recognisable among the dead, in order to demonstrate the futility of human might against the power of Death itself.

The program in the third version of the *Allegory of death*, carved by Sienese sculptor Tino da Camaino, on the tomb of Bishop Antonio d'Orso in Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence, broadens the social roles of Death's victims (figure 15, 1321). Of the six dead figures attacked by Death on the right spandrel, a nondescript layman joins a queen and king, a tonsured clerical figure, and two skeletons (figure 78).[17] At left, the victims are all identifiable by clothing and attributes as a pope wearing a papal tiara and holding the traditional keys and a book; a mitred bishop; a physician with a urine vial; and a dead emperor wearing an arch-topped crown (figure 79).[18] The modifications to the figures among the dead are notable because they reflect the new context that the iconography appears in. The pope and the bishop are appropriate new inclusions of ecclesiastical authority for the tomb of Bishop d'Orso. Secular authority likewise finds a wider representation: to the king is added a queen and an emperor. There are significantly fewer representations of nondescript men. Now, the focus is drawn primarily to high status members of the community, which reflects the

[16] I count twelve dead and can identify: one soldier who falls from a parapet, a crowned king, and a knight on a horse. The remaining seven dead are five interchangeable figures in long loose robes (probably men), one figure who is likely a woman as her hair is covered with a veil, a man in coif who could fall nearly anywhere on the social spectrum, and finally two skeletons.

[17] Freni, "From terrific death to the angels' care", 10–11; MacLaren, "'*Or guarda tu … desta donna la forma*'", 246–7.

[18] MacLaren identifies the third figure as a scholar holding up a scroll. Following Freni, I see this figure as a doctor; a near match of his pose, vial and hat is in the early fourteenth century illuminated manuscript (figure 82) Rasis, *Liber medicinalis Almansoris* (1301–1400), translated into Italian by Zucchero Bencivenni, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana MS Plut.73.43, folio 6 verso. (https://tecabml.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/plutei/id/1234014/rec/1). We can also compare to the dead doctor in Pisa, see (figure 81). Conversely, Freni identifies the fourth figure as a king. Following MacLaren, I believe this is an emperor. A depiction of an emperor wearing a similar arch-topped crown can be found seated between a pope and a king in a copy of Gratian's *Decretals*, mid-1300s, British Library, Add. MS 15274, folio 3 recto, (figure 83). See Freni, "From terrific death to the angels' care", 10–11; MacLaren, "'*Or guarda tu … desta donna la forma*'", 246–7. And ibid., 247 n 530.

prominence of d'Orso himself and the importance of the site. Most significantly, there is the new inclusion of a tonsured friar and a medical doctor. These figures do not reflect the traditional strongholds of power, but instead highlight contemporary power-brokers in Italy: urban professionals and members of the mendicant orders.[19]

It is the inclusion of urban professionals and elites and mendicant friars that most distinguishes the demographics of the dead in the Triumph.[20] Although many of the images of the Triumph of Death are badly damaged, I have been able to connect social identities to fifty-four individual figures across the nine extant images of the Triumph. Of these, over half can be categorised as urban characters or members of mendicant orders or lay organisations. By the fourteenth century, Italian cities were flourishing centres of commerce, populated by urban workers such as merchants, bankers, and craftsmen.[21] In the Pisan fresco, whose design was likely overseen by Dominican theologians, the educated, wealthy, and cosmopolitan populace of the city is represented by a well-dressed layman with a book (figure 75); a merchant holding a money bag (figure 76); two rich ladies and two young men in fashionable hats (figure 80, figure 81); a doctor with two books and an apothecary jar (figure 81); a Muslim wearing a turban; and a craftsman in a soft cap (figure 80).[22] Parallel to the growth in the secular urban population, the mendicant orders had found their *raison d'être* in urban centres where, as Franciscan Cardinal and theologian Bonaventure (1221–1274) and Master General of the Dominican Order Humbert of Romans (c. 1190–1200 – 1277) pointed out, large numbers of sinful people were gathered together ready for the ministrations of the friars.[23] In the Pisan *Triumph*, the mendicant orders are represented by a Franciscan monk as well as a Dominican nun and monk (figure 75, figure 81). Thus, of the nineteen dead in the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, twelve are figures directly related to urban life. They are a strong and deliberate contrast to the edifying

[19] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, xi.

[20] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1583.

[21] Classen, "Urban space in the Middle Ages and the early modern age", 16.

[22] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1572.

[23] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 187.

depictions of the secluded lives of the hermits in the extreme upper left of the *Triumph*, above the *Encounter*; and at the end of the fresco cycle in the *Thebaid*.[24]

The majority of fourteenth-century images of the Triumph of Death were created within the context of direct mendicant influence, and most of the examples appear in established cities or towns.[25] For fourteenth-century mendicants and theologians urban centres were sites of considerable moral concern. City life was rife with dishonest traders, usurious moneylenders, and greedy merchants.[26] High profits allowed city women to purchase elaborate clothing and cosmetics, drawing them towards the sins of vanity and lust.[27] So in the Franciscan Santa Croce *Triumph*, although only four dead bodies remain, it is telling that two are young women wearing low-cut dresses (figure 77, c. 1345).

Unfortunately, as in Santa Croce, most of the surviving images of the Triumph of Death with mendicant patronage have sustained significant damage that makes it hard to identify most of the figures. In the St John chapel, in the Dominican church, the dead are nearly all unidentifiable because of the damage to the fresco. Aside from two men wearing helmets, likely soldiers, and a veiled woman who might be a nun, I cannot securely identify any other figures (figure 85, 1329–35). Although the authors of the Aufenstein cycle are unknown, and the lower part of the *Triumph* is almost completely missing, a tonsured friar (facing up) is still visible among the four dead above Death's scythe (figure 64, 1330s). He is joined by perhaps a woman with a head covering next to Death's foot, a man, and at the bottom a helmeted figure who may be a soldier. In the Cornedo *Triumph*, the figures of the dead are nearly all lost, and those remaining are almost illegible. One may be wearing a veil, so could have been another nun, tertiary (a lay member of a Christian religious order), or widow (figure 86, 1366). The Lucignano *Triumph* in the Franciscan church is missing the lowest part of the

[24] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1561.

[25] The relationship between the cycles and the authors are laid out in the introduction of this thesis. In summary, the images in Pisa (Dominican), Santa Croce (Franciscan), the St John chapel (Dominican), and Lucignano (Franciscan) were created under the auspices of friars.

[26] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 41.

[27] Warr, "The devil on my tail", 106.

fresco, particularly in the central section where the dead were piled in a heap. Yet of those still visible, the majority are mendicants: there are four friars with tonsured heads, at least one of whom is definitely a Franciscan dressed in brown; and one female religious figure (figure 87, 1380s).[28]

While mendicants were not alone in using the Triumph of Death iconography, the articulation of the theme in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's panel remains broadly similar to the examples already discussed. As plausibly argued by art historian Maria Corsi, the *Allegory of Redemption* (c 1338), was most likely commissioned by the Sienese Compagnia dei Disciplinati and hung in their headquarters.[29] According to a late fifteenth-century inventory, the panel was displayed near the staircase, the walls of which were decorated with scenes of eremitical life in the 1340s or 1350s, shortly after the panel was completed.[30] If so, as in Pisa, the characters among the dead would have been contrasted not only with Lorenzetti's hermits but also with the inclusion of hermits on the surrounding walls.[31] The social types among the dead bodies in the *Triumph* scene in the *Allegory* again evoke the dynamic urban milieu. Among the corpses, five young men are dressed in richly coloured clothing, some with fashionable hats. Other figures include a king, a knight with a sword, and a soldier in armour (figure 88, figure 89, figure 90). With them are two fashionable women, and one man who may be Muslim (indicated by his headgear). The Christian religious classes are represented by a pope, a bishop, and a cardinal. Only two figures might represent the less-privileged classes: one is in pink and wears a coif, and the other lies crossways over him in blue (figure 89).[32] Notably, none of the dead appear to be dressed in confraternal robes, a point which I return to below.

Likewise, the *Triumph of Death* in Subiaco was not commissioned by a mendicant order, but by Benedictine monks. Therefore there are no friars among the

[28] In Pisa, the ecclesiastical figures are all grouped together on the right-hand side of the pile of dead, so it is possible that in Lucignano the ecclesiastical were simply the top of the pile of dead and secular figures have been lost.

[29] Corsi, "Una nota di Inventario per una provenienza da recuperare", 290–97.

[30] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 89–97.

[31] The identity and role of the figures in Lorenzetti's panel are discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

[32] Blue and pink dyes were used by the lower classes. Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 133.

dead and instead we find a monk dressed in the black habit of the Benedictine Order (figure 91, 1340s).[33] The woman lying at the base of the fresco is in the clothing of a Benedictine nun who represented the women at the neighbouring Santa Scholastica convent.[34] As historian Lester Little has pointed out, the Benedictines had made a concerted effort to imitate the Franciscans in the structure of their order.[35] Art historian Serena Romano noted that the earlier images in the Subiaco complex (executed around 1280 by Roman painter Consolo) seem to be based on the cycle in the upper church at Assisi.[36] In this context the adoption by the Benedictines of the Triumph of Death iconography, otherwise exclusively used by the Dominicans and Franciscans, is not surprising. The rest of the dead figures in Subiaco are well-off young men, in line with the other representations of the Triumph.

Thus, although the Triumph of Death presents many more dead bodies than in the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, the corpses are from a select segment of fourteenth-century society. Notably, none of the dead bodies are depicted with any sign of disease or ill health, and none are elderly. While some may be from more humble professions, none are obviously destitute: they do not wear the ripped and patched clothing of the indigent figures who beg for Death's attention. Also absent are any children or babies, or any sign of pregnancy.[37] The exclusion of these groups and the repeated emphasis on the educated, wealthy, and cosmopolitan urban populace and mendicant orders make it clear to whom the Triumph of Death was addressed.

Now that I have established who the dead bodies represent, I turn to how they are treated. In fourteenth-century Italy, care for the dead was a highly ritualised process from the deathbed to funerary and burial protocols.[38] As I will show, while the

[33] Tjamke Snijders, "The black Cistercians: the reactions of Black Monks to Bernard of Clairvaux and the challenges of increased competition", *The Catholic Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (2019), 432.

[34] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 134 figure 81.

[35] Little, "Imitatio Francisci", 205.

[36] Romano, *Eclissi di Roma*, 127–33.

[37] Children were not uncommon in the later macabre form of the Dance of Death, see: Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 149–54 and 156–57.

[38] Binski, *Ritual and representation*, 32.

corpses of the dead are not properly cared for, the Triumph resists making a blanket condemnation of Death's victims. I begin with the apparent abandonment of the dead, who are left unburied on open ground without even the meagre dignity of a mass grave. The bodies are not orderly; for instance, in the Pisan *Triumph* a woman lies directly on top of a king, who himself is lying on top of a prone hunter. In the Subiaco *Triumph*, a nun lies under a young man and the young man's head rests on a mendicant's chest. This representation is deliberately provocative. The image of bodies piled together outside is a shocking contrast to the kind of burial that most viewers would have expected to receive. Allowing for some variations in, for instance, the use of coffins, normative Christian burials had a general uniformity across medieval Europe. Bodies were normally buried independently in a supine position along an east-west alignment with the head facing east and the arms beside the body or crossed over the chest.[39] Physical proximity between the decedent and sacred ground, particularly to an altar in a church, was a priority. The burial location of a decedent also served to broadcast information about their social and spiritual rank.[40] In Italian churches, these practices are still readily observable in the plethora of medieval family chapels alongside the tombs that line the floors and walls of churches and cloisters.

The treatment of dead bodies in the Triumph iconography contravenes these norms. Not only are the bodies exposed to the elements, but also they are not on sacred ground, they are not laid out with care, and the social classes are mixed. The exposure of corpses normally implied that the dead themselves were sinful. In the Bible, exposure of the dead is described as part of God's condemnation of the people of Judah as in Isaiah 5:25: ' … their carcases were torn in the midst of the streets'; and in Jeremiah 7:33: 'And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth'. Deliberate exposure of the dead, that is abandoning a body without burial or funerary rites, was also used as a spiritual punishment in the Middle Ages. For instance, a 1056 Parisian charter describes how

[39] Amelie Alterauge et al., "Between belief and fear—reinterpreting prone burials during the Middle Ages and early modern period in German-speaking Europe", *PLOS ONE* 15, no. 8 (2020), 2.

[40] Charlotte Roberts et al., "Burial of the Christian dead in the later Middle Ages", Oxford handbooks in archaeology (Oxford University Press, 2013), 17.

the body of an excommunicated but unrepentant knight was left unburied for three months as punishment for his repudiation of Christianity.[41] Murderers and those who died by execution or suicide were also subjected to deviant burials outside of consecrated ground.[42] In the Middle Ages, deviant burials occurred not only for individuals, but for whole communities. Dead bodies were disposed of collectively in catastrophic circumstances, such as war or epidemic disease, when the large number of corpses overwhelmed the capacity of the community to properly collect and bury the dead.[43] The treatment of the dead in the Triumph therefore suggested troubling possibilities about who the decedents were in life and therefore the quality of their afterlives.

The irregular treatment of the dead in the Triumph was brought into distressing contrast with proper mortuary practices because most examples of the iconography were placed near burial locations (Aufenstein, St John chapel, Santa Croce, Lucignano) or cemeteries (Pisa, Subiaco, Merano). The location of images of the Triumph would have been designed to highlight the benefits of burial by the authors of the iconography. Confraternities, such as the one that likely commissioned Ambrogio Lorenzetti's version of the *Triumph*, organised funerary rites for deceased members.[44] By the fourteenth century mendicant orders, as well as the Benedictines, were assigning more prominent burial locations to people who had given larger endowments.[45] Such is the case in the St John chapel, where Giovanni de Rossi's endowment of that chapel likely allowed his burial there in 1324 in close proximity to the high altar.[46] Indeed, over the course of the thirteenth century the major source of

[41] Mathieu Vivas, "Christian burial privation in the Middle Ages: an interdisciplinary approach (France, mid-10th–early 14th)", *Imago temporis: medium Aevum* 12 (2018), 195.

[42] Alterauge, "Between belief and fear", 2. Fear of animated corpses or the undead also sometimes motivated exhumation and damage to bodies, and accounts for some of the deviant reburials analysed by archaeologists, see: Stephen Gordon, "Dealing with the undead in the later Middle Ages", in *Dealing with the dead: mortality and community in medieval and early modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomaini, Explorations in medieval culture (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[43] Alterauge, "Between belief and fear", 4.

[44] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 66.

[45] G. G. Coulton, *Five centuries of religion*, ed. G. G. Coulton, 5 vols., vol. 3: Getting and spending, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (London: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 50.

[46] Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi della Capella di S. Giovanni a Bolzano", 93.

income for friars had transferred from local nobility to the newly rich urban classes.[47] Burial in prominent buildings provided an opportunity for the erection of monuments, ensuring that the identity of the deceased could be preserved as well as appealing to the 'macabre narcissism' of a newly urbanised population dislocated from traditional and ancestral funerary practices.[48] The horrifying treatment of the dead in the Triumph, of whom a large percentage are urban elites, thus finds an antidote, for a price, in the ministrations of the mendicants.

The need to appeal to the urban bourgeois and nobility may also have influenced the depiction of the dead. Although the corpses are shown abandoned on open ground, there is no gruesome or visceral quality to their bodies. The dead are not covered in bugs or worms and the corpses do not swell, as in the representation of the dead in the versions of the *Encounter* in Pisa and Subiaco: there is no sign at all of what actually killed them. This becomes particularly apparent when images of the mass deaths in the Triumph are compared with contemporaneous representations of battle scenes. For example, images of multiple corpses appear regularly in different iterations of the *Grandes chroniques de France* that were produced from 1332 until the end of the fourteenth century.[49] In battle scenes, the treatment of corpses is graphic: they are stabbed, bleeding, dismembered, and trampled beneath the hooves of horses as the fight rages above them. Sometimes the killing is so intense that the knights' chargers splash through puddles of blood, as on folio 116r of a manuscript from 1330 (figure 92).[50] These images of piled bodies slaughtered by knights on horseback were well-known conventional models for displaying multiple corpses as an ensemble. Yet no such violence appears among the pile of dead bodies in any image of the Triumph.

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[47] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 205.

[48] Jacques Chiffoleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Albin Michel, 2011), 171. 'Macabre narcissism': Jacques Le Goff, "Préface à la première édition (1980)", in *La comptabilité de "au-delà: les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Albin Michel, 2011), 6.

[49] Anne Dawson Hedeman, *The royal image: illustrations of the Grandes chroniques de France, 1274–1422*, ed. Walter Horn and James Marrow, California Studies in the History of Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

[50] British Library *Grandes chroniques de France*, Royal MS 16 G VI. Ibid., 41. Pamela Porter, *Medieval warfare in manuscripts* (London: British Library, 2000), 48, 52–53.

Despite Death's claim in Pisa that she will not wait to extinguish life, and in Lucignano that she only craves extinguishing life, and despite Death's weapons, the Triumph does not depict Death itself literally killing the dead.[51] In the Pisan *Triumph*, Death holds the scythe upside down with the blade overhead, clean of any blood, and none of the dead bodies have any wounds. Similarly, in the central section of the Lorenzetti panel, although Death holds the scythe blade downwards, ready to harvest, the blade does not intersect with any figure. Indeed, the only dead body showing wounds is that of Christ himself.

The lack of violence towards the dead is also in contrast with earlier images of personified Death killing unambiguously and graphically. In the *Berlin Beatus*, Death stabs at the bodies below her horse with a spear (figure 19, 1100). Her action is so powerful that she punctures one naked figure through the shoulder. Death's horse is prodded forward by Satan, whose own spear has skewered a pig, a horse, and a man together. In the thirteenth century, Death's victims are first shown graphically murdered on the façade of Notre-Dame in Paris (figure 20, 1210), where Death holds a sword in each hand as her disembowelled victim collapses behind her.[52] On the façade of Notre-Dame Cathedral, Amiens, the figure of Death is shown with her sword still lodged inside her victim (figure 21, 1220s). Death drags the sword through her victim's stomach, causing horrific and graphically depicted injuries as the viscera fall loose. In the English *Bible moralisée* (Add. 18719), Death's victim is ignominiously speared through the backside as he falls from Death's horse into a hell-mouth (figure 93, thirteenth century).[53] All of these images depict the dead brutalised by Death. Their macabre imagery emphasises bodily horror. To the viewer, these gruesome scenes are

[51] In Pisa, Death says: 'Io non attendo (ad altro) che a spegner vita / Menando la mia falce si attondo / In fino a che nessun ci rimarra': / E' tale che teme forte mia ferita, / Che, suscitato poi nell'altro mundo, / Dopo mia fine ad (Morte) me richiamara'. Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari in rima", 56. In Lucignano, Death says: 'lo so' colei c'occido one persona / giovane e vecchia ne verun ne lasso / De grande altura subito … '. Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1627 n134; Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 40. Death does shoot arrows towards the worldly living in the St John chapel, Cornedo, and Merano. I discuss this in chapter three.

[52] Paris c. 1210 Notre Dame west façade Last Judgement portal, 2nd voussoir on right.

[53] British Library *Bible moralisée*, MS Add. 18719, folio 305 recto. Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 131.

a repellent and terrifying evocation of pain and violence experienced in the moment of dying.

In contrast, the bodies of the dead in the Triumph are comparatively peaceful. Even when Death's scythe drags on the ground through the piled corpses, as in Aufenstein, the St John chapel, Subiaco, Cornedo, Lucignano and Merano, it is not shown cutting into their flesh. The *sinopia* in the Aufenstein *Triumph* is the first to show any of Death's weapons near the pile of dead bodies. Death holds the scythe at the start of a mowing stroke, clearly intending to reap the pile of dead bodies below the horse (figure 40, 1330s).[54] Because of the damage to the fresco, only four dead bodies remain. All have their eyes closed; they appear peaceful, evoking the association between death and sleep found in ancient literature and in the Bible: [55]

> After that he [Christ] was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present but some are fallen asleep [have died]. (1 Corinthians 15:6)[56]

The Triumph of Death was not the only fourteenth-century representation of unwounded dead accompanied by a personification of Death. An early predecessor is found in Brunetto Latini's *Favolello*, a fairy-tale poem on friendship dedicated to Rustico di Filippo found at the end of the only extant illustrated version of his *Tesoretto* (Strozzi 146, 1310–20).[57] The poem is copied in all but one of the fourteenth-century examplars of the *Tesoretto*, suggesting that it had become widely recognised.[58] On folio 23r, the friend is shown lying dead on the ground. Death, wielding a sword, rides above him on a bucking horse (figure 70, 1310). Death does not look at the body but up at the text. The dead friend has a peaceful disposition, and his body is fully dressed and represented without any wounds. The image is tragic and

[54] A diagram of a mowing stroke can be seen in Miller, *The scything handbook*, figure 18, 26.

[55] Philippe Ariès, *The hour of our death*, 23.

[56] Also Acts 7:60: 'And he [Stephen] kneeled down and cried with a loud voice "Lord lay not this sin to their charge". And when he had said this he fell asleep [died]'.

[57] Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana. Harding, "Visualizing Brunetto Latini's Tesoretto in early Trecento Florence", 242–3.

[58] Ibid., 243.

poignant, but notably devoid of gruesome wounds or rotting flesh, no doubt reflecting the close relationship between the author and subject.

In the Triumph of Death, the lack of depicted violence to the corpses may reflect the relationship between the authors of the iconography and their flocks. The undamaged nature of the corpses in the Triumph allows the focus of the image to remain on the lack of care assigned to the dead. This lack could be amply met by the commissioners of the Triumph of Death, who provided access and burial rights to the cemeteries and churches that housed the Triumph. At the same time, while the pile of bodies and their sheer numbers threaten anonymity, burial in such spaces allowed the social rank of the decedent to be remembered.

The relationship between the authors, the patron, and the location of the two images of the Triumph of Death in Bolzano may explain why in those examples the dead are uniquely represented in upright rows, as if standing. As previously discussed, the images of the *Triumph* in the St John chapel (figure 2, 1329–35) and in Castel Cornedo (figure 7, 1366) were commissioned by the same person: Nicolò de Rossi.[59] Both versions are in family chapels; indeed de Rossi's father was buried in the St John chapel in 1324.[60] This particularly intimate relationship between the patron, the familial dead, and the representation of human mortality may have encouraged an even gentler depiction of the corpses in the Triumph.

In the St John chapel, the dead are arranged into a front row of five figures and a second row of at least three bodies (figure 85). In Cornedo, there is a single row of five bodies (figure 86). In both images, the blade of Death's scythe intersects with the dead at chest level, and its cutting edge frames the faces of the dead. The scythe is big enough to collect the whole row of the dead at once, showing that Death can gather whole communities. In both examples, the standing dead are a continuation of the crowds who appear before Death, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The standing dead may have been designed to evoke the repeating pattern of stems in a

[59] De Marchi, "Illusionismo Nordico e spazialità giottesca a Bolzano", 19; Waltraud Kofler Engl, "Il gotico lineare", ibid., 30–31; Rasmo, *Storia dell'arte*, 74; Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi", 92; Jordan, "Chapel of St. Kathrein".

[60] Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, 348.

field of grain. In the fourteenth century, growing and harvesting grain was a familiar and important activity for everyone in the community because cereal crops and bread were staple foods.[61]

Grain was associated not just with work and nourishment, but with starvation and death. By the early fourteenth century, the Tyrol had experienced seven successive years of crop failures and an unusually high number of locust plagues.[62] The success or failure of the grain harvest was intimately connected with both daily life and the threat of death for the viewers of these frescoes. Whenever local growing conditions could not support the population, grain was a crucial import. The largest European business transactions in the fourteenth century were grain purchases and sales along the Italian peninsula.[63] Indeed, the de Rossi family worked as customs officials in the Tyrol and thus may have dealt with grain imports.[64]

Given their fundamental roles in both daily life and international economics, it is unsurprising that grain and bread were potent religious symbols. In the sacramental rite of the Eucharist, Christ's very body is bread:

> … the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:51)

Ordinary people were also conceptualised as grain and bread. In one sermon, Saint Augustine used bread in an extended metaphor, the life of a Christian aligning the human body with grain:

[61] Examination of the bodies of fourteenth-century peasants has revealed physical evidence of the impact of farming on their bones, including the repeated use of scythes. William C. Jordan, *The great famine: northern Europe in the early fourteenth century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 14. On grain as a staple food see: Richard Britnell, "Markets and incentives: common themes and regional variations", in *Agriculture and rural society after the Black Death: common themes and regional variations*, ed. Ben Dodds and Richard Britnell, Studies in Regional and Local History (Hertfordshire, Great Britain: University Of Hertfordshire Press, 2009), 3.

[62] For the Great Famine see: Jordan, *The great famine*, 7. For locust plagues see: D. Camuffo and S. Enzi, "Locust invasions and climatic factors from the Middle Ages to 1800.", *Theoretical and Applied Climatology* 43, no. 1 (1991), 69.

[63] Britnell, "Markets and incentives".

[64] Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, 356.

> This bread tells our story. It arose as grain in the fields. … Remember that this is your story as well. You did not exist and were created … you were like grain stored in the granary … You were baked in the oven of the Holy Ghost and truly became the bread of God.[65]

Showing the dead as a field of grain about to be reaped is an innovative extension of an established Christian metaphor. From this perspective, the standing dead in the St John chapel and Cornedo represent death as a natural stage in a Christian's journey from life to afterlife. Not only is there no sense of a brutal death, but the standing bodies have more dignity than a heap of corpses apparently abandoned. The image of mass death was no doubt meant to be shocking, but in the Bolzano versions of the Triumph this is somewhat tempered in an appropriate response to their location within family chapels.

The fate of the dead is left entirely uncertain in most images of the Triumph of Death. For the fourteenth-century Christian, life did not end at death.[66] Since the 1100s, *memento mori* texts would depict demons and angels arriving *en masse* to battle for dominion over the soul of a dying man.[67] Thus the moment of dying was fraught, and the attitude of the dying person was paramount. From the thirteenth century, liturgists had specified in detail how a person should await death. The dying should lie supine, so that they could face heaven; friends and family should be recalled; and finally the dying person should 'forget the world and think of God' in order to assure their access to heaven.[68] Yet most images of the Triumph of Death show the dead not only without any spiritual preparation for the afterlife but without any sense of the afterlife at all. As Gertsman writes of the Dance of Death:

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[65] Quoted in Massimo Montanari and Beth Archer Brombert, *Medieval tastes* (Columbia University Press, 2015), 56.

[66] Jacques Le Goff, *The birth of purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 2.

[67] This concept appears in the writings of Peter Damian (1007–72), Othloh of St Emmeran (1010–70), and Lotario di Conti (Pope Innocent III, 1198–1216). Gerhild Scholz Williams, *The vision of death: a study of the 'memento mori' expressions in some Latin, German, and French didactic texts of the 11th and 12th centuries* (Göppingen: Verlag Alfred Kümmerle, 1976), 17.

[68] Ariès, *Western attitudes toward death*, 8–10.

> The dancers do not earn clemency from God, nor are they damned to hell: there is no one to guide them in their dialogues with Death, and their fate after remains unknown.[69]

In the Triumph of Death it is the dead who are left in this disquieting stasis. The image thus rests on an appeal to its audience: it is they who must take control of their fates. If, for the upper echelons of urban society, this relied on substantial donations to the authors of the Triumph for a prime burial location and the saying of masses, then perhaps that was a fair cost for the salvation of one's soul.[70]

Even in the four versions of the Triumph of Death that do include scenes of judgement—those in Pisa, in the St John chapel, in Merano, and in Lorenzetti's panel—no assurances are given to the audience as to the final destination of the dead. I begin with Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Redemption* where a representation of the Last Judgement occurs within the same field as the *Triumph of Death* (figure 4, c 1338). This is the only representation of the Triumph that shares the same visual field as a Last Judgement, and so the two iconographies are presented as parts of the same narrative. Here the *Last Judgement* is depicted on the far right of the panel where Christ appears in glory, flanked by the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist, and surrounded by trumpeting angels. Below this heavenly scene, the resurrected have been divided into the elect and the damned.

While Lorenzetti's *Last Judgement* conforms in most respects with fourteenth-century visual norms, the white gowns of the elect represent a relatively rare variation on this standard iconography (figure 94).[71] In the *Allegory*, the choice to represent the elect in diaphanous white robes differentiates them from the nearby figures in the *Triumph of Death*. The white garments of the elect signified their holiness and purity, but it is unusual to see the elect wearing white in fourteenth-century Last Judgements. Typically, the elect wore clothing that identified

[69] Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 38.

[70] Ariès, *The hour of our death*, 73–81.

[71] On the conformity of the panel with other representations of the Last Judgement see: Baschet, *Justices de l'au-delà*, 205–219; Corsi, "Una nota di inventario", 71.

their social role and status.[72] For example, in the versions of the *Last Judgement* in the Pisan Camposanto (figure 95) and in the Scrovegni Chapel, the elect wear varied, detailed, and colourful clothing which contrasts sharply with the shameful nudity of the damned in hell.[73]

In Lorenzetti's panel, the white clothing of the elect may have been an explicit appeal to the possible commissioners of the panel, the Compagnia dei Disciplinati. Confraternity habits were often white, visually linking members both to purity and to the white garment worn by Christ during the Passion.[74] The white gowns of the elect in Lorenzetti's panel also recall those worn by figures moving from purgatory to heaven in Jacopo di Mino del Pennicciaio's fresco in the convent of San Marco in Todi (1346). In that image, the white *guarnelli* reflect the fact that the souls of the elect have been cleansed of their sins by the purifying torments of purgatory.[75] In the *Allegory*, it is the practices of the confraternity—charity, prayer, and penance—that have helped the personal salvation of their members.[76] Yet the white robes also serve to anonymise the elect. There is no clear correspondence between the dead and the resurrected, and indeed the elect outnumber the corpses. Unlike other examples of the Triumph of Death, Lorenzetti's version does not include any members of a religious order among the dead bodies that could be linked to a commissioning organisation (such as the Black Monk in Subiaco or the friars found in those versions commissioned by mendicants). Yet, if the panel was indeed commissioned by a flagellant confraternity, as I believe likely, then the white clothing of the elect may have been a reassuring sign

[72] In Revelation 4:4 John describes the elders as 'clothed in white raiment' and in Luke 9:29 Christ's clothing becomes 'white and glistening' during the Transfiguration. White clothing could also represent humbleness and humility for a practical reason: it was made from undyed, and therefore cheaper, cloth. Margaret Scott, *Medieval clothing and costumes: displaying wealth and class in medieval times* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2004), 133. For the clothing of the elect in fourteenth-century images of the Last Judgement, see: Warr, *Dressing for heaven*, 205.

[73] Indeed, in the Scrovegni Chapel *Last Judgement*, at the base of the *crux invicta*, two demons are forcibly stripping a condemned man.

[74] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 37.

[75] Warr, *Dressing for heaven*, 216.

[76] John Henderson, "The flagellant movement and flagellant confraternities in central Italy, 1260–1400", *Studies in Church History* 15, no. 1 (1978), 149.

to members of the Disciplinati that compliance to the rules of the confraternity would ensure them a place among the elect.

While the *Allegory* thus presents the *Triumph of Death* as one part of the overall narrative of salvation, the scene of the *Last Judgement* is separated from the bodies of the dead. There is no depiction of the resurrection, or of the moment of judgement: the elect and the damned are already separated. In contrast, in the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, we witness the moment of transition between life and afterlife, as souls—represented as naked homunculi—are dramatically pulled from the mouths of the dead by angels and demons (figure 1). Once parted from their bodies, the souls are borne into the sky above the scene of the *Triumph*.

This scene of aerial battle has long been identified as a particular judgement, meted out to souls at the moment of death.[77] The particular judgement accounted for what happened to souls between the death of their bodies and the advent of the Last Judgement. The Gospel of Luke, which describes the soul of Lazarus ascending to Abraham's bosom and the soul of Dives tormented in hell (Luke 16:19-31), and the soul of the Good Thief in paradise (Luke 23:43), provided a biblical model for the judgement of the soul, and its reward or punishment, immediately after death. Because the intermediate judgement related only to the spiritual aspect of a person,[78] visual images had to clearly distinguish between the body and the soul. By the thirteenth century, the representation of the soul as a homunculus, as in the Pisan *Triumph*, was widely popular, as seen in representations of the respective fates of

[77] Debra Markow, "The soul of the sinner–the soul of the saint: some aspects of the iconography of particular judgment", 3 (1983–1984); Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso"; Christine Maria Boeckl, "The Pisan 'Triumph of Death' and the Papal constitution 'Benedictus Deus'", *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no. 36 (1997); Virginia Brilliant, "Envisaging the particular judgment in late-medieval Italy", *Speculum* 84, no. 2 (2009); Carletti, "Transition between life and afterlife".

[78] Markow, "Soul of the sinner", 17; Janis Johnston Elliott, "The Last Judgement scene in central Italian painting c. 1266–1343: the impact of Guelf politics, papal power and Angevin iconography" (University of Warwick, 2000), 7.

Dives and Lazarus and the good and bad thieves at Calvary.[79] Similarly, Christ sometimes appears as a ghostly homunculus in representations of the Annunciation.[80]

Early representations of this judgement broadened its subjects to include saints, whose exceptional lives and deaths warranted their souls' transportation to heaven immediately after death, also often pictured as a homunculus tenderly carried by an angel away from a corpse.[81] However, these representations of souls carried to heaven by angels or taken by demons showed only biblical characters or exemplary individuals.[82] In the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, the separation of the body and the soul is made noteworthy by the shocking appearance of the large number of dead bodies of contemporary people. That is, the pile of dead bodies in the *Triumph* allowed for the first time the separation of the soul to be depicted as the experience of everyday people. Thus, the members of the urban *milieu* depicted in the fresco were asked to consider their own afterlives.

As Virginia Brilliant observes in her analysis of images of the particular judgement, although this airborne gathering of souls above the Pisan *Triumph of Death* has been described as a 'judgement', in fact only one soul actually appears in the process of being judged.[83] This is a tonsured cleric, found just above the *putti* holding torches, whose forearms are gripped by an angel while a demon pulls on his knees (figure 96). Here judgement is represented as a physical battle between two forces, symbolising, Brilliant suggests, the viewers' own daily struggle between behaving

[79] Markow, "Soul of the sinner", 20–1; Merback, *Thief, cross and wheel*, 231.

[80] Jacqueline Tasioulas, "Gabriel's annunciation and the problems of angelic voice", in *Visions and voice—hearing in medieval and early modern contexts*, ed. Hilary Powell and Corinne Saunders, Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 49.

[81] Brilliant, "Envisaging the particular judgment", 317.

[82] Pamela Sheingorn, "'And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest': the soul's conveyance to the afterlife in the Middle Ages", in *Art into life: collected papers from the Kresge Art Museum medieval symposia*, ed. Carol Garrett Fisher and Kathleen L. Scott (Michigan State University Press, 1995). Although twelfth-century *memento mori* texts describe an everyman whose death was awaited by a crowd of demons and angels prepared to fight over his soul, as in the writings of Peter Damian (1007–1072), Othloh of St Emmeran (1010–1070) and Lotario di Conti (Pope Innocent III, 1198–1216), this was not visually depicted until the *ars moriendi* texts in the fifteenth century. Williams, *The vision of death*, 17; Ariès, *The hour of our death*, 110.

[83] Brilliant, "Envisaging the particular judgment", 325.

virtuously or sinfully.[84] In any case, despite the weapons of the demons and the cruciform spears of the angels, there is very little sense of direct contest between the two squadrons. The demons appear on the left of the image and the angels on the right and, apart from the cleric, no other souls are fought over. Instead, it seems that the fate of the souls is sealed from the moment of their collection from their bodies, creating a sense of pressing urgency because almost as soon as Death passes over her victims, the angels and demons arrive to collect their quarry. One angel even appears to swoop under Death's elbow to snatch up the soul of a bishop (figure 84). This swift and confronting representation of the meting out of judgement immediately after death affirmed the importance of the individual's preparation for their own passing by both good behaviour and through securing burial rites, funeral masses, and so on.[85]

The treatment of the souls by the angels and demons graphically represents what viewers could anticipate after death. The four souls held by the angels in the upper right of the fresco are carried gently. Although nude, all of the souls retain some semblance of modesty: their chests are covered by gestures of prayer or with crossed arms, and their genitals are hidden by crossed or tightly pressed-together legs (figure 39). One soul is almost totally shielded from public view by an angel's wing (figure 97). In contrast to this tender and respectful treatment, the souls taken by demons suffer under their rough handling. One woman, found directly above Death, is carried painfully upwards by her hair (figure 1). Her treatment mirrors a sinner in the *Last Judgement* who is pulled into hell by her long braids (figure 98): they are both condemned by their vanity.[86] Eight of the ten souls held by demons have their arms tied behind their backs, reflecting the treatment of dishonourable criminals, who were brought to their punishments ignobly bound.[87] Meanwhile, the six souls held upside down by demons may be invoking the practice of inverted hangings that were used to disgrace heretics.[88]

[84] Ibid., 327.

[85] Ariès, *The hour of our death*, 107.

[86] Warr, "The devil on my tail", 104–5.

[87] Merback, *Thief, cross and wheel*, 142.

[88] Ibid, 187.

Even though the souls have been separated from their bodies, there is a defined emphasis on the tangible agony that the sinners experience. What the soul felt and how it felt was a topic of much debate in the fourteenth century, with no view predominating.[89] However, didactic visual art such as the Triumph of Death demanded images that were eminently legible by viewers, and thus spiritual torment is depicted in physical form.[90] Indeed, two souls are shown bleeding. Above Death, to the left of the woman gripped by the hair, is a man tied to a pike. His stomach is scraped by the protruding spines on a demon's tail, leaving bloody gashes (figure 99). Meanwhile among the dead bodies is a merchant, identifiable by his moneybag (figure 81). Despite his death, the merchant's soul remains entranced by worldly power: as he turns to face his demon, he holds up a miniature, ghostly version of his moneybag, as if wealth could buy pardon in the afterlife (figure 100). Nonetheless, his soul is scratched and bloodied by his demon's clawed hands. In Pisa, the visualisation of the soul as a small and tender body allows their visceral mistreatments to be imaginatively experienced by viewers.

Although the evocative treatment of the souls was clearly designed to carry a didactic warning, the authors of the Pisan *Triumph of Death* have not clearly linked the figures of the dead with the souls. The number of souls does not correspond to the number of corpses below, and in most cases there is no way to identify which soul belongs with which body. Only three souls are being actively taken from their bodies. The soldier in a plaid suit has his soul snatched by a demon, as does the merchant clutching a moneybag (figure 101). In contrast, the bishop's soul is gathered up by an angel.[91] However, the battle for the soul of the tonsured cleric—suspended between an angel and a demon—shows that the fates of the soldier and merchant are not assured (figure 96, figure 39). Thus, like the representation of the elect in Lorenzetti's *Allegory*

[89] Jan Swango Emerson and Hugh Feiss, "Introduction", in *Imagining heaven in the Middle Ages: a book of essays*, ed. Jan Swango Emerson and Hugh Feiss, Garland Medieval Casebooks (London: Routledge, 2000). xiv-xv.

[90] Warr, *Dressing for heaven*, 219.

[91] Identified by Frugoni as the Dominican Simone Saltarelli who died in 1342. His inclusion is interpreted by Frugoni as a repudiation of Pisa's welcome to the antipope Niccolò V. Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1567.

of Redemption, the Pisan *Triumph of Death* avoids promising any particular social group access to heaven or an eternity in hell.

In the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, the good souls are taken by the angels towards the upper right of the fresco, that is, towards the location of the elect at the *Last Judgement*. Just over the fictive border is a representation of heaven: a row of angels hold the tools of the Passion, the Apostles watching the *Last Judgement* and the elect gazing prayerfully towards Christ. Meanwhile, in the *Triumph* the demons are taking their targets to the top of the mountain in the centre of the fresco. Here the two souls (a man and a woman) are ignobly stuffed headfirst into flaming volcanic fissures (figure 102, figure 103). While some scholars have identified this mountain as the entrance to hell, others have suggested it was intended to lead to purgatory.[92]

To my mind, the mountain in the *Triumph of Death* was undoubtedly meant to represent the entrance to purgatory. Firstly, there is a clear effort being made to differentiate the *Triumph of Death* from the neighbouring scene of the *Last Judgement*. Where the *Judgement* shows the bodily resurrection of the dead, the *Triumph* shows the separation of the soul and the body. Likewise, where the *Judgement* shows the resurrected elect in heaven, fully dressed and the same height as the angels, the *Triumph* only shows the diminutive and naked souls of the saved held by angels. Because the *Judgement* includes an enormous depiction of sinners tortured in hell, it may be that the *Triumph* showed souls being taken to purgatory in order to continue the distinctions being made between the two scenes.[93]

Purgatory's role as a place of atonement for sin had been confirmed by papal proclamations in 1254 and 1274.[94] Dante Alighieri was the first to provide a description

[92] The following suggest that the mountain leads to hell: Frugoni, *Il tema dell'Incontro*, 212; Maria Laura Testi Cristiani, "Il Trionfo della Morte nel Camposanto monumentale di Pisa: temi macabri di meta' Trecento", in *Il Trionfo della Morte e le Danze Macabre: dagli atti del vi°Convegno internazionale tenutosi in Clusone dal 19 al 21 Agosto 1994*, ed. Dott. Clara Forte (Clusone: Città di Clusone, 1997), 76; Boeckl, "Pisan 'Triumph of Death'", 58. While on the side of purgatory, see: Joseph Polzer, "Michelangelo's Sistine 'Last Judgment' and Buffalmacco's murals in the Campo Santo of Pisa", Ibid.,35, no. 69 (2014), 73.

[93] Baschet, *Justices de l'au-delà*, 309.

[94] Goff, *Birth of purgatory*, 289.

of the creation of purgatory in Inferno 34 of his influential *Divine Comedy* (c. 1321).[95] Dante's influence over the program of the Pisan Camposanto frescoes has been noted by other scholars.[96] In a series of cantos late in the Inferno, Dante describes how the earth displaced from Lucifer's fall became Mount Purgatory.[97] The purpose of purgatory was one of change: through its cleansing punishments the sins of the dead could be expunged, permitting their eventual ascent to heaven. In purgatory, the souls of sinners are not tortured by demons, as they are not allowed power over ultimately saved souls, but they are burned.[98] Dante describes the fire of purgatory repeatedly, culminating in the final wall of flame between purgatory and heaven: 'Holy souls, you cannot move ahead unless the fire has stung you first: enter the flames'.[99] The flames gushing from the mountain-top in the Pisan *Triumph* certainly accord with Dante's description and contemporary understandings of the physical nature of purgatory.

Ultimately, the treatment of the souls above the dead bodies in the Pisan *Triumph of Death* constitutes a warning to the living that leaves open the possibility of reform. Souls would inevitably leave purgatory and ascend to heaven.[100] A soul's progress through the purgatorial fires could be hastened by restitution before death or through suffrages made by relatives after death. By the thirteenth century, Dominicans were receiving significant income from restitution payments, and in the

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[95] Teodolinda Barolini, "Inferno 34: satanic physics and the point of transition", Columbia University Libraries, https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-34/, 40–42.

[96] Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari", 56; Elliott, "Last Judgement scene", 233.

[97] 'Qui è da man, quando di là è sera; / e questi, che ne fé scala col pelo, / fitto è ancora sì come prim' era. / Da questa parte cadde giù dal cielo; / e la terra, che pria di qua si sporse, / per paura di lui fé del mar velo, / e venne a l'emisperio nostro; e forse / per fuggir lui lasciò qui loco vòto / quella ch'appar di qua, e sù ricorse'. Dante Alighieri, "Inferno 34", Columbia University Libraries, https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-34/, 118–126.

[98] Franco Mormando, "What happens to us when we die? Bernardino of Siena on 'the four Last Things'", in *Death and dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 117.

[99] 'Poscia 'Più non si va, se pria non morde, / anime sante, il foco: intrate in esso, / e al cantar di là non siate sorde', / ci disse come noi li fummo presso'. Dante Alighieri, "Purgatorio 27", Columbia University Libraries, https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/purgatorio/purgatorio-27/, 10–13. For references to the flames of purgatory, see also Purgatorio 9:31–32, 16:1–5, 25:112–17 and 137, 27:16–18, 25–27, 49–51.

[100] Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, "Introduction", in *Last things: death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 5.

fourteenth century wealthy urban elites were making large philanthropic donations.[101] Even usurers who had not made restitution, the most reviled sinners of the fourteenth century, were able to exit purgatory through the actions of their families. Jacques Le Goff quotes a number of exempla showing how the widows of usurers hastened their husbands' ascension to heaven via contrition and repentance.[102] Thus while the Pisan *Triumph of Death* promises sinners a swift punishment after death, it avoids any permanent condemnation.

Similarly, in the fresco of the *Triumph of Death* in the St John chapel, a scene of the particular judgement evokes hope for souls after death. As an endowment of the de Rossi family, the chapel likely functioned not just as a burial place; its construction, decoration, and use were a mechanism serving to hasten the transfer of familial souls to heaven. In the St John chapel *Triumph*, as at Pisa, somatised souls, represented as naked homunculi, are separated from bodies of the dead in preparation for immediate judgement (figure 2, 1329–35). Two small figures of angels with purple robes and red wings can be seen active among the dead (figure 104). The better-preserved angel on the right holds a naked homunculus soul reverentially in a cloth. The grey shapes between the angels may have been small demons competing to collect souls.

The angels are carrying the souls to a scene of judgement that appears in the upper left of the pictorial field, behind and above those who plead to die (figure 50). While the visual conventions of the Last Judgement were largely set by the fourteenth century, the particular judgement generated multiple distinct iconographies.[103] In the St John chapel, the particular judgement has been invested with a judicial quality as an angel sets a praying soul down into the lower plate of a pair of scales that are held aloft by another angel (figure 105). Scales had long appeared in Christian art as a symbol of divine justice, originating in scenes of the Last Judgement.[104] Yet in the St John chapel, they also might have referred to the commercial activities of the de Rossi family, who,

[101] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 212–13.

[102] Jacques Le Goff, *Your money or your life: economy and religion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Patricia Ranum (New York: Zone books, 1988), 77–93.

[103] Brilliant, "Envisaging the particular judgment", 315.

[104] Markow, "Soul of the sinner", 18; Brilliant, "Envisaging the particular judgment", 328.

in addition to their work as customs officials, were also the main financiers for the local aristocracy.[105] Scales such as those used by the moneylenders in the nearby *sinopia* in Aufenstein symbolised financial activity (figure 106, 1330s). Thus, the inclusion of the scales in the St John chapel *Triumph* was likely a deliberate choice to visually converge the representation of divine justice with the commercial activities of the de Rossi family. The tools of their (morally dubious) trade are the same as those that administer justice.

Each plate of the scales holds a scroll with texts that illuminate the meaning of the image. In the upper plate, which is otherwise empty, the scroll reads:

> As Daniel says, thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.[106]

This plate thus represents the sins of the soul being judged. That is, if it were heavier and hung lower, the soul would have been 'found wanting' and have been condemned. The text is a reference to Daniel 5:26–27:

> This is the interpretation of the thing: Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. / Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

In this Bible passage, Daniel has been asked to interpret God's writing on the wall for King Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel says that while Nebuchadnezzar learnt humility and retained his kingdom, Belshazzar's pride has angered God and therefore he will lose his kingdom. Educated viewers of the fresco are thus warned against the sin of pride, which will be counted against their souls after death.

The soul sitting in the lower plate on the left has done more good than bad. The scroll held in place between the soul's knees and the plate reads:

[105] Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, 356; de Marchi, "Il momento sperimentale", 47.

[106] 'QVIA/DICIT /IN DANIE/LE ASCE/NSVS ES/IN STAT/ERA ET/INVENT/VS ES/MINVS/HABEN/S' . Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi", 91 n23.

> Oh rapacious rich, you will not live forever. So do good while you are alive, if you want to live after death.[107]

This text is remarkably similar to a phrase that appears on the seventh capital in the north gallery of the Benedictine cloister attached to the cathedral in Monreale, Sicily (twelfth century).[108] The impost block of the capital reads:

> O DIVES DIVES / NON MVLTO TEMPORE VIVES / FAC BENE DVM VI / VIS POST MORTEM SI VIS.[109]

The scenes below this text depict the story of Dives and Lazarus, recounted by Christ in Luke 16:19–20.[110] In this paradigmatic tale about the sin of avarice, the poor man (Lazarus) dies while begging on the steps of the rich man's banqueting hall.[111] After the rich man also dies, he goes to hell. From hell the rich man can see Lazarus held in the paradisical bosom of Abraham. In the St John chapel, the textual reference to wealth no doubt reflects the status of the de Rossi family as 'rich men'. Yet, as the text says, the soul has made adequate restitution through its good works—perhaps the

[107] 'ORAPTOR DIVES NO[N] O[MN]I TEN/PORE VIVES FAC BENE DV[M] VI/(VIS) POST MORTE VIVERE SI VIS'. Ibid., 91 n23.

[108] Clear photographs and a three-dimensional rendering are available at: Ute Dercks and Roberto Scopigno, "Monreale - north side - N8sh7", Kunsthistorisches institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut; and Istituto di scienza e tecnologie dell'informazione "A. Faedo" (ISTI-CNR), Pisa, Italy, https://cenobium.isti.cnr.it/monreale/capitals/N/N8Sh7.

[109] Based on the photographs provided on the website cited above, I have corrected the transcriptions provided by ibid., and Carl D. Sheppard, "Iconography of the cloister of Monreale", *The Art bulletin* 31, no. 3 (1949).

[110] Luke 16:19–20: 'There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: / And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, / And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. / And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; / And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. / And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. / But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. / And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence'.

[111] Robert J. Karris, "The interpretations of the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) by Cardinal Hugh of St. Cher (†1263) and Cardinal Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (†1274)". *Franciscan Studies* 78, no. 1 (2020).

de Rossi's bequest of the chapel itself—as well as their many other public donations in Bolzano.[112]

As in the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, the administration of justice in the St John chapel *Triumph* is not uncontested. A demon is trying to weigh down the higher plate of the scales by perching on the cross-beam above it (figure 105). The demon's attempts to claim the soul echo a depiction of the particular judgement in the thirteenth-century *Seitenstetten missal* (figure 107, c. 1265).[113] In that image, three demons attempt to pull down the higher scale, including one demon who perches on the cross-beam, just like the demon in the St John chapel scene. However, in the *Triumph of Death* the three angels outnumber the demon. One angel places the soul on the plate while another holds the pair of scales. These anonymous and partly disembodied beings are contrasted with the fully incarnated St Michael, who is further distinguished by his spear and his cloak, which is red lined with green. St Michael's incarnated form references stories attesting to the physical evidence of his presence left on earth in the form of a red cloth at Monte Gargano and a footprint.[114]

But St Michael is not simply an observer. The angel holding the pair of scales points at the demon while looking at Michael, thus drawing Michael's attention to the interference of the demon. Frowning, Michael gestures at the demon with his left hand in a scolding fashion, while holding up a threatening lance in his right. Unfortunately, damage to the fresco has made the spear hard to parse. However, based on the angle of Michael's right hand, the spear may have been pushing down on the other end of the cross-beam, nullifying the demon's influence. In the *Seitenstetten missal*, the angel overseeing the particular judgement pushes down on the scale containing the soul, counteracting the extra weight of the demons on the other end

[112] The patronage of the de Rossi family was 'omnipresent' in fourteenth-century Bolzano, see: de Marchi, "Illusionismo nordico e spazialità giottesca a Bolzano", 19. The relationship between the biography of the de Rossi family and the *Triumph of Death* are reminiscent of the Scrovegni family and the many references to the sins of their profession as moneylenders in the famed Arena Chapel, Padua. See, for example: Derbes and Sandona, "Barren metal and the fruitful womb."

[113] Morgan Library & Museum, New York *Seitenstetten missal*, MS M.855, folio 206 recto (c. 1265). (https://www.themorgan.org/collection/seitenstetten-missal/158991/414). Markow, "Soul of the sinner", 20.

[114] Gill, *Angels and the order of heaven*, 102.

(figure 107, c. 1265). In the St John chapel, St Michael's intervention echoes his battle with Satan, framing the dispute over one soul within the broader Christian story of good versus evil.[115] Indeed, St Michael plays an important role in the book of Daniel, referenced on the higher scale, as a saviour for the people of Israel.[116] His attendance at this particular judgement (like the use of the scales) is borrowed from images of the Last Judgement.[117] In all, this scene of the particular judgement makes a strong case for the goodness of the soul being judged. Despite the demon's attempts to change the outcome, it is no match for the angelic host.

Indeed, just to the left of the St John judgement, a soul is being welcomed at the gates of heaven by St Peter, who holds out his left hand in welcome while giving a blessing with his right (figure 108). The soul is presented to St Peter reverentially by an angel, who carries it in a white cloth. The use of the white cloth of honour enhances the treasured status of souls of the elect. While in the Pisan *Triumph of Death* the elect were simply taken in the direction of heaven, in the St John chapel fresco the celestial paradise is represented as a white tower whose interior walls are a glowing field of gold, recalling the description of the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation 21:18: 'the city was pure gold'. A scroll unfurls from behind St Peter's shoulder as he leans forward to bless the soul. The text on the scroll is incomplete and art historian Nicolò Rasmo was unable to identify its source.[118] However, I have been able to identify the first section of the inscription and correct Rasmo's transcription. The first part of the text is a popular antiphon used in the liturgy of several Petrine feasts:

> Loosen by God's command, Peter, the chains of the earth: thou who makest open the kingdom of heaven to the blessed, Alleluia.[119]

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[115] Brilliant, "Envisaging the particular judgment", 329.

[116] Gill, *Angels and the order of heaven*, 69.

[117] Ariès, *Western attitudes toward death*, 31; Baschet, *Justices de l'au-delà*, 206; ibid., 81.

[118] Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi", 91 n23.

[119] The first part of the scroll reads: '[S]OLVE/ IVBE(N)TE/ DEO TER/RA[RVM] PE[TRE]/ CATENAS/ QVI FA/CIS VT PAT/EANT CE/LESTIA R/EGNA BEATIS'. Transcribed by ibid., 91 n23 with corrections. The Latin antiphon reads: 'Solve jubente Deo, terrarum Petre, catenas: qui facis ut pateant coelestia regna beatis. Alleluia'. See: William Byrd, "Solve Jubente Deo (William Byrd)", Choral Public Domain Library, https://www.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Solve_jubente_Deo_(William_Byrd). *Divine office for use*

This antiphon was most commonly used in the liturgy for the festival of St Peter in Chains, which commemorates St Peter's liberation from prison by an angel.[120] In the *Triumph of Death*, the good soul is freed from the 'chains of earth', or the prison-like desire for worldly things, and thus is welcomed into heaven. The scroll goes on to quote Revelation 21:27:

> As John says [of the heavenly Jerusalem] in the Apocalypse, There shall not enter into it any polluted thing, nor any that practise abominations and lies.[121]

The soul before St Peter has clearly met the conditions listed by St John, and will be welcomed into the heavenly city. The texts in the St John chapel *Triumph* thus show a close interrelationship with the visual, functioning as a scholarly enrichment of the didactic message of the *Triumph* and linking the new iconography with the authority of the Bible.[122] The dislocation of these quotes from their original contexts and their new juxtaposition in the setting of the *Triumph* suggest that the meaning of the image was in part actively constructed by the viewers themselves. The relationship between the image, the texts, and funerary services in the chapel articulate the hopes of the de Rossi family for a favourable judgement after death.

This overtly optimistic scene of judgement and entry to heaven is balanced by the depiction of a demon carrying three souls into a hell-mouth far below the gates of heaven in the bottom left corner of the fresco (figure 109). Here, a small demon has the souls of the doomed strapped uncomfortably to its back with a rope tied tightly

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of the laity, containing all the offices from Advent to Easter / Roman Catholic Church, new ed., with corrections and additions. (Manchester: Haydock, 1806), 373.

[120] Cantus manuscript database, "007678: Solve Jubente Deo", (Canada: University of Waterloo, 2019). Acts 12:6–7 'And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. / And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands'.

[121] The scroll continues: 'QVIA/ (A)IT IOH[AN]ES IN/ APOCALIP/SI [NON] INT/RABIT IN ILL/AM ALIQVIT/ EO INQVINATVM ET FAE/IENS ABO/MINACION/EM ET ME[N]/DACI/VM' . Transcribed by Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi", 91 n23. Revelation 21:27 'And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life'.

[122] See: Bolzoni, *The web of images*.

around their middles. While the just are treated individually and are carried reverentially from their bodies to judgement, and thence to St Peter, the souls of the damned are not worthy of such gentle treatment but are ignominiously bundled together like a heavy load of kindling. Two souls face outwards, but the middle soul is turned the other way and has his face buried in the demon's hairy coat. Although the fresco is quite damaged, it appears that, like the sinful souls in the Pisan *Triumph*, the figures in the St John chapel *Triumph* have their arms tied behind their backs in the manner of criminals, while the exposure of the middle soul's backside shows that their treatment should be understood as both humiliating and degrading.[123]

The demon is in the act of stepping over the gaping lower jaw of a monstrous head that rises out of the ground before it, complete with an extended fiery tongue waving in the air. This vivid and concrete representation of the mouth of hell is drawn from the first line of Revelation 6:8, which says:

> And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.

Apocalyptic images of Death sometimes show it accompanied by a personification of Hell, as in three versions of the Beatus Apocalypse, where hell is a huge, winged creature with a large curly beard, bushy hair, and a large nose (figure 52, figure 53, figure 54).[124] As discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, the St John chapel *Triumph of Death* is imbued with apocalyptic resonances because it appears at the end of a cycle of St John the Evangelist and for the quotations of Revelation within the fresco itself. Other images of Revelation 6:8 depict a hell-mouth emerging from the ground behind Death, as in the *Liber floridus* (figure 45) and the *Bible moralisée* (Add.

[123] Merback, *Thief, cross and wheel*, 142.

[124] c. 1175 John Rylands Library, University of Manchester The *Manchester Rylands Beatus*, MS lat. 8, folio 103 verso. (https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/MS-LATIN-00008/1).
1047 Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid Beatus of Liébana, *Codex of Ferdinand I and Doña. Sancha* (*Facundus Beatus*), Ms. Vit. 14.2 (Vitr/14/2), folio 135 recto. (https://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000051522).
1220 The Morgan Library & Museum, New York *Las Huelgas Apocalypse*, MS M.429, folio 122 recto. (https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/112348).

18719) (figure 93).[125] In the St John chapel fresco, the hell-mouth is presented as a lateral view of a leonine face, similar to the hell-mouth behind Death depicted on the crossing vault at Assisi (figure 46, c. 1305) and in depictions common in Anglo-Saxon illuminated manuscripts.[126]

There is an intriguing possibility that the inclusion of both the hell-mouth and St Michael might be related. Historian Kathleen Openshaw has pointed out a penitential prayer to St Michael that reads:

> I therefore beseech and entreat, archangel St Michael, that you … deign to take up my soul when it leaves my body and free it from the power of the enemy, so that it may bypass the gates of Hell and the ways of darkness, so that *the lion or dragon* [my emphasis] who is accustomed to receive souls into Hell and lead them to eternal torments may not obstruct it.[127]

This prayer would be appropriate to the judgement scene in the St John chapel *Triumph of Death*, where St Michael acts as an eschatological assistant to the souls of the dead while the monstrous face of hell receives souls below. Openshaw has also identified a unique depiction of Revelation 12:7 (which reads 'Michael and his angels fought against the dragon') in the eleventh-century *Arnulf prayer book*, created in Milan (figure 110).[128] Here St Michael is shown trampling the dragon while stabbing its mouth with a lance held in his right hand. At the same time, St Michael lifts a naked and diminutive soul from the dragon's mouth. For viewers of the St John chapel *Triumph of Death*, the inclusion of St Michael may have been a reminder that he could rescue souls from the very mouth of hell.

Like the mountain fissures in the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, the destination beyond the St John chapel hell-mouth may have been purgatory. Demons were just as

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[125] c. 1090–1120 Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel Lambert of Saint-Omer, *Liber Floridus*, Cod. Guelf. 1 Gud. lat., folio 11 verso. (https://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=1-gud-lat&lang=en). Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 90; Jordan, "The iconography of death", 110; Swarzenski, "Comments on the figural illustrations". *Bible moralisée*, MS Add. 18719, folio 305 recto; Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 131.

[126] Openshaw, "The battle between Christ and Satan in the Tiberius psalter", 21.

[127] Ibid., 22.

[128] Eleventh century, British Library, *Arnulf prayer book*, Egerton 3763, folio 104 verso. Ibid., 25.

likely to carry souls to purgatory, and purgatory itself was also frequently represented as a gaping mouth, as in the *Breviari d'amor* (figure 111, c. 1310–20).[129] In this poetic work on the Christian love of God, one illumination shows four hell-mouths stacked vertically, each open maw filled with souls. The key to differentiating between the four infernal regions is the attitudes of the souls therein.[130] At the highest level, Christ is shown liberating the patriarchs from Limbo, their smiling faces and prayerful gestures communicate their relief and joy. Below them, in the purgatorial fires, three figures gaze upwards at Christ, submitting to their purifying torments while holding their hands together in prayer. In contrast, the souls in the lower two hell-mouths seem to weep and struggle in despair: they have no hope of emerging from their ordeals. In the St John chapel *Triumph*, the souls strapped to the demon's back gaze upwards towards the scene of *Judgement*. That the judgement scene is of a particular judgement, and not the Last Judgement itself, seems to me to make this reading a strong possibility. For the de Rossi family, a depiction of purgatory would mean that hope was not lost for the souls of their somewhat sinful relatives. Through the bequest of the chapel and the masses performed therein, the living could materially shorten the stay of the souls in purgatory and expedite their release to heaven.[131]

A final instance of the combination of the particular judgement with the Triumph of Death is found on the outside wall of Santa Maria del Conforto, Merano (figure 9, 1380–90).[132] Here the judgement appears directly above the *Triumph of Death*, the two scenes being separated by a thin stripe of red and yellow (figure 112). Unfortunately, damage to the Merano *Triumph* has eliminated many of the key details. The pile of dead bodies is completely missing, and so too is any information about whether or not angels and demons were harvesting souls from the dead. Nonetheless, in the upper left corner of the *Triumph* we see a bestial, four-legged demon with horns

[129] c. 1310–20 National Library, Saint Petersburg, Matfre Ermengaud, *Breviari d'amor*, ms esp. F V XV 1, folio 187. Louise Marshall, "Purgatory in the medieval imagination: the earliest images", in *Imagination, book and community in medieval Europe. Papers of a conference held at the State Library of Victoria*, ed. Gregory Kratzmann (Melbourne: Macmillan & State Library of Victoria, 2009), 213–15.

[130] Ibid., 215.

[131] Le Goff, *Birth of purgatory*, 292; Marshall, "Purgatory in the medieval imagination", 217.

[132] Recla, *Santa Maria del Conforto*, 28.

and red wings gripping a homunculus soul with his forepaws (figure 113). Unlike the souls taken by the demons in the Pisan *Triumph*, the Merano figure appears very innocent and childlike. However, its open arms may also have suggested distress or a call for help. To the right of the image, in the sky above Death's arrow-pierced victims, an angel wearing a patterned white robe swoops down from the heavens to catch up another soul, of whom only the naked feet have survived (figure 114). As in the Pisan and St John chapel images of the Triumph, the nudity of souls serves to anonymise the figures, and there is no way to know which of the dead bodies they belonged to. The demon and the angel represent a moral choice for the audience: to behave virtuously and accordingly be collected by angels after death, or to behave sinfully and risk collection by a demon.

As in the St John chapel, the souls are destined for judgement overseen by St Michael. The Merano judgement scene has a notable similarity to the *Seitenstetten missal* (figure 107).[133] In both images, St Michael himself holds the balance of the scales in his left hand, as demons loaded with heavy sacks attempt to turn the ruling against the soul in the lower plate, who is kneeling in prayer. In the Merano fresco, two demons are hanging off the higher plate, while inside it another demon carries a heavy sack over its shoulder. A further two demons stand on the cross-beam. One of the demons wears full armour and wields a sword and a shield against St Michael, who himself wields a sword in his right hand. However, the size difference between the two combatants makes the outcome clear. The demons' malicious attempts to disrupt the judgement appear comical next to the potency of the archangel. Unlike in the other images of judgement already discussed, there is no depiction or sense of what happens after the judgement is complete. Now, the emphasis is on the moment of judgement itself. Nothing has been decided, and the balance may yet swing in the other direction. No assurances are extended to the audience about the destination of the soul, and they are thus asked to seriously consider their own preparations for the moment of death.

[133] Markow, "Soul of the sinner", 20.

In this chapter, I have argued that the images of the Triumph of Death address themselves primarily to urban audiences through the inclusion of the mercantile elite and mendicant friars among the pile of dead bodies. While the lack of care given to the dead is profoundly shocking and disquieting, the absence of gruesome injuries and decomposition among the corpses keeps the focus of the image on actionable problems, that is, on the ability of the living to acquire burial and funerary rites.

While the dead in the Triumph appear in significantly higher numbers, and with a much broader representation of social character types than the corpses in the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, the dead in images of the Triumph do not represent a complete cross-section of contemporary society. The decedents do not include babies or the elderly, nor the very impoverished, nor those with disabilities. The focus of the Triumph is thus fixed on the rising professional classes, as well as on the traditional strongholds of power, the nobility and clergy. However, beyond the demographics of the dead, the Triumph of Death iconography leaves many questions unanswered. The circumstance of their death is unknown, and the moral significance of the dead is rarely given. When scenes of judgement are included within the Triumph, they nonetheless elide either direct criticism of any particular social group or a clear promise of heaven or hell.

This chapter raises the question of how the bodies in the Triumph of Death might have influenced later macabre iconography. In particular, the dead in the Triumph presage some of the key features of the Dance of Death, which appeared in European visual art from the early fifteenth century.[134] In Elina Gertsman's analysis of the Dance of Death, she notes how the dying are shown as immobile while Death appropriates the power of the dance, mocking them with its ability to move.[135] We see this same dynamic in the earlier macabre form of the Triumph of Death. In the Triumph, the quiet bodies of the dead eloquently communicate the stillness of death through being contrasted with the rampaging figure of Death, which rides or flies over them. Finally, the broadening of social classes represented among the dead in the

[134] Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 3.

[135] Ibid., 69.

Triumph was surely an important precursor to the total democratisation of death found in the Dance.[136]

The figure of personified Death announces and demonstrates the swift approach of the end of life on the earthly plane of existence. Beneath the drama and spectacle of Death are the quiet results of its presence. The horrifying vision of piled corpses borders on nihilistic; status, power, earthly wealth, and devotion to God and the Church have counted for nothing in Death's reckoning. Focussed on the moment of death, the Triumph insists that its viewers consider the proper way to approach their own deaths. The dead and Death are framed by two groups of living figures who avoid or pursue Death. These exempla will be explored in the next two chapters.

[136] Ibid., 21.

Chapter three

Vanitas
The lure of the world

A defining feature of the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death is the presence of two groups of people, depicted as opposites in every way, who are usually placed on either side of Death and the pile of dead bodies. One group is composed of the poor, who are often shown dressed in rags and suffering from the effects of old age and physical infirmities. In stark contrast is an ensemble of youthful men and women, whose fashionable attire and often pleasure-seeking conduct mark them out as sinners. In this chapter and the next, I argue that these two groups are essential to the moral lesson of the Triumph of Death.

The focus of this chapter is on the group of the young and worldly who appear in every extant version of the Triumph of Death.[1] The disparity between them and the group of the poor evokes Jesus's story in Luke chapter 16, which explains how the respective fates of Dives and Lazarus (discussed in chapter two) are the result of their differing status in life. Yet while the rich man and Lazarus both perish, in the Triumph of Death the figure of Death targets only the worldly and ignores, contrary to expectations, the poor. Death's pointed attack is a significant shift from earlier images of personified Death, which sought to emphasise its inescapable and universal nature, such as in Francesco da Barberino's *Allegory of Death* where the personification of Mors fires arrows indiscriminately in all directions (figure 13, figure 14, figure 15). This chapter considers how the representation of the those hunted by Death makes explicit the central critical message of the Triumph.

[1] With the exception of the frescoes in Santa Croce, which have survived only in very partial fragments. However, enough of that Triumph survives to demonstrate a close dependence on Pisa, and we can therefore assume that these figures also appeared there.

As with the dead bodies discussed in the previous chapter, there has been almost no in-depth scholarship on this component of the Triumph of Death, either on individual examples—with the exception again of the Pisan example—or across the whole corpus. Most writers simply note the superficial qualities of the worldly figures: that they are young and wealthy.[2] While Frugoni has compared the worldly figures in the renditions of the Triumph in Pisa, in Lorenzetti's panel, in Subiaco, and in Lucignano, her purpose was to draw attention to the commonalities across these examples.[3] However, as will be shown, although the worldly figures appear in all images of the Triumph of Death, their representation is not consistent. Indeed, they are the only component of the Triumph iconography that shows clear regional styles. Such iconographic distinctions are striking when compared to the lack of geographical specificity of the other elements of the Triumph, and have not before been sufficiently noted by scholars. I begin with a comparative analysis of the versions in the Pisan Camposanto and in Castel Aufenstein, Matrei am Brenner, followed by my analysis of Lorenzetti's panel. Reflecting the novelty of the Triumph of Death as a visual theme, each of these three early examples present strikingly different articulations of worldly sin. Later renditions are discussed in geographic groups beginning with Subiaco and Lucignano, where the populous group has been culled to only two hunters. The last section turns to three Tyrolean iterations, in Bolzano and Merano, all distinctive for the way in which the intended victims plead directly with Death.

Aufenstein and Pisa are interesting test cases, because although they are visually distinct they share the same underlying themes. In the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, the worldly figures consist of ten richly dressed young people (figure 84). As I will show, these figures emulate real-world social character types from the fourteenth century. Thus, the Pisan image seeks to directly address contemporary behaviour and audiences. As identified by art historian Chiara Frugoni, the worldly people in Pisa are guilty of the capital sins of pride, avarice, and lust.[4] In the fourteenth century, these sins were understood to threaten both civic order and spiritual wholeness. In

[2] Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte"; Carletti and Polacci, "Transition between life and afterlife", 99.

[3] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1568–1633.

[4] Ibid., 1583.

Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of tyranny* personifications of Avarita, Superbia, and Vanagloria hover above the tyrant as his tutelary spirits (figure 115, 1338–39).[5] Meanwhile, St John the Evangelist tramples the same trio underfoot in a panel painting by Giovanni del Biondo (figure 116, late fourteenth century). As I will show, these are also the three major vices depicted in the Aufenstein fresco. Like the *Allegory of tyranny*, in Aufenstein the worldly figures consist of personifications of vices combined with staged scenes representing the vices that emanate from the central depiction of the hanged Judas (figure 117, 1330s).

The compositional relationship between Death and its targets is notably different at Pisa and Aufenstein. In the latter, Death's prospective victims do not appear within the frame of the *Triumph* itself, but are displaced onto the adjoining west wall (figure 118, 2024). Here, the decorative schema is divided by thick bands of ochre *sinopia* into registers, two populated with personifications of the vices. These frame the central window, within the deep recess around the window Judas, the worst sinner of all, appears at the moment of his suicide, hanging from a wooden gibbet (figure 119). The ropes of the noose are pulled tight by a cavorting demon, reminiscent of the relief on a capital in St Lazare, Autun, where two demons hang Judas by the strings of his moneybag (figure 26, 1120–32).[6] While Judas is always linked to cupidity, as I will discuss shortly, I believe here the figure is also meant to invoke a fear of dying unrepentant. As Janet Robson has argued in her analysis of the subject in Italian art (which did not, however, include Aufenstein), the depiction of the *Death of Judas* was used to invoke fear of death and of damnation.[7] Thus, although the *Triumph of Death is* on the adjoining wall, the threat of death is carried across the program.[8]

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[5] White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, 388–97.

[6] As in Aufenstein, the Autun depiction of the *Death of Judas* appears within a cycle of vices. O'Reilly, *Iconography of the virtues and vices*, 145.

[7] Janet Robson, "Fear of falling: depicting the *Death of Judas* in late medieval Italy", in *Fear and its representations: in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Brepols, 2002), 33.

[8] The relationship between Judas and personified Death in Aufenstein echoes the depiction of personified Death as an ally to *Desperacio* (deadly despair) in an eleventh century manuscript. Judas was often represented as the vice of *Desperacio*. Bibliothèque national de France MS Lat 2077, folio 169 recto. (https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc599714). Identified by Jordan, "The iconography of death", 71. For Judas as *Desperacio* see: Léon Dorez, *La canzone delle virtù e delle scienze di*

By placing an image of Judas at the centre of the cycle of vices, the authors of the Aufenstein cycle emphasised his association with the sin of avarice. Whereas ancient Christian theologians had considered pride the most dangerous vice, by the eleventh century avarice had become supreme.[9] Indeed, on the right-hand side of the window recess are a number of figures which I interpret as contributing to this reading. First, there are two cloaked people with their faces pressed close together (figure 120). A tall devil stands behind the figure on the left, and the devil's right hand is on that person's shoulder as it leans forward to whisper into the person's ear. Historian Josef Weingartner, writing in 1916, suggested that the cloaked figures were two women gossiping.[10] However, given the proximity of Judas (unidentified by Weingartner) I believe a more plausible reading is the Pact of Judas, in which he accepts the thirty pieces of silver from the high priest as the price of his betrayal of Christ. The presence of the long-limbed demon behind a cloaked figure mirrors the compositional layout of Giotto's *Pact of Judas* in the Arena Chapel (figure 138, 1305). As pointed out by Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, the placement of the devil's hand on Judas's shoulder signifies a legal agreement: the deal has been done.[11] Indeed, behind the tall devil in Aufenstein is a large hairy demon who is holding up the outstretched skin of an animal, as you might hold up a sign to be read (figure 121). A smaller demon is pointing at the outstretched skin with its index finger. Weingartner suggests that this is a depiction of a promissory note, not for money owed, but for the sinner's soul to be received in hell.[12]

The poor condition of the *sinopia* makes further reading of the two-figure group difficult, so that one cannot now tell whether Judas or his collaborator originally held a moneybag, as one might expect. Nevertheless, a demon above their heads

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Bartolomeo di Bartoli da Bologna: testo inedito del secolo XIV (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'arti grafiche editore, 1904), 82.

[9] Richard Newhauser, "Towards modus in habendo: transformations in the idea of avarice", in *Sin: essays on the moral tradition in the Western Middle Ages*, Variorum Collected Studies (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 2.

[10] Weingartner, "Die frühgotische Malerei Deutschtirols", 18.

[11] Derbes, "Barren metal and the fruitful womb", 279–280.

[12] Weingartner, "Die frühgotische Malerei Deutschtirols", 18.

indicates that dirty money has changed hands. The demon has its back to the viewer and is crouched in a wide-knee squat. Its rear end is very close to the heads of Judas and his collaborator. Visible along the demon's spine is a series of circles. I believe that these are coins and that this is a personification of avarice defecating money. Such images became popular in the late thirteenth century to express the notion of currency as a filthy and disgusting waste product.[13] Thus we may read this group of figures as a condemnation of Judas's concupiscence, which drove him to the sin of avarice. His betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver (worth no more than excrement) drove him to despair and suicide, and ultimately doomed his soul to hell: a dire warning of the consequences of sin.

The theme of avarice is continued in the top right decorative field, where four men sit behind a long table (figure 106). Closest to Judas is a man with a long beard weighing coins with a scale while a demon grasps his right shoulder. The coins on the table are very close to the face of the devil defecating coins in the window recess, visually linking the two scenes.[14] Next to the coin counter, two men confer over a pile of coins heaped on the table and a book or sheaf papers, details that strongly indicate that this is a scene of moneylending.[15] Although Aufenstein might seem a long way from the mercantile cities of central Italy, documentary evidence collected by historian Robert Davidsohn testifies to a brisk trade by Florentine mint masters, customs collectors, and financial agents in the Tyrol from the late thirteenth century onwards.[16] Avarice thus is not only depicted through the sin of Judas, but is brought into the quotidian sphere of the audience itself.

The vice of lust is similarly linked to the behaviour of contemporary audiences, in the line of merry-makers depicted in the lower left register. Bracketed by a viola player and a horn player, six alternating male and female dancers strike up a circle or

[13] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 34.

[14] I can make out about twenty coins on the moneylender's table, and about nine inside the demon. I speculate that in the finished fresco there may have been thirty pieces, evoking Judas's bribe, but there is no way to know for certain.

[15] Weingartner, "Die frühgotische Malerei Deutschtirols", 18.

[16] Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, 323–57.

line dance (figure 122, figure 123). This style of dance, known as the *carole* or the *istempitta*, often accompanied by a piper, was widespread across Europe.[17] Dancing was frequently condemned by preachers. According to the influential thirteenth-century French theologian Jacques de Vitry, 'the woman who leads the chorus is the chaplain of the devil', while his contemporary, German Franciscan preacher Berthold of Regensburg, denounced dancing as linked to deceit.[18] Line and circle dances usually progressed towards the dancers' left.[19] At Aufenstein, this would suggest that the group are dancing towards the *Death of Judas* in the central recess. At the beginning of the dance, to the right of the musician with the viola, the dance is sedate. Three couples stand with their feet on the ground, inclining their heads towards each other. Yet the danger of sexual attraction is already suggested by their physical closeness, as they link arms or hold hands (figure 124).[20] As the dance unspools, turning the corner of the window niche to progress in towards the *Death of Judas*, their initial restraint gives way to vigorous movements and lewd behaviour.

In mendicant confession manuals, the suggested questions for discovering the sin of lust included asking whether the confessant had attended or participated in public dances.[21] The concerning behaviour that might occur in such dances is demonstrated by the four figures within the recessed frame. At the far end of the line, the horn player lifts his right leg high as he cavorts to the music (figure 123). There is no doubting the implication that the human musician is an agent of sin, because directly above him a demon also plays a horn (figure 3). Next to him, a couple amorously embrace, and as they kiss the man clutches at the woman's groin (figure 123). The final dancer in the recessed space has the hem of his gown tucked

[17] Suzanne Lord, *Music in the Middle Ages: a reference guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 174. Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 61.

[18] Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The making of the Magdalen: preaching and popular devotion in the later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 159; Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 61.

[19] Jennifer Nevile, "Dance in Europe 1250–1750", in *Dance, spectacle, and the body politick, 1250–1750*, ed. Jennifer Nevile (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 30.

[20] Known by its French name as a *vielle*, this instrument was a precursor to the violin. It was called a viola in Italy but is not the same as the modern instrument that shares its name. Lord, *Music in the Middle Ages*, 140.

[21] Karen Silen, "Dance in late thirteenth-century Paris", in *Dance, spectacle, and the body politick, 1250–1750*, ed. Jennifer Nevile (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 69.

provocatively into his belt above his pelvis. In all, they represent the worst fears of censorious officials.[22] Thus, as with the moneylenders on the upper register, the sin of lust is represented in activities that were familiar to its audience.

By contrast, the vice of pride returns to an allegorical mode in the person of a crowned woman holding a sceptre and riding side-saddle on a stag (figure 125).[23] In Aufenstein, Pride's steed is trampling supine figures who raise their arms but do not attempt to get up, likely representing the vice of Sloth.[24] Finally, Envy appears as the grotesque figure of a hunched man dressed in a ragged tunic, tugging at Pride's cloak.[25] The use of personifications in this scene strikes an odd note against the more naturalistic depictions of lust and avarice. Unfortunately, the fourth decorative field on the lower right side of the wall is now lost. Perhaps whatever scene was depicted there also deployed personifications, thus balancing out the cycle. In any event, all of the segments of the west wall contribute to an overall criticism of worldly sin. Pride, lust, and avarice frame the suicide of Judas, whose own inclination towards sin led to his death and damnation. A similar fate will befall the dancers and moneylenders, because racing Death on the adjacent south wall is nearly upon them.

The Pisan fresco presents the threat of personified Death with even greater potency and immediacy. Here, a group of fashionably dressed men and women have gathered around a long bench in an orchard, oblivious to swiftly approaching Death with her scythe upraised (figure 84, 1330–35). Her victims are marked out in advance by two helpful assistants, a pair of *putti*, hovering above the closest couple and pointing downwards while holding inverted flaming torches above their heads, a

[22] The dancers' proximity to the figure of Death in the Aufenstein cycle articulates similar ideas and associations that later gave rise to the celebrated and more widely popular Dance of Death iconography. Circle dances were performed in Europe as part of traditional funerary rites, leading to stories of the dead themselves returning to the mortal world to dance in cemeteries. In the Dance of Death, the living (and dying) dance the circle dance with multiple figures of Death, realising too late that they are caught in its snare. In Aufenstein, the dance is a distraction from the coming figure of Death and the means by which the dancers doom themselves. To my knowledge the Aufenstein dancing figures have not been noted in any scholarship on the Dance of Death. Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 54.

[23] Identified as Pride by Weingartner, "Die frühgotische Malerei Deutschtirols", 18.

[24] Ibid., 18.

[25] Ibid., 18.

common antique motif of life extinguished (figure 23).[26] This enhances the impression of imminent threat: Death is about to strike. Meanwhile viewers themselves are reminded that they must urgently heed the warning of the *Triumph*. As we shall see, this compelling compositional strategy of the imminent death-stroke proved extremely popular and, with the exception of Lorenzetti's panel, was followed in all subsequent iterations of the Triumph.

At Pisa, the capital sins of pride, lust, and avarice are deftly condensed into the single scene of the young people gathered together in the garden. While the separation of the sins in the Aufenstein *Triumph* allowed for clear articulation and denunciation of each vice in turn, the Pisan fresco emphasises the interrelationship of sin, following traditional Christian exegesis. Thus, for instance, wealth fostered an attachment to the present world, engendering an enjoyment of physical pleasure for its own sake, ultimately leading people away from their social and religious responsibilities and into vice.[27] Such intertwined dangers are expressed by the extravagant clothing worn by the women. Their appearance was censured by the texts that originally appeared in the fictive frame below. Hence the direct address of the text underneath the woman wearing pink:

> Vain woman, why do you delight / to go thus painted and adorned, / so that you wish to please the world more than God? / Ah, abandon it! What a judgement awaits you / unless your heart incontinently turns / to confess itself, often, of every sin![28]

[26] The *putti* are twins of the pair who hold up the didactic scroll in the centre of the fresco (figure 143), which themselves were copied from a Roman sarcophagus repurposed by Gallo dell'Agnello (d. 1297) (figure 144), a senior civic figure in Pisa, to be used as a family tomb. Jordan, "The iconography of death", 145. The use of ancient sarcophagi as family tombs and lavish status symbols was fashionable among Pisan elites interred in the Camposanto during the fourteenth century. Karen Rose Mathews, "Recycling for eternity: the reuse of ancient sarcophagi by Pisan merchants, 1200–1400", in *Memorializing the middle classes in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Anne Leader, Studies in medieval and early modern culture (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2019), 30–31.

[27] Helen Rhee, *Wealth and poverty in early Christianity*, ed. Helen Rhee (1517 Media, 2017). xx.

[28] 'Femina vana, perche' ti delecti / D'andar cosi dipinta et adorna / Che vo'i piacer al mondo piu' che a dio? / Ai lasscia! Che sententia tu ne aspecti, / Se incontenente il tuo cor non torna, / Ad confessarsi spesso d'ogni rio!' Translation by Watson, *The garden of love in Tuscan art*, 54. Transcription from: Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari in rima", 56.

A second scroll makes the threat of sudden death and the attendant dangers of unconfessed sins even more explicit:

> O anima, perché perché non pensi / Che Morte ti torrà qual vestimento / In che tu senti corporal dilecto / Per la vertu de'suoi cinque sensi, / Col quale haverai eternal tormento / Se qui lo lassi con mortal dilecto?[29]

Presented in the vernacular and at the lowest level of the fresco, these moralising texts were accessible to a large number of literate viewers.[30] They leave no doubt as to how the woman in pink was intended to be understood. She is guilty of indulging in vain and sensory delights and is in danger of losing her mortal soul to eternal damnation if she does not immediately turn from her worldly concerns and repent.

As demonstrated by Lina Bolzoni, the texts in the Pisan cycle were part of a broader network of vernacular preaching and writing that was directed towards the rising urban classes via public sermons, devotional tracts, and classes on theology.[31] In these sermons and texts, mendicant preachers, as exemplified by famous Dominican preachers Giordano da Pisa (1260–1310), Domenico Cavalca, likely contributor to the design of the Pisan cycle (c. 1270–1342), and Iacopo Passavanti (1302–57), warned repeatedly about the dangers of material excess, which led to pride and vainglory and thus banished any hope of salvation.[32] Vanity and pride were sins to which women—particularly those of the wealthy merchant classes—were considered especially vulnerable. Giordano da Pisa warned that women's clothing led to immodesty, lasciviousness, vainglory, pride, and scandal; but above all, such clothing would lead to the ruin of not just herself, but also all those who saw her.[33]

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[29] Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari in rima", 56.

[30] Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 29.

[31] Ibid., 16.

[32] Frugoni, *Il tema dell'Incontro*, 214. Eliana Corbari, *Vernacular theology: Dominican sermons and audience in late medieval Italy* (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2013), 53.

[33] 'rovina, però che rovini li altri, tu femina, ché infiammi l'anime altrui coi vestiri dilicati. Unde ella fa peggio che se ella ardesse case, però ch'ella va ardendo l'anime!'. Cecilia Iannella, *Giordano da Pisa: etica urbana e forme della società*, Studi Medioevali (Pisa: ETS, 1999), 184.

In the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, the visualisation of these intertwined sins takes the form of carefully depicted contemporary dress.[34] The woman in pink wears an elaborate pink dress, a *sopraveste*, probably a *cotta*, over a striped *gonella* whose sleeves are visible under the slashed overdress (figure 24).[35] The other women in the garden wear similar outfits. *Cotte* such as these were garments 'exclusively … of excess'.[36] Wealth was explicitly signalled through lavish quantities of expensive fabric and adornment, as well as novelty and impractibility.[37] Although, as Bellosi and others have pointed out, a clear distinction between men's and women's clothing would not be fully articulated until the end of the fourteenth century, the woman in pink's dress was nonetheless designed as a gendered display of her body meant to evoke the sin of lust.[38] Despite excessive amounts of fabric, the pink *cotta* is cut low and wide across the woman's chest, covering only the edges of her shoulders, while her *décolletage* is displayed.

All the gowns on display are richly decorated. The patterned fabric indicated that they were meant to be understood as expensive silk or damask, with woven or embroidered designs (figure 126).[39] The richness of the fabric is amplified by the extreme length of the *cotte*, which would preclude the wearer from engaging in any gainful employment. Thus, the purpose of such garments was to display the female body and to aggrandise the wearer. In the next fresco of the Pisan cycle, the *Last Judgement*, fashionable women are dragged by their braided hair and sumptuously

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[34] For an early consideration of the costumes in the Pisan frescoes, see Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo*, 52–64. For the distinction between men's and women's fashion see ibid, 60 and 64.

[35] Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Guardaroba medievale: vesti e società dal XIII al XVI secolo* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1999), 88. Dresses of this style were popular across western Europe and were known in England as *gounes* and France as *houppelande*. See also Traci L. Austin, "Women's dress lexicon from fourteenth-century England" (University of Nebraska, 2003); ibid., 116.

[36] 'exclusively … of excess' from Austin, "Women's dress lexicon from fourteenth-century England", 118.

[37] The three principles of demonstrating wealth in dress are from Catherine Kovesi Killerby, *Sumptuary law in Italy, 1200–1500*, Oxford historical monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 116–7.

[38] Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo*, 62; Susan Mosher Stuard, *Gilding the market: luxury and fashion in fourteenth-century Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 15; Emanuele Lugli, "Fashion's measure: preaching, chronicle-writing, and the new look of the 1340s", *Fashion Theory* 25, no. 2 (2021), 157–93.

[39] Beckette Anne Ogden, "14th century English class structure in relation to fashion: a costume design analysis for 'Two Planks and a Passion'" (masters diss., California State University, 2003), 9.

decorated gowns into hell, their clothing becoming the device through which they reach their punishment (figure 98).[40] In the adjacent monumental depiction of hell itself, a woman wreathed in snakes and flames gazes into a mirror. The failure of the vain women in the *Triumph* to heed religious, legal, and moral warnings has doomed them to die with the sins of vanity and pride on their souls, fating them to an eternity in hell.

Extravagant outfits such as those worn in the Pisan *Triumph of Death* were the focus of not just religious but also secular criticism, in the form of extensive regulation through sumptuary legislation that sought to control luxury consumption, particularly among urban women.[41] Pisa passed its first sumptuary law in 1286, followed by new laws in 1302, 1305, 1350, and 1386.[42] However, women repeatedly flouted such laws, often bribing local officials for exemptions.[43] The women in the garden were thus frescoed at the height of attempted legislative control over women's clothing. The woman in pink wears a heavily decorated headpiece, probably an early version of a *balzo*, also known as a padded roll hat (figure 24).[44] Her *balzo* is decorated with pearls sewn onto the fabric in florets. Such decoration was of particular concern to lawmakers in Venice, who banned *frexatura perlarum*—embroidered borders dominated by pearls—first in 1299 for everyone except brides, then for all women in 1334, and again in 1360.[45] Thus the depiction of women's clothing in the Pisan *Triumph* was designed to evoke real-world women who acted against the codes set by religious and government leaders.

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[40] Warr, "The devil on my tail", 105.

[41] Killerby, *Sumptuary law in Italy, 1200–1500*, 112. Florence went so far as to establish the *Ufficiale delle donne*; an independent body whose sole purpose was to enforce sumptuary laws. Stuard, *Gilding the market*, 84. Bologna used secret informants as whistleblowers, and in just one month, May 1300, fourteen people were summoned to report on their fellow citizens. Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, "Sumptuary laws in Italy: financial resource and instrument of rule", in *The right to dress: sumptuary laws in a global perspective, c. 1200–1800*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 177.

[42] Killerby, *Sumptuary law in Italy, 1200–1500*, 28, 30.

[43] Stuard, *Gilding the market*, 84.

[44] Jacqueline Herald, *Renaissance dress in Italy 1400–1500*, ed. Aileen Ribeiro (London: Bell & Hyman, 1981) 210.

[45] Stuard, *Gilding the market*, 44.

The woman in pink holds a tiny white dog in her lap, another signal of her frivolous nature (figure 24). Lapdogs lack the utility of hunting or guard dogs, and their major role in the early modern period was for personal pleasure and as a display of wealth.[46] Such dogs were common as pets for the nobility in the fourteenth century, although the dog's main role in the *Triumph of Death* is an additional sign of the woman's sins, particularly greed and lust. Small white snub-nosed lapdogs were particularly associated with worldly women.[47] While manuscripts produced for a noble audience emphasised dogs' positive associations, particularly their loyalty, other symbolic meanings were at best equivocal.[48] Although there are positive Christian interpretations of dogs, most famously the Dominicans as the *domini canes* or 'hounds of God', associations attached to canines could also be negative.[49] The owners of dogs themselves emphasised the role of the canine as a status symbol by perfuming their fur; decorating them with expensive collars made of silk, velvet, and gold; or giving the animals names that evoked material luxury such as Sattin, Damask, or Perlina ('little pearl', who was a Medici pet).[50] Given this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that small lapdogs became synonymous with greed. Chaucer's Prioress fed her 'smale houndes' while paupers starved.[51] In *Het boek der natuur* (*The book of nature*, 1260), a Flemish poet deploys dogs as a metaphor for the worldly laymen and ecclesiastical

[46] Sarah Cockram, "Sleeve cat and lap dog: affection, aesthetics and proximity to companion animals in Renaissance Mantua", in *Interspecies interactions: animals and humans between the Middle Ages and modernity*, ed. Sarah Cockram and Andrew Wells (London: Routledge, 2017), 38.

[47] Lapdogs were described in the thirteenth century encyclopedia *De natura rerum* (Thomas of Cantimpré): 'sunt et minutissimi caniculi, quod matrone nobiles in sinibus suis portant' / 'these are the smallest dogs, that worldly matrons bear at their bosoms'. Quotation and translation from: John Block Friedman, "Dogs in the identity formation and moral teaching offered in some fifteenth-century Flemish manuscript miniatures", in *Our dogs, our selves: dogs in medieval and early modern art, literature and society*, ed. Laura D. Gelfand, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 330–1.

[48] Ibid., 340.

[49] Walter S. Gibson, "Metaphorical dogs in the later Middle Ages: the dogs of God and the hounds of hell", in *Our dogs, our selves: dogs in medieval and early modern art, literature and society*, ed. Laura D. Gelfand, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 368.

[50] For collars, see: John Block Friedman, "Dogs in the identity formation and moral teaching offered", in *Our dogs, our selves: dogs in medieval and early modern art, literature and society*, ed. Laura D. Gelfand, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 328; For dog names, see: Cockram, "Sleeve cat and lap dog", 42; And perfume: Ibid., 45.

[51] Alexa Sand, "And your little dog, too: Michal's lapdog and the romance of the Old Testament", in *Our dogs, our selves: dogs in medieval and early modern art, literature, and society*, ed. Laura D. Gelfand, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 165.

figures who use Church funds for their own profit instead of 'barking' to warn the faithful flock and safeguard their wellbeing.[52] Thus, the small white dog in the Pisan *Triumph of Death* signified its owner's greed and misuse of wealth, particularly her failure to act charitably.

As well as in greed, the woman in pink is implicated in the sin of lust. In addition to her inappropriate clothing, her small dog and her interaction with the falconer to her right explicate her sinful behaviour. As noted by Polzer and Frugoni, a scroll (now faint and difficult to discern) emerges from the falconer's mouth, suggesting that he is speaking to the woman in pink (figure 24).[53] Unfortunately, this section of the fresco is damaged and the text is no longer legible.[54] However, it is notable that by the direction of the scroll, the falconer's attention appears to be fixed on the woman's groin: the scroll runs from his lips to where she provocatively pushes a finger into her dog's mouth as it sits suggestively in her lap: the word for small dog, *cagnolina*, was slang for female genitalia.[55] Dogs were associated with indiscriminate and casual lust. In the *Fasciculus morum*, a fourteenth-century preachers' manual, two sinners are killed by devils for copulating on a holy day and are described as 'joined together like dogs'.[56] The medieval poem *Tghluc vanden hont* (*The luck of the dog*) asserts that men are jealous of lapdogs as they have untrammeled access to women's bedrooms.[57] In all, they express the sinful nature of the woman, who is loaded with signifiers of greed and lust.

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[52] Gibson, "Metaphorical dogs in the later Middle Ages", 366.

[53] Joseph Polzer, "The role of the written word in the early frescoes in the Campo Santo of Pisa", in *World art: themes of unity in diversity. Acts of the XXVIth International Congress of the History of Art*, ed. Irving Lavin, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 362 and 365 n22. Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il Paradiso", 1568 n18. The scroll can be seen in a documentary photograph of 1945 which recorded the condition of the fresco after the Camposanto was hit by artillery and subsequently caught fire in 1944. The black and white photograph (now held by the Frick Art Reference Library, negative number S30006) shows a large dark mark (perhaps a scorch mark) between the falconer's face and the woman in pink's shoulder. The beginning and end of the scroll are visible on either side of scorched area.

[54] This scroll is not mentioned in Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari".

[55] Paoletti and Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, 155.

[56] Friedman, "Dogs in the identity formation and moral teaching offered", 340.

[57] Gibson, "Metaphorical Dogs in the Later Middle Ages", 363.

The falconer who speaks with her, as well as the man in blue who also holds a falcon, are similarly depicted with contemporary signifiers of sin. The falcon itself was a multivalent object. While falconry traces its origins to hunting, during the Middle Ages it developed into a sophisticated and expensive art form. Training a falcon is long and difficult, requiring weeks of extreme control and discipline on the part of the falconer.[58] Despite the intensive and expensive training regime, the bird can revert to total wildness at any time and abandon its handler, adding both risk and uncertainty to this difficult endeavour. Even when the animals do not reject their handlers, the costs of training and maintaining the birds of prey far outweighs the benefits of their hunting capabilities.[59] Given the costs involved in such training, it is not surprising that in the Middle Ages powerful hunting raptors became associated exclusively with the upper classes.[60]

To be a falconer thus came to signify nobility, wealth, and sophistication. A key text for this development is the thirteenth-century *De arte venandi cum avibus* (*On the art of hunting with birds*) by Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. *De arte* was both a cutting-edge practical manual, with advice still relevant for modern falconers, and a manifesto on falconry as an art form in its own right.[61] The elevation of artistry over utility is illustrated by Frederick II's encouragement of falconers to train their birds for beautiful arcs of flight, rather than for effective hunting.[62] In images of the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, the living are frequently depicted as falconers, as in the Pisan example.[63] Young hunters with falcons also appear in eremitical images to signify the imposition of the secular world into the seclusion of hermits'

[58] The bird had to be temporarily blinded, either through the use of a hood or through *seeling*, sewing the eyes shut. Teresa Flora Lucia Gualtieri, "Birds of prey and the sport of falconry in Italian literature through the fourteenth century: from serving love to served for dinner" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 31. Then the falcon had to be kept awake for days to encourage its dependency on the falconer. Sara McKay Petrosillo, "Pluck off her bells and let her fly: falconry as medieval reading practice" (PhD diss., University of California Davis, 2016), 6.

[59] Robin S. Oggins, *The kings and their hawks: falconry in medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 110–11.

[60] Gualtieri, "Birds of prey and the sport of falconry", 1.

[61] Petrosillo, "Pluck off her bells", 37.

[62] Ibid., 39.

[63] Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 26.

sanctuaries.[64] Thus the falcons would have been understood as a quintessential signifier of the worldly classes. The falcons held by the men in the Pisan *Triumph* match the white dog on the woman's lap: while the animals could be practical and useful, here they are expensive indulgences, intended primarily as status symbols for the pleasure of their noble handlers.

In thirteenth- and fourteenth-century literature, such as poetry and romances, as well as breviaries and falconry manuals, the falcon represented both love and lust. The bird could denote the poet hunting for his lady love, such as in the writing of troubadour Rigaut de Berbezilh (1140–63), who was a major influence on the later Sicilian School of poetry under the patronage of Frederick II. In the third stanza of '*Tuit demandon qu'es devengud'amors*', de Berbezilh describes how love is like a trained hunter of perfect ladies, descending from the sky onto worthwhile lovers like a bird of prey.[65] The Pisan man turns his gaze to the woman in pink like a falcon assessing its target. The falcon could also stand in for the woman herself, who was imagined as a wild animal that a man must capture and tame, as expressed by Chaucer's Wife of Bath: 'With empty hand men may non haukes lure'.[66] In this reading, the woman is not just a wild creature that might be tamed, but also fickle and unreliable, liable to turn on—of from—the man at any moment.

Indeed, the woman in the *Triumph of Death* has already turned her gaze away from her suitor. The woman in pink seems to glance sidelong at the man in blue, himself a falconer, but he in turn is gazing at the seated musician who is playing the *stromento de porco*, a psaltery, with a quill plectrum in her right hand.[67] The psaltery player is carefully watched by the viola player who faces her, turning away from the viewers of the fresco and offering a view of the underside of his instrument. The game

[64] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art, 1260–1610*, 946.

[65] 'Car senz e pretz e larguess'e valors / e tut bon aip i eron aiostat / ab fin'amor per far sa voluntat, / et i era iois, domneiars et honors; / tot eissamen con lo falcs que deissen / vas son auzel quant l 'a sobremontat, / deissendia ab dos'omilitat / Amors en cels c'amavon lialmen'. Gualtieri, "Birds of prey and the sport of falconry", 39.

[66] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), 415; Petrosillo, "Pluck off her bells", 108.

[67] Lord, *Music in the Middle Ages*, 145.

of glances suggests adulterous passions because it is impossible to guess who among the group is formally coupled.[68] By including the falcon, then, the authors of the *Triumph* not only ensure that the figures will be understood as noble, but cast them in an unfavourable light, for the falconers and their companions are subject to improper animalistic lusts.

The couple and their flirtatious implications are not unique in fourteenth-century art. Indeed, they replay common tropes from chivalric literature and art. On a contemporaneous carved ivory mirror cover, now in the British Museum, a man holding a falcon dallies with an elegant woman seated beside him (figure 127). He looks at her groin, pointing towards it with his right hand in an echo of the damaged scroll from the Pisan *Triumph of Death*. Ivory mirror cases such as this were popular luxury objects at the time the *Triumph* was created. There are more than 2000 surviving French carvings dating from the period.[69] The vast majority of carved ivories were made for the nobility and illustrated popular secular imagery of chivalric romances.[70] One of the most prevalent themes in ivory carving was courting couples, such as the pair in the mirror case (see also figure 128, late 1300s).[71] Often, the figures were identifiable as famous lovers meeting in a garden; popular figures included Aristotle and Phyllis, Pyramus and Thisbe, and Tristan and Isolde.[72]

While Frugoni rejects the notion of identifying the couple in the Pisan *Triumph of Death* as Tristan and Isolde themselves, the ivory carvings provide a crucial cultural context that helps us to understand why they are marked out in the *Triumph*.[73] Tristan and Isolde were the most popular couple featured on carved ivories, and their adulterous love story, with its 'tryst beneath the tree', became near-ubiquitous in

[68] Watson, *The garden of love in Tuscan art of the early Renaissance*, 56.

[69] Harry Bober, "French Gothic ivory mirror case", *Annual report: Fogg Art Museum* (1952), 5.

[70] Watson, *The garden of love in Tuscan art of the early Renaissance*, 54; Katherine Elisabeth Staab, "Tactile pleasures: secular Gothic ivory" (The Pennsylvania State University, 2014), 89.

[71] Paul Williamson, "Medieval ivory carvings in the Wernher Collection", *Apollo*, 1 May 2002, 19.

[72] James A. Rushing, "Adventure in the service of love: Yvain on a fourteenth-century ivory panel", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 61, no. 1 (1998), 59.

[73] Watson, *The garden of love in Tuscan art of the early Renaissance*, 55; Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1568 fn18.

visual art in the fourteenth century.[74] The standard representation of Tristan and Isolde shares a remarkable number of similarities with the couple in the Pisan *Triumph.* Normally, the two lovers are seated either side of a tree trunk, with Tristan on the left and Isolde on the right, as in the illustration in the *Maastricht hours*, folio 273r (figure 129).[75] Isolde is sometimes shown with her small magical dog Petitcrieu.[76] Isolde's cuckolded husband Mark and his servant Melot spy on the couple from the tree above.[77] Mark is fooled by the courting couple, who trick him into thinking their relationship is chaste. While the secular reception of Tristan and Isolde focussed on their irresistible, forbidden, and tragic love, the *Triumph of Death* upsets this positive interpretation of noble courtship.[78] Although Isolde's husband was deceived, the lustful couple in the *Triumph* cannot trick the *putti* above them (figure 23). While the *putti* resemble Cupid, they do not signify love but the coming of Death and subsequent judgement, as predicted in the inscription below them. In echoing images of courtly love, the Pisan *Triumph* reimagines scenes from luxurious secular objects as a condemnation of wanton behaviour and vice.[79]

Like the representation of the line dance in the Aufenstein *Triumph of Death*, the two musicians among the elegant group in the Pisan garden scene also signified a criticism of secular and elite pastimes (figure 24). Although fourteenth-century Christian iconography increasingly used musical instruments to denote heaven, the inclusion of the musicians in the *Triumph of Death* likely reflected growing secular patronage from the elite and the presence of professional musicians at court.[80] Like the couple under the tree, the depiction of the musicians also draws on images from secular art. Early fourteenth-century erotic art often shows couples courting to the

[74] Lydia Yaitsky Kertz, "Shadows and reflections: Tristan and Isolde in manuscripts and ivory", *Word & Image* 30, no. 2 (2014), 131–3.

[75] First quarter of the fourteenth century, British Library, *Maastricht hours*, Stowe MS 17, folio 273 recto. Ibid., 136

[76] Sand, "And your little dog, too", 165.

[77] Kertz, "Shadows and reflections", 136.

[78] Rushing, "Adventure in the service of love", 63.

[79] Watson, *The garden of love in Tuscan art of the early Renaissance*, 56.

[80] Kathi Meyer-Baer, *Music of the spheres and the Dance of Death: studies in musical iconology*, Princeton Legacy Library (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 130.

sound of nearby musicians, and sometimes themselves the instruments were decorated with images of falconers and women with small dogs.[81] The inevitability of death and the foolishness of their entertainment evokes Job 21:11–13:

> They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. / They take the timbrel and harp and rejoice at the sound of the organ. / They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.[82]

In the *Triumph of Death*, the musicians signify yet another sensual pleasure that distracts from a proper contemplative life.[83] This theme is repeated in the Dominican program in the *Road to salvation* fresco in the Spanish Chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence (c. 1366, Andrea Bonaiuti da Firenze).[84] Executed some thirty years after the Pisan *Triumph*, the Spanish Chapel fresco depicts a garden scene featuring the familiar motifs of an elegant woman with a small dog, a falconer and a viola player seated on a bench in a garden. Here, they represent a distraction from the path to salvation itself.[85]

In all, the group in the Pisan *Triumph of Death* evoke the sins of avarice, lust, and pride through contemporary clothing, behaviour, and relaxing diversions. Yet although the pile of dead bodies includes the corpses of professionals, such as the doctor with the urine flask and the lawyer with his books, those hunted by Death are only the very elite of society. Thus, while the authors of the Pisan fresco address the message of the *Triumph* to the rising urban sphere generally, they avoid directly criticising any specific group. This avoidance likely serves two purposes. Firstly, it aligns with traditional Christian teachings that wealth *per se* is not sinful, but that sin occurs in one's attitude towards it.[86] By the Middle Ages this kernel had developed into increasingly liberal interpretations of the money economy by theologians. For

[81] Watson, *The garden of love in Tuscan art of the early Renaissance*.

[82] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1568 fn17.

[83] Angela Bellia, "Musica e danza nel 'Trionfo della Morte' della tarda età medievale", in *Dance, writing and performance in the late middle and early modern age* (Tarragona2015), 8.

[84] White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, 563–566.

[85] Watson, *The garden of love in Tuscan art of the early Renaissance*, 59.

[86] Rhee, *Wealth and Poverty,* ix-x; Newhauser, "On ambiguity in moral theology", 4.

instance, Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) wrote that '… civil legislation has at times tolerated usury… so as not to hinder the advantages that so many derive from it'.[87] Secondly, the close relationship and financial dependency between the authors of the *Triumph* and the mercantile elite shown among the dead bodies may have dissuaded the authors from a direct criticism of commercial activity.[88]

I suggest that a similarly equivocal reading might be applied to the depiction of the worldly in Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Redemption* (figure 4, c 1338). In this panel, the living figures are gathered around the bodies at the base of the cross. It is noteworthy that the living are not divided between those who plead for Death and the worldly; instead, the figure of the crucified Christ is placed between Death's scythe and the living. Death's threat here loses the visceral immediacy seen in the Pisan *Triumph*.[89] The living are divided into two groups. The first group stand in a line above the pile of dead bodies, starting with the hermit with the large scroll to the left of the crucifix, and then continuing with two humble figures, then a group of three women, and then two hunters. The second group are in a line below the dead bodies. This group also has a hermit with a scroll who is in conversation with a man with a moneybag. To the right are two further men in conversation.

The inclusion of the hermits within the *Triumph of Death* is unique to this panel, and reflects the interests of the likely commissioners of the panel, the Compagnia dei Disciplinati. Shortly after the panel was completed, the confraternity had a sequence of eremitical scenes frescoed on the walls of the staircase (in the 1340s or 1350s) in their chapter-house, near where the *Allegory* may have hung.[90] As art historian Andrew Chen has shown, these scenes were based on Domenico Cavalca's translation of *Vite dei sani padri*, a copy of which belonged to the confraternity.[91] The members of the confraternity clearly held the lessons of the eremitical movement in

[87] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 212.

[88] Coulton, *Five centuries of religion*, 50.

[89] This is discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

[90] Corsi, "Una nota di inventario per una provenienza da recuperare", 72.

[91] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 89–97.

high regard. Inclusion of the hermits in the *Triumph of Death* may have originated iconographically from the earlier macabre tradition of the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead. Cavalca, a member of the Pisan Dominican convent, influenced the designs of the cycle in the Camposanto.[92] In the version of the *Encounter* found in Pisa, a hermit mediates between the living and the dead, fulfilling a didactic role.[93] Because the purpose of the hermit in the *Encounter* is to explain the meaning of death to the noble hunters, the hermits' inclusion in the *Allegory* is crucial for interpreting the living in the *Triumph* scene.

The *Allegory* includes four scrolls, unfortunately now blank, two of which are held by the hermits. Probably originally there were texts written upon the scrolls that have now been lost through damage (although some scholars propose that they were never completed).[94] I concur with many other researchers that the scrolls in the *Allegory* likely contained phrases similar to those in the Pisan version of the *Encounter* next to the *Triumph of Death* (figure 130).[95] In Pisa, the hermit[96] says:

> If your mind has become aware / By keeping your sight on what is here, / Vainglory will be defeated / And you will see the death of Pride. / You too will come to this, it is clear! / Now observe the law that is written here.[97]

Because the hermit in the Pisan *Encounter* is speaking about the three dead bodies who lie before the hunters, the text on his scroll best aligns with the hermit in the *Allegory* who stands at the base of the cross, just above the pile of the dead. Among the dead, at the very base of the cross, is a corpse who holds a second scroll. This scroll perhaps held similar text to that found near the three dead bodies in the now lost frame of the Pisan *Encounter*. In the Pisan text, the corpses said:

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[92] Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 15.

[93] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1561.

[94] Mascolo, "*L'Allegoria della Redenzione*", 290.

[95] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 96; Corsi, "Una nota di inventario", 72.

[96] Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 30.

[97] 'Se nostra mente fia ben accorta / Tenendo fiso qui la vista afitta, / La vanagloria vi sarà sconfitta / La superbia, come vedete, morta. / V'accorgerete ancor di questa sorta. / Se osservate la legge che v'è scritta'. Transcription from Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari", 57; translation from Bolzoni, *The web of images*, 33.

> Tu che mi guardi et si fiso mi miri. / Vedi quanto io son ladio al tuo conspecto, / Quantunque che tu sii chiaro giovanecto, / Pensalo or prima che Morte ti tiri. / Nel mondo io hebi molti vani desiri / Et non pensai nel presente difecto: / Per dio, tua vita tollila dal dilecto, / Per via la passa de affanni et di sospiri. / Si come hora se' dèi ben pensar che io fui; / Ma il mondo amico ad ciascheduno è poco, / Venir pur dèi a questo punto et luoco. / Or fa' che in prima adoperi Cului / Il qual ti chiama sempre al summo bene / Se campar vòi dell'aspre et eternal pene.[98]

Taken in combination, the two texts in the Pisan *Encounter* warn the party of hunters to amend their ways, give up their many vain desires and meditate on both death and God. It is through such meditation that the hunters, and the audience of the fresco, might hear God's call to good and escape eternal punishments in hell. In the *Allegory*, audiences are invited to pay attention not only to the dead, but also to Christ on the cross. Indeed, if the panel did belong to the Compagnia dei Disciplinati, these instructions would echo contemporaneous confraternity statutes requiring that members pray and perform devotional gestures in front of a crucifix every day.[99]

In the *Allegory*, the warning by the corpse and the hermit closest to the cross was likely directed at the group of five worldly people who stand on the other side of the Crucifixion from the hermit (I am passing over the two humble figures who will be dealt with in the next chapter). Next to the humble figures, are three fashionable women dressed in garments of some expense (figure 131). Like the women in the Pisan *Triumph*, these figures evoked contemporary targets of legal and moral censure for vainglory. For example, the first woman wears a golden circlet on her head. Such circlets, *cerchiellium*, were subject to sumptuary legislation in Florence, requiring a fee be paid to the city before they could be worn.[100] The second woman, in a red *gonella*, wears a veil covering her hair and chin. The delicate fabric clings to her face

[98] Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari", 60.

[99] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 45.

[100] However, this rule was regularly flouted. Ser Donato, the Florentine notary charged with enforcing sumptuary laws, fined eight women for wearing forbidden headdresses over a six-month period in 1349. Stuard, *Gilding the market*, 96–7.

and neck, revealing as much as concealing. Its translucence evokes silk, so although she feigns modesty, she in fact expresses her opulent wealth.[101] The third woman wears a gold *sopraveste* of such length that she has picked it up to walk, exposing her shoes and her *gonella* with an embroidered hem. Excessively long garments had been banned by Dominican Cardinal Latino Orsini in 1279, and in 1306 Dominican theologian Giordano da Pisa declared that wearing them was a sin.[102]

Next to the women are two hunters in conversation (figure 132). On the left is a falconer with two small white dogs at his feet; like the white dog on the woman's lap in the Pisan *Triumph of Death*, these are clearly not functional hunting animals. The dogs' collars are encrusted with decorations. The falconer's pink cloak has a decorative golden collar and is lined with fur.[103] Such cloaks were incredible luxury items because to be fully lined they could require more than 2000 furs.[104] The falconer is speaking to his companion, another hunter armed with a longbow. Like the falconer, the archer is a 'fashion plate': he wears a tightly fitting red *surcotto* with blue sleeves, belted low around his hips, with a flared, gored skirt. This was a newly fashionable cut, popularised in the early 1300s by the Lord of Florence, Walter de Brienne.[105] Both men wear highly fashionable lattice work shoes.[106] Through the design of their costumes, Lorenzetti has evoked figures of luxurious excess, surrounded by useless animals.

However, in the *Allegory of Redemption* the women and the hunters are not portrayed as negatively as their compatriots in the Pisan *Triumph of death* are. Because they stand in gender-segregated groups, any opportunity for flirting has been

[101] The production of silk veils became a speciality of fourteenth-century Bologna, for example. Ibid., 10.

[102] Killerby, *Sumptuary law in Italy, 1200–1500*, 123; Warr, "The devil on my tail", 107.

[103] The fur is shown as white triangles with pale grey between them. This was the standard representation of miniver, or *vaio*, the fur of the winter coat of the European red squirrel. The alternating colours were created by interchanging white belly fur with the grey-blue fur of the animal's flank. Muzzarelli, *Guardaroba medievale*, 361.

[104] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 126 n76.

[105] Ibid., 100. A pair of very similar young men, one dressed in a tight pink *surcotto* appear in a c. 1352 scene of the court of King Meliadus, Naples (figure 133): British Library, Helie de Borron, *Roman du Roy Meliadus de Leonnoys*, Add. 12228, folio 220 recto.

[106] Ibid., 93. Richly-dressed young men wearing lattice work shoes appear in many images. Three young men, including a falconer, appear as an example of greed in the c. 1330 British Library, *Treatise on the Vices*, Add MS 27695, folio 2 verso.

removed, and there is no evidence of improper behaviour. Furthermore, it may be that these figures are observing the pile of dead bodies, as are the hunting party in representations of the *Encounter*. Indeed, the falconer seems to gesture towards the scene with his right hand.[107] The postures of the women present an interesting tableau. The woman in blue is in close conversation with the woman wearing red. Both have ducked their heads so that their faces are close together, and the woman in red holds the wrist of the woman in blue. The grip on the wrist may be a signal to pay attention. A similar gesture is found in one of the monumental allegorical vault frescoes in the lower church of Assisi, where St Francis weds a personified figure of Lady Poverty (figure 134, c. 1330).[108] In the lower right corner, an angel takes the wrist of a departing falconer to entreat him to witness the marriage.

Similarly, in the manuscript versions of Barberino's *Allegory of Death* the figure of a scholar grips the wrist of one of those attacked by Death (figure 14, figure 13). The scholar, identified as Barberino himself, is offering hope to the living by sharing the message of Christ, who is personified above them.[109] In the *Allegory*, the height difference between the women also suggests that perhaps the woman in blue is a child. Compare, for example, an early fourteenth-century sculpture of a man holding two children by the wrists that appears on a buttress in the south transept of the Portail de la Calende, Notre-Dame Cathedral, Rouen (figure 135, fourteenth century). We might interpret the woman in red in the *Allegory* as entreating a younger relative to follow the instructions of the hermit and corpses, and to 'keep [her] sight on what is here'.[110] That the women and hunters are studying the scene before them suggests that they still have a chance to reform, unlike the figures in the Pisan fresco. The confraternity that likely commissioned the panel counted a number of nobles and aristocrats among its membership.[111] Therefore, it is possible that the three women and the two hunters in the panel evoked the genteel and courtly pleasures that some of the

[107] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 96.

[108] Probably frescoed before September 1319. Gardner, *Giotto and his publics*, 88.

[109] Shelley MacLaren, "'*Or guarda tu … desta donna la forma*': Francesco da Barberino's poetic and pictorial invention" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2007), 46.

[110] Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari", 57.

[111] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art*, 97.

Disciplinati had access to. The panel was thus designed to directly exhort its audience to obey the principles of the confraternity in order to end up among the elect.

I now move to the base of the panel, where the didactic message becomes more critical in tone. Here a second hermit is in dialogue with an old man, and both hold large scrolls (figure 136). The man wears a white coif under a soft hat and a long blue robe, signifying he is of some high social or financial position.[112] In his left hand he holds a moneybag.[113] To the right of this hermit and the merchant are two further men in conversation (figure 137). On the right is a man dressed in a capacious yellow robe, with a yellow cloak and hat. He gestures towards his conversation partner, who wears a *mi-parti* robe of yellow and blue and is holding a moneybag in his right hand. Moneybags were a long-established symbol denoting that the holder had committed sins relating to wealth, particularly avarice. Moneybags would also have evoked Judas's betrayal of Christ, as in Giotto's frescoes in the Arena Chapel, Padua (1304–13).[114] While the program of the Arena Chapel interweaves a cycle depicting the life of the Virgin with a cycle that depicts the life of Christ, a thematic emphasis on usury has been noted by scholars.[115] Moneybags appear in several scenes in the Arena Chapel, providing a contemporary framing for the figure in Lorenzetti's *Allegory*. In Giotto's depiction of the *Pact of Judas* on the east wall of the chapel, Judas is shown clutching a full moneybag, the sinful nature of his betrayal of Christ for money emphasised by the presence of a claw-footed Satan (figure 138, 1305). The consequences of Judas's betrayal are shown on the west wall. In the *Last Judgement*, Judas and several other damned souls are hung by their necks from the strings of their moneybags: a clear indictment of misgotten wealth.

The figures hung by their moneybags in the Arena Chapel *Last Judgement* also evoke Dante's description of the people condemned for usury in the seventh circle of hell, sitting with moneybags tied around their necks, licked by flames and hurt by the

[112] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 85 and 88.

[113] Mascolo, "*L'Allegoria della Redenzione*", 292; Corsi, "Una nota di inventario", 71. Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1631.

[114] White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, 311.

[115] Derbes and Sandona, "Barren metal and the fruitful womb".

burning soil, while their eyes 'feast' upon their moneybags.[116] Although usury was already banned in the Bible (Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35–37, Deuteronomy 23:19–21) by the Middle Ages it had risen to be, as historian Lester Little wrote, the central ethical problem of the new cash economy.[117] As an increasing number of urban merchants achieved staggering levels of wealth through moneylending, banking, and trade, they were often typecast as usurers.[118] We can also recall, for example, the dead merchant clasping a moneybag in the Pisan *Triumph* who has his soul collected by a demon (figure 100). The moneybag thus serves to clearly mark out the men in the *Allegory* as guilty of sins related specifically to their professions. The conversation between the hermit and the merchant with the moneybag might have consisted of warnings about the dangers or futility of avarice or usury. Yet, as for the aristocratic figures above them, hope was not entirely lost. The merchant who is speaking to the hermit may have been shown in the process of repenting. Usury could be forgiven if restitution was made.[119] In Luke 19:1–10 Christ promises salvation to the rich man Zacchaeus, because Zacchaeus donates half of his profits to the poor. The design of the Lorenzetti *Triumph of Death* thus uses the figures of the worldly to directly address the members of the Compagnia dei Disciplinati exhorting them to beware the dangers of the material world.

The rest of the images of the Triumph of Death in the fourteenth century follow the model set by Pisa. The worldly are directly threatened by Death, their sins are made explicit, and they have run out of time to reform. In the images of the Triumph of Death in the monastery of Sacro Speco, Subiaco, and in San Francesco, Lucignano, the worldly figures hunted by Death have been distilled down to a pair of hunters. As I have already shown, in the fourteenth century the figure of the young noble hunter

[116] 'Così ancor su per la strema testa / di quel settimo cerchio tutto solo / andai, dove sedea la gente mesta. / Per li occhi fora scoppiava lor duolo; / di qua, di là soccorrien con le mani / quando a' vapori, e quando al caldo suolo: / [...] / ... ma io m' accorsi / che dal collo a ciascun pendea una tasca / ch'avea certo colore e certo segno, / e quindi par che 'l loro occhio si pasca'. Dante Alighieri, "Inferno 17", Columbia University Libraries, https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-5/. Lines 43–57.

[117] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 179.

[118] John Scott, "Avarice in Dante and his age", *Dante studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante society*, no. 132 (2014), 2.

[119] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 212.

acted as a visual shorthand for cupidity, pride, and lust. In the fresco cycle in Subiaco a version of the *Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead* (figure 58, 1340s) faces the *Triumph of Death* (figure 5) across the stairwell. The two macabre images present a unified message about how to properly approach death. Both images use a pair of young hunters to represent the heedless.

In Subiaco, I begin with the *Encounter.* In this image only two of the living are hunters (figure 140). Both hunters wear clothing that marks them out as a worldly men.[120] These two dapper dressers do not pay any heed to the scene of death before them. The man in white has turned his back on the display, and the two falconers talk to each other. They are contrasted with their companion. He is a young man dressed in a red robe with a white collar, with a white coif and white gloves. Possibly he is studying to become a doctor of canon law.[121] His costume can be compared to a figure of a churchman in the c. 1378 *Le songe du vergier*, folio 1v (figure 141), who is similarly dressed in a red robe with a white collar[122] The young man in Subiaco is gazing attentively at a hermit standing behind the corpses (figure 58). While no texts appear in this fresco, we can safely assume that, like the hermit in the Pisan *Encounter*, the hermit in Subiaco was intended to be understood as delivering the didactic message of the scene. The hermit is a particularly apt didactic figure for the Subiaco *Encounter*, because the monastery is built on the location of the cave where St Benedict himself had lived as a hermit.[123] The young man in the fresco, perhaps a student of theology,

[120] The man on the far left wears a *surcotto* with a high collar closed by buttons. This garment is now blue, but this appears to be later overpainting. Where the paint has flaked off, the underlying fresco shows that the garment was originally pink. The *surcotto* fits tightly around the upper body before flaring into a gored skirt below the belted waist. There appears to be expensive gold edging along the skirt gores. Long *manicottoli* tails descend from his elbows. He wears a rolled brim hat, a *mazzocchio*, which was fashionable among the elite. His *mazzocchio* has been supplemented with a *foggia*, a draping of cloth from the crown. These hats were originally created from hoods with a long decorative tail. The vertical opening for the face was turn and became the horizontal opening for the head, and the edges were rolled with the tail forming the *foggia*. The second falconer is dressed a little more conservatively in an old-fashioned loose white gown. However, he is still marked as among the well-off not only by his falcon, but also by the *manicottoli* tails on his elbows. Francois Boucher, *A history of costume in the West*, trans. John Ross (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1987), 202; Michael Harrison, *The history of the hat* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1960), 55.

[121] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 110.

[122] c. 1378, British Library, *Le songe du vergier*, Ms. Royal 19 C IV, folio 1 verso.

[123] Romano, *Eclissi di Roma*, 128.

models an appropriate attentiveness to the wise hermit's lecture and the lesson of the corpses.

The three dead appear to be the same figure at different stages of decomposition. The third corpse is a skeleton, and even his clothes have rotted away (figure 142). The first two corpses are dressed in red robes with gold trim. The robe has a miniver fur collar and, as we can see on the second corpse, where the process of decomposition has caused the robe to flop open, it is also lined with miniver. The corpse was likely meant to represent a senior scholar, possibly of theology.[124] While the living man who listens to the hermit is not wearing exactly the same clothing as the corpse, the similarity between their dress does suggest that they should be understood as being linked. They wear matching coifs and white gloves, and red robes with white around the shoulders. The way the living man holds his hands in front of his body mirrors the crossed hands of the corpse. The corpse is the living man's future self.

For the young man in red in the Subiaco fresco, the encounter with death is a profound reflection on his own eventual death, a reflection ably guided by the hermit. From this, he can choose to act in accordance with Christian teachings and go to his grave with care and proper ritual. The separation between the attentive man in red and the uninterested falconers is further emphasised by the use of the physical reality of the space. Sacro Speco is built into the holy caves in the cliff face of Mount Taleo above the Aniene River valley.[125] The challenging reality of this environment is made constantly apparent when encountered in person, as I experienced during my

[124] Solid-coloured robes with fur lining were the standard clothing of scholars and chaplains at universities. Red robes with miniver were worn by Italian doctors of medicine and law. Berthe M. Marti, *The Spanish College at Bologna in the fourteenth century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 84; Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 85. This is described in Boccaccio's *Decameron* on the Eighth Day in Novel Nine: ''Tis matter of daily experience that our citizens come back to us from Bologna, this man a judge, that a physician, and the other a notary, flaunting it in ample flowing robes, and adorned with the scarlet and the vair and other array most goodly to see … ' / 'Sí come noi veggiamo tutto il dí, i nostri cittadini da Bologna ci tornano qual giudice e qual medico e qual notaio, co' panni lunghi e larghi, e con gli scarlatti e co' vai e con altre assai apparenze grandissime, … '. Transcription from Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, trans. Vittore Branca, 1a ed., I Meridiani (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1985). Translation from *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio*, trans. J.M. Rigg (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903).

[125] A complete description of this complex can be found in Romano, *Eclissi di Roma*, 127–131 and 345–349.

fieldwork visit. Various rooms have odd, unsymmetrical dimensions as the building wraps around the mountain. The *Encounter* is spread over two surfaces, which meet at an inside corner (figure 140). The falconers are on the surface to the viewers' left; while the man in red, the hermit, and the corpses are on the surface to the viewers' right. The physical separation between the two groups emphasises the moral distance between them.

Turning to face the *Triumph of Death*, we find another pair of young hunters, one with a falcon, in close conversation with each other (figure 145). Like the young men in the *Encounter*, those in the *Triumph* are dressed in the fashions of the contemporary elite.[126] In all, just as in the *Encounter*, their clothing was intended as a signal of their preoccupation with the quotidian and their failure to pay attention to the lessons of the Church, particularly to prepare for death. Indeed, like the young men in the *Encounter*, they do not pay attention to coming death. While in the *Encounter* death is expressed passively by the silent corpses, in the *Triumph* the living are threatened by the sword-wielding personification of Death itself. The escalating danger of Death has not notably changed their behaviour. Again, the young men turn their backs on Death and talk between themselves. But inattention is no protection from Death, and its effects interrupt their conversation. The falconer's cheeks are pallid, and his eyes are half-closed: he is dying. His friend who stands close to him asks with concern:

> Your face has changed … / … so pale; / I want to know who hurt you so.[127]

[126] The falconer in the Triumph wears a pink *surcotto*, also with *manicottoli* tails on his elbows, perhaps a visual link with the now overpainted *surcotto* in the *Encounter*. His *mazzocchio* now features a draped *becchetto* descending behind his right shoulder. The falconer's companion is dressed in a dark blue *pellanda* with a high collar. The garment's slashed sleeves reveal a contrasting pink lining which denotes expensive and careful construction. Both men wear the highly fashionable lattice-work shoes (figure 158) earlier modelled by the hunters in Lorenzetti's *Allegory*. Harrison, *The history of the hat*, 55; Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 93.

[127] 'Changiato sé nel viso […] / […] tanto scolorito; / vorria sapere che t'à così ferito'. D'Achille, *Parole: al muro e in scena*, 56. See also: F. Hermanin, "Gli affreschi del secolo decimoquarto", in *I monasteri di Subiaco*, ed. P. Egidi, G. Gionvannoni, and F. Hermanin (Roma: a cura e spese del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1904), 511; Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1627 fn134; Völser, "The theme of death in Italian art", 89.

Here, dramatic irony is used as a mechanism to teach the audience. The cause of the falconer's troubles is not clear to his friend ('*vorria sapere che t'à così ferito*'), but the vision of a skeletal Death astride a horse is visible to the audience. We can see that Death's sword has just touched the neck of the falconer and soon the power of Death's horse will drive the sword home in a killing blow. The audience is thus made aware that invisible Death stalks everyone, and even the young and well-off can be taken suddenly in the midst of life. The doomed falconer replies to his friend:

> I feel great pain and with laboured breath / I feel death wounds my heart / and immediately takes all my worth.[128]

The falconer reports feeling death's advent through physical effects—'*Cho[n] gran dolor e con forti sospiri*'—and through the immediate loss of his *valore*. *Valore* was most often used to denote high intellectual, moral, or professional qualities, as in Dante's *Inferno* 4:43–45:

> Great sorrow seized my heart on hearing him, / for I had seen some *estimable* men [my emphasis] / among the souls suspended in that limbo.[129]

However, in the context of the *Triumph of Death*, where the targets of Death are without doubt the wealthiest members of society, *valore* is also a play on words. *Valore* was also used to signify economic value, for example in scholastic and Franciscan writings on commerce.[130] The text thus is a warning against the same sins as are depicted among the worldly in Pisa: avarice, pride, and vanity. At their root is the distraction caused by the material world, a source of corruption that blinds the young men to the reality of their mortal lives. It is this focus on worldliness that provides the lens through which death is viewed and the lesson of the *Triumph of Death* is communicated. Death in the Subiaco *Encounter* is peaceful because the young doctor

[128] 'Cho[n] gran dolor e con forti sospiri / sentia la morte che ferì al core; / de subito ne tolse omne valore'. D'Achille, *Parole: al muro e in scena*, 57.

[129] 'Gran duol mi prese al cor quando lo 'ntesi, / però che gente di molto valore / conobbi che 'n quel limbo eran sospesi'. Dante Alighieri, "Inferno 4", Columbia University Libraries, https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-4/.

[130] Susan J. Noakes, "Franciscan economic discourse in Dante's 'Paradiso' 10–3: the semantics of 'valor'", *Dante studies* 127 (2009), 153.

confronts it face-to-face, listening to the lessons imparted by the hermit. In contrast, in the *Triumph of Death* the two young men have paid no heed to the lessons of the Church, and therefore one dies unprepared.

A similar pair of young men is found in the *Triumph of Death* in the church of San Francesco in Lucignano (figure 8, 1380s). Here the familiar falconer is joined by an archer, echoing the hunters in Lorenzetti's *Allegory*. Again, both men are dressed in the contemporary fashions of the elite (figure 146). The tight *surcotto* seen in Subiaco has been modernised to the manner of the late fourteenth century, and both men wear the longer and much looser *pallende* belted at the waist.[131] While the men are purportedly on a hunt, the long sleeves of the archer and the loose cape of the falconer would have made movement difficult, so their clothing is a clear sign that these men are not hunting for necessity, but for pleasure. The two young men have linked their arms companionably and, as in Lorenzetti's panel and in the Subiaco *Triumph of Death*, are in conversation.

Their dialogue betrays their preoccupation with the material world. The archer observes 'The world is very sweet for whomever can pay': the falconer replies with the qualifying statement: 'You speak the truth, if prosperity lasted'.[132] Although their focus on the physical world is shown to be foolish because Death will shortly shoot them down with her arrow, the falconer's statement suggests that he has some awareness of the fleeting nature of worldly pleasures. Likely, the text is addressed as much to the viewer as to his companion. The two young hunters stand beside a lone tree, to which is attached a long, unfurled scroll. The scroll was likely originally inscribed, but is now blank. Beneath the scroll, an axe is lodged in the tree's trunk and, at the very bottom, two black rats have their noses pressed against the trunk. The vivid imagery of the axe

[131] Both *pallende* have dagged hems (that is, the edge of the fabric is cut perpendicularly), a design which had returned to popularity just before the painting of this fresco. Also typical of 1380s style are the exaggerated sleeves of the archer. The red colour of their outfits would have been particularly evocative of wealth for viewers. For most of the fourteenth century, crimson was an expensive dye used to make fabrics highly sought after by the upper classes. Herald, *Renaissance dress in Italy 1400–1500*, 45 and 224; Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 108 and 120; Killerby, *Sumptuary law in Italy, 1200–1500*, 63; Muzzarelli, *Guardaroba medievale*, 45.

[132] 'Quante dolcie mondo chi sa pagasse / Tu dici benvero se prosperita durasse'. Transcription: Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte", 153. See also Völser, "The theme of death in Italian art", 95.

in the tree is derived from the penitential preaching of John the Baptist, as reported in two near-identical biblical passages that warn individuals who do not repent that they will be punished after death:

> And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Matthew 3:10)

> And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Luke 3:9)[133]

The two young hunters stand close to the tree, so it is clear they are the ones who 'bringeth not forth good fruit'. The blank scroll could once have contained a reference to, or a quote from, one of these passages. The axe would have been a familiar allusion to coming judgement for contemporary audiences, thanks to its popular use in penitential preaching.[134]

While the biblical passages may explain the axe, they do not address the distinctive inclusion of the two small rats at the base of the tree. They are a clear sign, as first observed by art historian Chiara Frugoni, that the young men and the tree are a reference to the Barlaam and Josaphat legend, with its allegorical story of a man who is fleeing from a unicorn (symbolising death) and falls into a pit (the world).[135] There he holds on to a shrub (life) which grows from the wall of the pit. He soon realises that two small animals, one white (day) and black (night) are eating the roots of the shrub. Four snakes (the elements of his body) move under his feet. At the bottom of the pit is a dragon (hell), waiting to eat him. In the shrub is a beehive, and while tasting the honey that drips from it (the pleasures of worldly life), the unfortunate man forgets

[133] This imagery also appears in the c. 1459 altarpiece the Mystical Nativity by Fra Filippo Lippi. The adoration of the child is set in a forest, and the Christ child is surrounded by evidence of woodcutting, including an axe lodged in a tree.

[134] Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte", 153; Völser, "The theme of death in Italian art", 95.

[135] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1626.

the reality of his situation and thus seals his fate.[136] The pleasures of the material world act as a dangerous distraction from the threat of hell. The moral of this parable has unmistakable parallels with the message of the *Triumph of Death*. But how did the two stories come to be combined in Lucignano?

The Barlaam and Josaphat stories, of which the honey-eating man is only one example, were a retelling of the life of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, that entered Europe in the mid-eleventh century via a Latin translation.[137] New Latin retellings published by Dominicans in the *Speculum historiale* by Vincent de Beauvais (d. 1264) and in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacques de Voragine (d. 1298) spread the story widely in Italy in the thirteenth century.[138] Barlaam and Josaphat were popularly understood as saints after their inclusion in the 1370 *Catalogus sanctorum*, a collection of moral stories by Pierre de Natalibus (d. c. 1400–06).[139] The first vernacular telling of the story in Italy was completed in the fourteenth century by the Sienese Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi (d. 1406) a resident of Asciano, a town only 18 kilometres from Lucignano.[140] Thus the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat was likely well known by literate audiences of the Lucignano fresco.

Indeed, a late-fourteenth-century fresco depicting the same parable as in Lucignano is found in the meeting hall of the Palazzo Corboli, Asciano (figure 147, late 1300s).[141] The Asciano version appears in the central tondo of the *Rota di Barlaam*, where the parable has been simplified to a depiction of Josaphat as a fashionable

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[136] Maria Monica Donato, "Un ciclo pittorico ad Asciano (Siena), Palazzo Pubblico e l'iconografia 'politica' alla fine del medioevo", *Annali della scuola normale superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia* 18, no. 3 (1988), 1237.

[137] The story had been passed through a number of languages before reaching western Europe. This explains some of the odd names in the Latin story. For instance, Bodhisattva became Budasaf (Arabic) then Iodasaph (Georgian) then Ioasaph (Greek) and finally Josaphat in Latin.
Joseph A. P. Wilson, "The life of the saint and the animal: Asian religious influence in the medieval Christian West", *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009), 176–7.

[138] Rosalie Ann Vermette, "The Champenois version of the 'Barlaam et Josaphat': a study in textual transmission" (PhD diss., The University of Iowa, 1975), 6.

[139] Ibid., 6.

[140] Donato, "Un ciclo pittorico ad Asciano (Siena)", 1239.

[141] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1626; Stefania Barbetti, "Asciano", in *Palazzo Corboli: museo d'arte sacra*, ed. Cecilia Alessi (Siena: Protagon Editori Toscani, 2002), 18; Alessandro Bagnoli, "Gli affreschi dell'antico palazzo Bandinelli ad Asciano", Ibid., 68.

young man standing in the branches of a tree, while a black rat and a white rat nibble at the tree's roots.[142] The unicorn and the dragon frame the tree trunk. Text in the frame of the tondo spells out the meaning of this scene, reading: 'Here is every man deceived by the world tree'.[143] Just inside the frame of the tondo, the hand of God appears, pointing to text that condemns the greedy who focus on the material world while their time on earth quickly passes and death inexorably approaches.[144] While the two hunters in the Lucignano *Triumph of Death* are not *in* the tree, the archer's description of the world as 'sweet' evokes the honey that distracts the man in the parable. Rather than the unicorn pursuing them as a metaphor of death, Death itself hunts them. Perhaps the blank scroll once held texts similar to those in the Asciano fresco, making plain the link to the Barlaam and Josaphat legend. The two small rats in Lucignano act as a visual nod to the parable, layering on top of the *Triumph of Death* a second narrative about the dangers of the material world, and strengthening the *Triumph*'s condemnation of the worldly.

Finally, I turn to the depiction of those hunted by Death in the three remaining versions of the Triumph, all in the Tyrol. These are found in the St John chapel, Bolzano (figure 2, 1329–35), in Castel Cornedo in Bolzano (figure 7, 1366), and in Merano (figure 9, 1380–90). All of these versions of the *Triumph of Death* share three significant differences from other representations of the iconography. Firstly, in these Tyrolean images those hunted by Death are in close proximity to a representation of a city. Secondly, they are aware of Death's approach. Finally, Death actively kills a number of figures among the living. Yet, notwithstanding these variations, those hunted by Death are still portrayed as the sinful elite.

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[142] Donato, "Un ciclo pittorico ad Asciano (Siena)", 1235.

[143] 'Hic est omnis homo decieptus ab arbore mundo' transcription from: Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1628.

[144] 'O dives qui fi…t i mundo quia senper / tua tenpora curunt'. Transcription from: Donato, "Un ciclo pittorico ad Asciano (Siena)", 1236. The opening phrase may have been drawn from Juvenal: 'Dives qui fieri vult, et citò vult fieri', 'The man who is anxious to become rich, is anxious to become so with all speed'. See H. T. Riley, ed., *Dictionary of Latin quotations, proverbs, maxims, and mottos, classical and medieval, including law terms and phrases with a selection of Greek quotations* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1866), 88.

I begin with the representation of the built environment in these three versions of the Triumph of Death. In the St John chapel and Merano versions of the *Triumph*, Death fires upon, and rides towards, city towers. In the St John chapel *Triumph*, Death's arrows hit the tower on the far right-hand side of the fresco (figure 148, 1329–35). The tower collapses under the barrage, and masonry tumbles onto a group of young men on horseback who were trying to reach safety inside the city gates. Unfortunately, in the Cornedo version of the Triumph, damage to the fresco has obliterated almost all of the figures in front of Death. However, on the far left of the image is a knight wearing a rounded helmet, who appears to have collapsed over a wall (figure 149, 1366).[145] His limply hanging body is strongly reminiscent of the victims of Mors in Barberino's *Allegory of death* images in the *Officiolum* and *Documenti*, in which soldiers in chain mail and close-fitting round helmets are hit by Death's arrows as they stand on ramparts (figure 13, figure 14).[146] Finally, in the Merano *Triumph*, Death fires arrows into the tower itself and into a crowd gathered below. One of Death's arrows has slipped through the tower window and hit a victim in the throat (figure 68, 1380–90).

The inclusion of the city scenes in the Tyrol have been linked by art historians to the increasing influence of Giotto in northern Italy.[147] However, Giotto's revolutionary use of the formal qualities of architecture to express human emotion is not repeated by the authors of the Tyrolean images.[148] Instead, the effects of the architectural elements within the *Triumph of Death* serve to contextualise the figures of the worldly. In the fourteenth century, urban aesthetics were intrinsically linked with civil values, and almost all Italian cities undertook unprecedented public works

[145] Jordan identified this figure as possibly a guard from a 'city wall or tower'. Jordan, "The chapel of St. Kathrein", 489.

[146] Both manuscripts also feature a dead knight close to Death's left side. The knight is in full armour and is shot in the chest. He slumps backwards over the rump of his dead horse which has collapsed and lies pathetically with its legs folded under it and its head lowered. This knight is also reminiscent of the dead nobles on horseback in the St John chapel *Triumph*.

[147] Dde Marchi, "Illusionismo nordico e spazialità giottesca a Bolzano", 18; Waltraud Kofler Engl, "Il gotico lineare", 30.

[148] White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, 315–316.

to beautify their urban environments.[149] Conversely, the presence of broken or destroyed towns and buildings spoke symbolically of moral failure.[150] Lorenzetti's famed *Allegory of good and bad government* in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico uses these themes specifically in addressing a political audience. In the *Allegory of good government*, the city is filled with construction work and well-maintained buildings. In *Bad government*, the buildings have fallen into disrepair. The references to fallen cities in Christian teaching strengthens this reading. The falling tower brought down by Death's bolt resonates with biblical descriptions of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven (Genesis 19:23–25) and the destruction of Babylon by earthquake at the end of time (Revelation 14:8). The collapsing tower in the St John chapel *Triumph* thus represents a moral failure or lapse that leaves Death's victims physically and spiritually unprepared and unprotected.

As I argued in chapter two of this thesis, fourteenth-century images of the Triumph of Death focus their attention on the educated, wealthy, and cosmopolitan populace of the city. The inclusion of the built environment behind those hunted by Death in these Tyrolean images serves to firmly establish them as city dwellers. As in all other versions of the Triumph, they are depicted as worldly elites. In the St John chapel *Triumph*, the worldly are separated into two groups. On the same level as Death are a group of young men on horseback who flee towards the city tower (figure 148). They are not knights, as they wear no armour, but are perhaps intended to represent wealthy young men who were riding for pleasure (like the hunters in the Pisan *Encounter*, figure 17).

Although almost entirely obliterated by a large area of loss, a second group of men and women originally stood before the city gate. This crowd of the living occupies the same level as the piled corpses gathered by Death's scythe and trampled under the hooves of its horse. Unfortunately, nearly all of these figures have been lost, with only the upper part of some faces discernible around the edges of the lacuna. All stare

[149] Marco Folin, "Transient cities: representations of urban destruction in European iconography in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries", in *Wounded cities: the representation of urban disasters in European art (14th–20th Centuries)*, ed. Marco Folin and Monica Preti, Art and material culture in medieval and Renaissance Europe (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 5.

[150] Ibid., 6.

upwards towards Death. Starting from the left edge of the crowd, we first see a man in a purple *berretta*, a common Italian round hat with the brim folded up (figure 150).[151] He has raised his right hand in a gesture of terror at Death, and the movement has dislodged his purple cloak, which falls back to reveal a pink sleeve. The mixing of bright colours had long been popular among the worldly, attracting criticism from theologians such as influential French theologian Peter Cantor (d. 1197), who commented on the superficiality displayed through an 'unwarranted' variety of colours in clothing.[152] Behind the man in the *berretta* is a large section of missing plaster. Past this gap are three men who are visible from the nose up (figure 151). They have the blond hair that characterises the elite young hunters in other images of the Triumph, so probably these were also male youths. Next to them stands a woman, identifiable by her golden veil, reminiscent of the worldly women found among the crowds of the living in the Pisan and Lorenzetti versions of the Triumph.[153] Thus the crowd facing Death in the St John chapel was probably comprised of a mix of genders who, like the groups in the Pisan and Lorenzetti versions of the Triumph, were all members of the worldly classes.

Death itself warns against earthly pleasures, as we read on the scroll that curls over its right arm (figure 152):

> After this life, I will reward you for fleshly delights and worldly wealth by throwing you before scorpions, snakes and biting worms. As it says in Ecclesiasticus, for when a man shall die, he shall inherit snakes, beasts and worms [cf. Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 10:13].[154]

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[151] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 145; Herald, *Renaissance dress in Italy 1400–1500*, 210.

[152] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 57.

[153] Scott, *Medieval clothing and costumes*, 26.

[154] '[P]RO CARNIS DILLICIIS MV(N)DIQVE DIVICIIS SIC VOS/ PREMIABO SCORPIONES AC SERPENTES VERMES/ QVOQV(E) [MOR]DE(N)TES POST HANC VITA VOBIS DABO/ [QV]IA DICIT[T IN EC]CLESIASTICO V[T] MORIT[VR] HO[MO] HEREDI/[TABI]T SERPENTES BESTIAS ET V[ER]MES'. Transcribed by Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi", 91 n23. The text is still visible and matches Rasmo's transcription. English translation (with some modifications by Louise Marshall) from Völser who also notes the quotation from Ecclesiasticus (Sirach). Völser, "The theme of death in Italian art", 76.

The interpretation of those hunted by Death is dictated to the audience by a scroll that emerges from behind the head of the foremost figure (figure 153):

> [F]orma genvs mores sapiencia rhs honores [ce]rte rvine [svb]ita .ola mane/[b]v[n]t qvia dicit in proverbiis non aqvieset cvivsqva precibvs / nec svsipiet pro redepcioe [b]ona [pl]vrima.[155]

The text reframes the quotation from Proverbs 6:35, originally about adultery, casting Death in the role of the reproachful and vengeful husband.[156] Thus readers are warned against the earthly pleasures, both material and intangible. As in the images in Pisa and Aufenstein, the worldly should beware pride (nobility and wisdom), avarice (wealth), and lust (beauty). The excerpt from Proverbs seems to suggest that members of the crowd before Death were trying to buy their way out of dying:

> He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts

Indeed, in the nearby fresco of the *Triumph of Death* above the cemetery of Santa Maria del Conforto in Merano, one of the worldly before Death is holding up a moneybag in a vain offering (figure 68). He bears a noticeable resemblance to the man in the *berretta* in the St John chapel fresco (figure 150). Their clothing is nearly the same; the man in Merano also wears a purple cloak over a pink shirt. They stand in nearly the same pose: they tilt their heads back, facing upwards, towards Death. Both raise their right arm, which is bent at the elbow. Given these close resemblances, plus the other similarities between the two frescoes, it is possible that figures among the crowd in the St John chapel example were also offering moneybags to Death.

Although the Merano fresco has sustained extensive damage, four more living figures are still visible (figure 68). As with the other figures discussed in this chapter,

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[155] Transcription by Rasmo, who also identified the reference to Proverbs 6:35: 'Nec acquiescet cuiusquam precibus nec suscipiet pro redemptione bona plurima'. Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi", 91 n23.

[156] 'But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. / A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. / For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. / He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts'. Proverbs 6:32–35.

their clothing marks them out as being from the urban upper class. Closest to the viewer are two young men with light brown hair, both wearing green. Green was a fashionable colour among fourteenth-century elites.[157] The man in the tower window, already shot by Death, shares their hairstyle. At the back of the standing group is a veiled woman. She wears a *kruseler*, a headdress popular in northern Europe during the Middle Ages. Its distinctive, delicately layered ruffles required a fine fabric to achieve, and thus it signified status and wealth.[158] The figures who are still alive all look in Death's direction. As in the St John chapel fresco, this crowd of sinners does not use their knowledge of Death to repent or to make restitution but will go to their graves with sin on their souls.

A similar theme was likely expressed in the *Triumph of Death* in the de Rossi family chapel in Castel Cornedo, Bolzano (figure 7, 1366). Unfortunately, like the other Tyrolean images, this fresco has suffered extensive damage, which has obliterated almost all the figures in front of Death. Between the dead knight and the figure of Death is a large gap without any substantial sections of *sinopia*; however, scant remnants of colour reveal some faces and clothing, making it clear that a large crowd stood before Death (figure 154). Not enough detail remains to securely count or identify the social types that made up most of the crowd. Only two figures are clearly recognisable, standing at the front of the group and identifiable by their mitres as two bishops.[159] The bishops look towards Death, suggesting that like the crowd in the St John chapel, the living hunted by Death in Cornedo were also aware of their fates.

The inclusion of bishops among those hunted by Death is unusual. No other fourteenth-century Triumph of Death shows clerical figures among the living,

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[157] Wardrobe accounts: Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 84.

[158] Rasmo, "La chiesa di Santa Maria del Conforto a Maia Bassa", 34 n11; Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 105. See for comparison the headdress of the queen in the c. 1352 *Roman du Roy Meliadus de Leonnoys*, Add. 12228, folio 220 recto. (figure 133). The same style of veil, more clearly depicted, is worn by the Italian woman in *The Arnolfini portrait*, 1434, Jan van Eyck. (figure 155)

[159] Mitres were first introduced as headwear for bishops in the eleventh century, and the pointed-shape mitre with the centre vertical band, as represented in the *sinopia* in Cornedo, dates from the twelfth century. Jane Hayward, "Sacred vestments as they developed in the Middle Ages", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 29, no. 7 (1971), 306.

although they do appear among the dead.[160] However, many clerical figures petition Death in a fifteenth-century version of the Triumph on the façade of the Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, Clusone (figure 156, 1484), (Clusone is around 250 kilometres southwest of Bolzano). As in the Tyrolean frescoes, Death's victims are shown in Clusone as a large crowd who are aware of Death's advent: they plead for their lives, and a number of figures offer worldly goods to Death. The majority of the crowd are ecclesiastical (figure 157). Close to the sarcophagus that Death stands on, a bishop wearing his mitre invites sacrilege by offering gold and silver coins on a paten. At the upper right side of the sarcophagus, a pope wearing the papal tiara also holds up an elaborate paten also filled with gold and silver coins. Death responds by saying: 'Death comes in full equality; I only want you and not your riches …'[161] The clerical hierarchy is shown gathered behind the pope, with four red-robed cardinals, three bishops in mitres, other tonsured heads who might be deacons, a Franciscan friar, and two black-robed Augustinians. Thus, the bishops in Cornedo may have been a forerunner to those in the fifteenth-century Clusone *Triumph,* and represent the corrupting influence of worldly power, even on those in the Church.

Notably, all three of these Tyrolean examples of the Triumph show Death actually killing members of the worldly. This motif also appears in the Subiaco version of the *Triumph of Death*. In the Subiaco fresco, Death's sword is about to strike home in the young man's neck (figure 145). In the St John chapel *Triumph of Death*, two of the riders are killed by the collapsing tower, and their bodies slump lifelessly over the haunches of their steeds (figure 148). In the *sinopia* in the Castel Cornedo, a knight lies slumped on the far left of the surviving image (figure 149), presumably killed by one of Death's arrows. Finally, in the Merano *Triumph* two of the extant figures have been shot by Death's arrows; they fall backwards with their eyes closed (figure 68). In chapter two I argued that the lack of violence enacted on the dead bodies in the pile beneath Death likely reflected the relationship between the authors of the

[160] Members of the clergy appear among the dead in Pisa, Lorenzetti's *Allegory*, Subiaco, and Lucignano. See chapter two of this thesis.

[161] 'Gionto la morte piena de egualenza sole voy / ve voglio e non vostra richeza …'. Terraroli, "Il ciclo dei temi macabri a Clusone", 38.

iconography and their flocks. As I have shown, while the pile of dead bodies included an ambivalent representation of the urban upper classes, the figures *hunted* by Death are not only the very elite of society but are sinners. Thus, the graphic killing by Death is a manifestation of its divinely willed role as the punisher of sinful humanity.

In this chapter, I have argued that the worldly figures hunted by Death functioned as cautionary models. They are unprepared for the moment of their death because they have been seduced by the pleasures of the material world and led into sin: they flirt and dance, indulge in expensive clothing and hobbies, and even attempt to buy off Death itself. Indeed, the swiftly approaching figure of Death heightens the urgency of the scene: the worldly have frittered away their last opportunity to repent and will go to judgement with sin on their souls. Although the purpose of the worldly figures remained consistent within fourteenth-century images of the Triumph, their representation varied, reflecting contemporary fashions and local concerns, linking each image of the Triumph to its own specific time and location. The texts in the frescoes in Pisa, Subiaco, the St John chapel, and Lucignano affirm the criticism of the worldly, reinforcing that they were intended to be understood as immoral and sinful. The unique depiction of the worldly as lustful dancers in the Aufenstein *Triumph* raises the question of whether there is a link to the later imagery of the Dance of Death, an area for possible further research.

In the Triumph of Death, the pile of dead bodies challenges viewers to consider their own mortality, and how to prepare for it. The living figures within the Triumph model two possible modes of behaviour. The young and worldly, while living pleasurable lives, prove to be deluded. The swift approach of personified Death undercuts the carnal joy of the young and worldly. Death itself cannot be turned away by offerings of gold. However, the question of how to face death is not left unanswered: mirroring the worldly is a second group of living figures who are old, poor, and ill. In the next chapter I explore how this second group were intended to act as a final dire warning about the corrupting dangers of avarice.

Chapter four

Moralitas
On those ignored by Death

In fourteenth-century images of the Triumph of Death, there appears a group of figures who play a similar role to that of the beggar Lazarus as described in Luke 16. Represented as both poor and infirm, they are placed behind the figure of Death, showing that they have been missed by its scythe.[1] Unlike the figures of the worldly, who enjoy the pleasures of life, as discussed in the previous chapter, those missed by the scythe beg for Death to take them by calling to Death and reaching out their arms in a pleading gesture. As in the comparison of Lazarus to the rich man, the figures who beg Death for release are depicted as the inverse of the worldly figures. The two groups are most often shown opposite each other, framing the figure of Death and the pile of dead bodies. This formal arrangement is reinforced by the visual characterisation of the two groups as the converse of each other: poverty is contrasted with wealth, old age with youth, and physical infirmities with beauty. In the Luke 16 story, the contrast between Lazarus and the rich man continues into their afterlives, because Lazarus ends up in Abraham's bosom while the rich man goes to hell. However, despite the superficial opposition of the two groups, the seemingly pitiful figures in the Triumph of Death are more complex than they might appear.

Previous scholars have noted the continuing presence of the figures who plead for Death in fourteenth-century representations of the Triumph but have not, I believe, sufficiently explored their origins, meaning, and purpose.[2] Chiara Frugoni's study of the Pisan group in *Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso* is a rare exception, but as

[1] These figures seem to be missing from the *Triumph of Death* in Merano owing to the damage of that fresco. As will be discussed in this chapter, the equivalent figures in the Lorenzetti panel play a different role to those in the rest of the corpus, which is expressed by a distinct compositional strategy.

[2] Jordan, "The chapel of St. Kathrein", 489; White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, 554; Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte", 148–9; Paoletti and Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, 155.

will be shown, my interpretation diverges from hers at certain points.[3] The group are often described simply as 'beggars', while their apparent abandonment is taken as evidence of the fickle nature of Death; however, neither of these positions is satisfactorily elaborated.[4] In an article focussed on comparing the purpose of 'the poor' in the Pisan and Santa Croce renditions of the Triumph of Death, M. and Piotr Skubiszewski characterise those in Florence as ultimately hopeful figures, who will be the recipients of Christian charity.[5] Their analysis rests on the identification of the dead as historic individuals, a thesis which I find improbable, as discussed in chapter two of this thesis. Indeed, the shortcomings of the Skubiszewskis' approach to the analysis of the Santa Croce figures are made plain in their conclusion, where they write of the poor in the Pisan Triumph of Death that 'their function within the image is vague'.[6] As will be shown, I disagree with this position. Several scholars have worked on the texts that appear in most images of the Triumph. However, these writers never elucidate the iconographic role of the poor, old, and ill as a group.[7] This chapter presents what I believe to be the first detailed critical examination of these characters across the corpus of Trecento iterations of the Triumph of Death. My investigation brings together a textual analysis with a full exploration of the iconographical and biblical origins of these figures in order to support my argument that they are not virtuous role models, but are as sinful as the worldly who mirror them.

Unlike other components of the Triumph, the figures ignored by Death show little change or development over the course of the fourteenth century. Such iconographic stability, which is particularly striking when compared to the variation and mutability of the other elements of the Triumph, has been insufficiently

[3] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1577–82.

[4] Weingartner, "Die frühgotische Malerei Deutschtirols", 16; Rasmo, *Affreschi medioevali atesini*, 134; Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte", 148.

[5] Skubiszewski and Skubiszewski, "The poor in the frescoes of the Campo Santo at Pisa and Santa Croce in Florence", 274.

[6] Ibid., 283–84.

[7] Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari in rima", 52; Federico Hermanin, "Gli affreschi del secolo decimoquarto", in *I monasteri di Subiaco*, ed. P. Egidi, G. Gionvannoni, and F. Hermanin (Roma: a cura e spese del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1904), 509–12; Bolzoni, *The web of images*, (2003); D'Achille, *Parole: al muro e in scena*, 45–65; Carletti, "Transition between life and afterlife", 105.

recognised by commentators. In my view, it is a notable clue to the crucial meaning and unique role played by these figures. Comparably impoverished, elderly, and disabled characters do not appear in any other macabre imagery. As we have seen, the pan-European macabre theme of the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead features solely three kings or noble hunters.[8] Impoverished actors are equally absent from the later imagery of the Dance of Death.[9] Those ignored by Death are thus a key and particular element of the fourteenth-century Triumph and, as I will argue, significantly contribute to the iconography's critical stance on the sins of contemporary society.

In the Pisan *Triumph* a woman among those ignored by Death, identifiable as a widow by her white wimple,[10] holds out a scroll that waves before the group (figure 159, c. 1330–1335), saying:

> Because prosperity has left us, / O Death, medicine for every pain, / Come and give us the last supper![11]

This same wording is repeated in the two later Tuscan versions of the Triumph in Florence (figure 160, c. 1345) and Lucignano (figure 161, 1380s). It provides the structure of this chapter.[12] Given that no one has yet found a source for this quotation and there is no close equivalent in the Bible or in Dante, it seems likely that it originates with the Triumph of Death itself. I progress through the key characteristics of this group, that is, their poverty, ill health, old age, and rejection by Death, and analyse how their characterisation would have framed these figures as sinful to their original audience.

[8] For this theme, see: Scaramella, *Humana fragilitas*, 26–31.

[9] Gertsman, *The Dance of Death*, 'Index of Dance of Death characters', 327.

[10] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 112.

[11] 'Poi che prosperitade ci à llasciati, / O Morte, medicina d'ongni pena, / Dè vienci a dare ormai l'ultima cena!' Transcription Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari in rima", 61. Translation with the help of Carletti, "Transition between life and afterlife", 98.

[12] In Lucignano, they say: 'Poi che prosperità / Cia lasciati O Morte / Medicina aogni pena vieci / Adare omai lutima cena'. The Santa Croce inscription is damaged, but the text is clearly the same: 'Da che prosperitade [ci a lasciati] / O Morte medicina [d'ogni pena. De vien]/ Ci adare omai l'Ultima [cena]'. Pantani, "Il Trionfo della Morte", 149.

In all undamaged versions, the group of the poor are also invariably depicted as elderly, with wrinkled faces and grey or white hair.[13] Unsurprisingly, old age was heavily correlated to poverty because it hampered the ability to work.[14] In the versions of the Triumph in Pisa, in the St John chapel, in Lorenzetti's panel, in Subiaco, and in Santa Croce, the poor have wrinkles and grey hair. Unfortunately, the versions in Cornedo and Aufenstein are too damaged to make it possible to ascertain the age of the figures.

The exclamation that 'prosperity has left' is evident visually in all versions of the Triumph of Death. Invariably, the figures pleading for Death to take them are depicted as the very poorest members of medieval society. At Aufenstein, the man and woman reaching out to Death wear ripped clothing and have bare feet (figure 162, 1330s). Similarly ruined clothing is worn by the same figures in the St John chapel, where the man in purple has a badly torn tunic, with rips in both shoulders and where the collar of the tunic should be, and a frayed hem and sleeves (figure 50, 1329-35). At Santa Croce, the comparable group wear dull-coloured clothing, indicating that it is the rudest of textiles, not dyed, embroidered, or decorated in any way, signifying that the wearer was either impoverished or miserly (figure 160).[15] The damaged clothing and the frequent lack of shoes among these figures indicates that these are people in dire straits, and represent the most destitute members of society.[16]

The mendicants, best exemplified by the Franciscans and Dominicans, voluntarily embraced poverty as a virtuous and heroic choice in the face of the growing threats of pride and avarice brought about by social and economic upheavals

[13] Unfortunately, the versions in Aufenstein and Cornedo are too damaged to ascertain the age of the figures.

[14] Geremek, *Mendicanti e miserabili nell'Europa moderna (1350–1600)*, 93; Bourdua, "Painting the poor and the infirm", 336. Blindness, white hair, and wrinkles were listed among other signs of old age by Roger Bacon (1214–92) and Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444). Shulamith Shahar, *Growing old in the Middle Ages: 'Winter clothes us in shadow and pain'*, trans. Yael Lotan (London: Routledge, 1997), 37, 42 and 45.

[15] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 74 image 44.

[16] Louise Bourdua, "Painting the poor and the infirm in Trecento Padua and Venice", in *Armut und armenfürsorge in der Italienischen stadtkultur zwischen 13. und 16. jahrhundert: bilder, texte und soziale praktiken*, ed. P. Helas and G. Wolf (Frankfurt am main: Peter Lang, 2006), 341.

of the time.[17] In the allegorical marriage of St Francis to Lady Poverty, for instance, we can see that the figure of Poverty is dressed in rags while Francis wears the humble but undamaged robes of his order. Poverty is lauded in multiple biblical references, such as Luke 6:20: 'Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God'; and the story of Lazarus in Luke 16. Similarly, the holiness of poverty was a key theme in Christian art. In one of the monumental allegorical *vele* (vault) frescoes in the lower church of Assisi, St Francis is shown being married by Christ to a personified figure of Lady Poverty (figure 134, c. 1330).[18] Lady Poverty is barefoot and emaciated, and wears only a torn and patched shift-dress. Yet despite the deep connection between poverty and holiness proselytised by Christianity, the practical application of these values was fraught. As discussed in previous chapters, from the eleventh century onwards, Italy had undergone the dual transformation of increased urbanisation and transition to a money economy. The mendicant movement had developed in parallel with, or, as historian Lester Little argues, was inextricably intertwined with these developments.[19] By the fourteenth century, there was a clear distinction made between the voluntary and the involuntary poor.

In fourteenth-century renditions of the Triumph of Death, only the impoverished figures in Lorenzetti's panel appear as members of the voluntary poor. I begin with this example in order to show the dramatic contrast between this and other representations. In Lorenzetti's panel, the two figures who appear to be the pictorial equivalent of the Pisan group are the elderly couple, a man and a woman, standing immediately to the right of the crucified Christ (figure 163, c. 1338). They both wear plain clothing consisting of a loose grey–brown habit with a black cloak and dark shoes, and the woman has covered her hair and neck with a white wimple. She and her companion carry staffs. They may thus represent pilgrims whose self-inflicted peripatetic poverty is at the service of their holy devotion. If the panel did belong to the Compagnia dei Disciplinati, the figures' gaze at the Crucifixion echoes other confraternity statutes requiring that members pray and perform devotional gestures in

[17] Geremek, *Mendicanti e miserabili nell'Europa*, 93; Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 112.

[18] Probably frescoed before September 1319. Gardner, *Giotto and his publics*, 88.

[19] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 171–197.

front of a crucifix every day in order to see God and be seen by him.[20] Indeed, they are the only figures in the panel who gaze upwards at the crucified Christ, modelling the contemplation of his redeeming sacrifice that viewers themselves should undertake. The uniqueness of the figures in Lorenzetti's panel is because of its likely patrons—the Compagnia dei Disciplinati a lay confraternity—and because in this example the iconography of the Triumph is subsumed within the larger narrative of Christ's redemptive power.[21]

The depiction of these two elderly penitents in Lorenzetti's panel are tellingly different from those in every other fourteenth-century version of the Triumph of Death. The differentiation between voluntary and involuntary poverty is clearly made at both Pisa and Subiaco. In Pisa, the man kneeling at the front of the group begging for Death has a prominent rip on the right sleeve of his tunic, while behind him another man sits on the ground with bare feet (figure 164). Standing above them is a man in a sleeveless tunic with no undershirt, and frayed hems at his shoulders. Yet to the left of the same fresco—above the *Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead*—is a depiction of a community of hermits living in the remote wilderness. One hermit has descended the hillside to deliver the address to the hunters. The hermit's garb is a clear contrast with those pleading with Death. Although he is old, uses a cane, and is barefoot, he wears a long, thick robe with a leather belt and prayer beads (figure 130), as well as a cloak and a warm coif. His clothes are humble, but practical and well kept. Similarly, the group of the poor and old in the Subiaco *Triumph*, also dressed in ripped and repaired clothing (figure 165, 1340s), are contrasted with the hermit in the *Encounter*, which faces the *Triumph*. This hermit also wears an undamaged robe and cloak (figure 58). Thus, in the fourteenth century there was a clear distinction between different kinds of poverty.

Images of the indigent poor—and of people with infirmities, which will be discussed below—are plentiful in medieval Christian art. The most characteristic role of the poor was as beneficiaries of either miracles or charity, quite different to their

[20] Chen, *Flagellant confraternities and Italian art, 1260–1610*, 45.

[21] Marco M. Mascolo, "*L'Allegoria della Redenzione*", in *Ambrogio Lorenzetti*, ed. Alessandro Bagnoli, Roberto Bartalini, and Max Seidel (Siena: SilvanaEditoriale, 2018), 290.

treatment in the Triumph of Death.[22] Scenes of saints giving their patrimony to the poor were extremely common, most famously in the example set by St Martin of Tours, and after him St Francis, both of whom were renowned for sharing their cloaks with beggars.[23] In such instances, the charitable impulse towards the visibly poor is used as proof of the saint's virtue. But none of the images of the Triumph of Death show Christ or any saints interacting with the figures of the poor. Indeed, they do not receive any charity. Compare, for instance, the role of the poor in an illumination of the dearth of Florence in *Lo specchio umano* (Domenico Lenzi) (figure 166, 1329). Here, two men with crutches, accompanied by a woman in a white wimple, sit calmly before a confraternity member and beneath a large Madonna, while around them a frenzied crowd attempts to access grain. In this scene the beneficent powers of the confraternity have protected the poor from the disaster unfolding around them.

So, how should the poor and elderly figures in the Triumph of Death be understood? Here I am inspired by art historian Chiara Frugoni, the only scholar to have offered any real analysis of the pleading figures' speech. Frugoni noted the unchristian nature of their opening statement 'because prosperity has left us'.[24] Indeed, extending her position, I contend that the poverty of the figures in the Triumph of Death was likely influenced by personifications of avarice. In the Middle Ages, theologians located sin both in a person's actions and in their soul: it was possible to appear virtuous but harbour sinful desires.[25] The sin of avarice could present as either luxuriant indulgence (as in the worldly figures of the Triumph, or the corpses still clutching their moneybags) or, conversely, as miserliness.[26] In *La Somme le Roi*, a thirteenth-century work of moral instruction for the King of France written by

[22] Bourdua, "Painting the poor and the infirm", 341; Livio Pestilli, *Picturing the lame in Italian art from antiquity to the modern era* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 40.

[23] Philine Helas, "The clothing of poverty and sanctity in legends, and their representations in Trecento and Quattrocento Italy", in *Weaving, veiling, and dressing* (2007), 249; Gardner, *Giotto and his publics*, 93.

[24] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1578.

[25] Newhauser, "On ambiguity in moral theology", 4.

[26] Rhee, *Wealth and poverty*, xiii. See also the personification of avarice in both Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of tyranny* (figure 115, 1338–39) and in Giovanni del Biondo's panel painting of St John the Evangelist (figure 116, late fourteenth century).White, *Art and architecture in Italy, 1250 to 1400*, 388–97.

the Dominican Frère Laurent, a personification of Mercy is contrasted with Avarice (figure 167, 1295). A tall and stately woman wearing a crown, Mercy hands a cloak to a beggar, while Avarice, who wears a torn robe, counts his money into a lockbox overseen by a demon. A similar representation of Avarice is found in a late fourteenth-century French illustrated manuscript of the enormously popular courtly allegory *Le roman de la rose*.[27] Here the vice is depicted as an older woman wearing a wimple and a heavily patched robe (figure 168, end of the fourteenth century). Clutching a full money bag, she gazes anxiously at her store of hoarded coins, evident in the five huge sacks that surround her, filled to the brim with money. Meanwhile, a fine fur cloak and undamaged dress hang on a railing above her head, to underline the moral that her poor clothing is the result solely of her own miserliness. Similarly, in Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, an early fifth century allegorical poem that describes a clash of virtues and vice in a 'Battle of Spirits', the personification of Avarice temporarily overcomes the Virtues in their fight because it disguises itself as Thrift.[28] In the same way, the petitioning figures in the Triumph may appear at first as the opposite of the worldly, but their mournful remembrance of riches lost betrays their inner avarice.

Just as their poverty may be read as avarice hiding in plain sight, so can the ill health of the figures be understood as a reference to sin. Notably, every fourteenth-century representation of those pleading with Death shows one or more leaning on walking sticks or crutches, such as in the St John chapel (figure 50). A number of versions of the Triumph show the figures sporting bandages, as in Aufenstein (figure 162), or with blindness, as in Santa Croce (figure 160). In Pisa, the group is beset with ill health: figures are blind, use movement aides, are wrapped in bandages, have missing limbs, and show signs of leprosy and dropsy (to be discussed shortly) (figure 164). Among the group in Subiaco, one figure has a distinctive goitre (an enlarged thyroid) (figure 165).

[27] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Douce 332, folio 002 verso.

[28] Newhauser, "On ambiguity in moral theology", 7–8; Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the virtues and vices in mediaeval art*, 2.

As with their poverty, a surface reading of the figures pleading for Death may group them with traditional representations of impoverished and sick recipients of miraculous healing or charitable subjects. By the fourteenth century, images of the lame and blind being healed by Christ or saints, or at saints' shrines, proliferated.[29] Pietro da Rimini's scene of St Nicholas of Tolentino healing the sick and the possessed in the chapel housing the saint's putative tomb at Tolentino (c. 1324–25) is one such contemporaneous example, out of many that could be adduced. Among the crowd gathered for healing, one sees lepers with open sores, one figure with a goitre, people using crutches, and a man whose closed eyes indicate that he is blind.[30] The whole group looks towards St Nicholas, focussing the audience's attention on the saint's power and benevolence. Representations of the ill and lame receiving charity likewise emphasise the beneficence of the charitable saint or organisation.[31]

Not only do the figures in the Triumph of Death not receive charity or a miraculous cure, they also do not turn to Christ, the saints, or charitable organisations for assistance. Instead, it is Death itself that they address, crying out: 'O Death, medicine for every pain'. In discussing the Pisan *Triumph*, Frugoni connected this statement with the presence of a doctor among the pile of dead bodies beneath Death, suggesting that the call for medicine is a polemical statement about contemporary science and its inability to cure sin.[32] I take a different reading: calling on Death as medicine reads as a suicidal wish. Contemporaneous documents from court inquests into suicides in England show that nearly a fifth were related to physical infirmity, that is, the deceased took their lives as a way to end illness or life with a disability.[33] Despite suicide being understood as a consequence of physical suffering, taking one's

[29] Pestilli, *Picturing the lame*, 42.

[30] Miklós Boskovits, "Studi sul cappellone di San Nicola: work in progress", in *Il cappellone di San Nicola a Tolentino* (Milan: Silvana, 1992), 9.

[31] Pestilli, *Picturing the lame*, 48–50.

[32] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1578. As already noted, this phrase is repeated in both the Santa Croce and the Lucignano versions of the Triumph. Unfortunately, both locations have suffered irreparable damage to the pile of dead bodies, and I have not been able to identify the corpse of a doctor in either fresco. The extent of the damage means that this possibility is not precluded.

[33] Rebecca F. McNamara, "The sorrow of soreness: infirmity and suicide in medieval England", *Parergon* 31, no. 2 (2014), 16.

own life had long been condemned by the Church.[34] The censure towards suicides stretched into their deaths, as they were not permitted to be buried in sacred ground.[35] The most famous suicide in Christianity is of course Judas, who not only embodied sin (as discussed at length in the previous chapter) but also frequently appeared as the personification of the vice of deadly despair, *Desperacio*.[36] In my view, the wish for death expressed by the pleading figures of the Triumph must be read in the same light. It seems highly implausible that a didactic image whose design was carefully overseen by Christian theologians would attach a wish for death to any figures who were meant to be seen in a positive light.

Indeed, in the Middle Ages illness and disability were sometimes considered to be physical manifestations of sin. In the Pisan *Triumph of Death* many of the figures have the physical characteristics of leprosy. They are missing the extremities of limbs, they are blind, or they have the typical damage or loss to the soft tissues of the nose (figure 159).[37] In the Bible, leprosy is a punishment for avarice.[38] In II Kings 5, Gehazi, the servant of the prophet Elisha, was cursed with leprosy after stealing gifts rejected

[34] Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the virtues and vices in mediaeval art*, 78.

[35] Alterauge, "Between belief and fear", 23.

[36] Bibliothèque national de France MS Lat 2077, folio 169 recto. (end of 9th century). (https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc599714). Identified by Jordan, "The iconography of death", 71. See also Dorez, *La canzone delle virtù e delle scienze di Bartolomeo di Bartoli da Bologna*, 82.

[37] A. Fornaciari, R. Gaeta, and V. Giuffra, "Leprosy in the Pisan fresco 'Triumph of Death' (1336–1341)", *Journal of Infection* 77, no. 1 (2018), 77; Shivayogi R. Kusagur, Mamatha S. Kusagur, and K. J. Gururaj, "A clinical study of ocular manifestations in leprosy", *Journal of Evolution of Medical and Dental Sciences* 2 (2013). The ailments displayed by the figures do not fit descriptions of ergotism, see: Torbjørn Alm and Brita Elvevåg, "Ergotism in Norway. Part 1: the symptoms and their interpretation from the late Iron Age to the seventeenth century", *History of Psychiatry* 24, no. 1 (2012); Bruce L. Mintz, "Ergotism", in *Atlas of clinical vascular medicine*, ed. Michael R. Jaff, Bruce L. Mintz, and Jessica Mintz (Somerset, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013).

[38] Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian art*, trans. Janet Seligman, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), 130; Peter Howard, "The language of medicine in Renaissance preaching", in *Representing infirmity: diseased bodies in Renaissance Italy*, ed. John Henderson, Fredrika Jacobs, and Jonathon K. Nelson, The body in the city (London: Routledge, 2021), 37.

by Elisha himself.[39] St Ambrose, theologian and Bishop of Milan (d. 397), wrote of this passage: 'Thus all the greedy, all the *avari*, possess the leprosy of Gehazi … '.[40]

Comparably negative associations may also have been intended for the seated figure in the Pisan *Triumph* (figure 164). His symptoms may have been a representation of dropsy. He has swollen hands and feet and an enlarged stomach. This disease, which we now call edema or fluid retention, causes swelling of the limbs and stomach, and in untreated cases can prevent people from standing independently.[41] In the Middle Ages, the symptoms of dropsy provided a perfect metaphor for the sin of avarice. Those afflicted with dropsy always felt thirsty and wanted more to drink, even though their body was swollen and deformed by the huge amounts of retained fluid. Likewise, the avaricious always want more than they already have.[42] In Dante's *Inferno*, the avaricious and dropsical Adamo says: 'alive, I had enough of all I wanted; alas, I now long for one drop of water'.[43] Similarly, the depiction of the goitre, an enlarged thyroid in the throat, in the Subiaco *Triumph* may have been intended to evoke disgust. Goitres were associated with low intelligence—the iodine deficiency which causes them can also cause severe cognitive impairments—as in Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the courtier*, where he describes

[39] 'But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. / So Gehazi followed after Naaman. … / And he said … My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments. / And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants … / … And [Elisha] said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? / The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever … ' II Kings 5: 20–27.

[40] Newhauser, "The love of money as deadly sin and deadly disease", 316.

[41] Jenni Juuliala, "Infirmity and the miraculous in the early seventeenth century: the San Carlo cycle of paintings in the Duomo of Milan", in *Representing infirmity: diseased bodies in Renaissance Italy*, ed. John Henderson, Fredrika Jacobs, and Jonathon K. Nelson, The body in the city (London: Routledge, 2021), 217.

[42] Newhauser, "The love of money as deadly sin and deadly disease", 320.

[43] '… a la miseria del maestro Adamo; / io ebbi, vivo, assai di quel ch'i' volli, / e ora, lasso!, un gocciol d'acqua bramo'. Dante Alighieri, "Inferno 30", Columbia University libraries, https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-30/, lines 60–63.

'anyone gazing … with dull eyes after the manner of an idiot, or laughing as stupidly as those goitrous mutes'.[44]

Indeed, the depiction of a large group of the indigent and diseased was probably intended to evoke negative judgements from the urban audiences of the Triumph of Death. Vagrants were often feared as harbingers of disease and as threats to social and economic stability.[45] In the fourteenth century, a number of harsh laws were promulgated throughout Europe that punished, imprisoned, and expelled the indigent poor and the diseased from urban spaces. In 1325, the Podestà of Florence created two official positions whose role was to search out lepers and expel them from the city.[46] Beggars were linked with laziness, delinquency, and crime.[47] Echoing today's complaints about the lazy person who would rather live on unemployment benefits than work, medieval beggars were accused of feigning ill health in order to receive charity.[48] Despite the popularity of images of charitable giving, charity was normally intended for the respectable poor and not for those who openly begged on the streets in the manner of the figures in the Triumph.[49] Thus, as Frugoni observed, the group of pleading figures in the Triumph of Death represent a threatening social group who likely evoked unease or disgust among many viewers.[50]

The group's petition to Death ends with the phrase 'come and give us the last supper!' Frugoni interprets the plea for a 'last supper' as a blasphemous pun on the Eucharist, arguing that the beggars only mourn the loss of human pleasures like a

[44] Danielle Carrabino, "Artistic representations of goitre in early modern art in Italy", in *Representing infirmity: diseased bodies in Renaissance Italy*, ed. John Henderson, Fredrika Jacobs, and Jonathon K. Nelson, The body in the city (London: Routledge, 2021), 169.

[45] P. Cottrell, "Poor substitutes: imaging disease and vagrancy in Renaissance Venice", in *Others and outcasts in early modern Europe*, ed. Tom Nichols (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 63.

[46] Henderson, *Piety and charity*, 244.

[47] Michel Mollat, *The poor in the Middle Ages: an essay in social history*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 4–5.

[48] Geremek, *Mendicanti e miserabili nell'Europa*, 96–101.

[49] Brian Pullan, "Support and redeem: charity and poor relief in Italian cities from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century", *Continuity and change* 3, no. 2 (1988), 185.

[50] Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1579.

banquet.[51] The phrase undoubtedly refers to the rite of mass and the Eucharist, as instituted by Christ at the Last Supper.[52] More specifically, it is referring to the *viaticum*, the provision of the final Eucharist by a priest to a dying person in preparation for a holy death.[53] Although the figures in the Triumph plead for a Christian communion, their request is directed towards Death rather than to a priest. In all, their attention towards Death and their mournful remembrances of more prosperous times marks them as sinful. In Subiaco, the group says: 'You leave us who always call you / desiring death'.[54] Even in the images of the Triumph where these figures do not speak, their desire for Death is clear because every member of the party gazes towards Death, and at least one figure reaches their hand out to Death in a dramatic and eloquent gesture. In the images of the *Triumph* in Pisa and Santa Croce, nearly every member of the group extends one or both arms in the direction of Death.

The pleas of the indigent group for Death were likely inspired by a passage from Revelation (9:1–6) which describes a group afflicted by divine punishments at the end of time fruitlessly begging for Death.[55] Revelation 9 marks the sounding of the fifth trumpet—indicated by a star falling into the abyss—after which the abyss is opened and from there a plague of locusts emerges to torment for five months 'only those … [who] have not the seal of God'. These victims shall 'seek death … and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them'. The message of this passage is that

[51] Ibid., 1578.

[52] Eric Palazzo, "*Missarum sollemnia*: eucharistic rituals in the Middle Ages", ed. John H. Arnold, *The Oxford handbook of medieval Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 245.

[53] John F. Romano, "Priests and the Eucharist in the Middle Ages", in *A companion to priesthood and holy orders in the Middle Ages*, ed. Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson, Brill's Companions to the Christian tradition (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 209.

[54] 'Tu lasce noi che sempre te chiamemo / desiderando che ne dea la morte'. Frugoni, "Altri luoghi, cercando il paradiso", 1626 fn134.

[55] Revelation 9:1–6: 'And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. / And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. / And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. / And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. / And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. / And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them'.

sinners can receive punishment in the form of physical torment for the purpose of bringing about repentance.[56] Applying the lens of Revelation 9 to those pleading for Death in the Triumph, we might understand that their poverty and ill health are punishments for sinfulness, and that Death eludes them because they should learn from their torments and reform.

To my knowledge, no other scholar has connected Revelation 9 with the Triumph of Death. In his doctoral thesis, art historian Louis Jordan identifies the passage in a discussion on Death as a horseman in Revelation, but does not link it to the beggars in the Triumph.[57] Surprisingly, art historian Nicolò Rasmo does not connect the Triumph with Revelation 9 in his comprehensive analysis of the St John chapel. This is despite the fact that the St John chapel *Triumph* contains quotations from Revelation, and appears as the concluding panel in a cycle depicting the life of St John the Evangelist; and the Evangelist's cycle also has a fresco depicting a vision of the Apocalypse (figure 41).[58]

I am not suggesting that the beggars in the Triumph of Death are a direct illustration of Revelation 9:6, but rather that this passage helped the authors frame or generate the iconography. It is unlikely that the authors of the Triumph drew on an existing visual tradition of this passage. Although Revelation was a popular topic, representations of chapter 9 are notably absent from early Christian art.[59] While a full survey of all visualisations of the Apocalypse is outside the scope of this thesis, my reviews of key studies in the field indicate that depictions of this chapter of Revelation in manuscript and monumental art focus on the more immediately dramatic moments—the sounding of the fifth trumpet and the locust plague, visualised in art as fantastic horsemen or beasts with stinging tails.[60] When chapter 9 of Revelation is

[56] Richard Bauckham, "Revelation", in *The Oxford Bible commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1294–5.

[57] Jordan, "The iconography of death", 21.

[58] Rasmo, "Revisioni: gli affreschi trecenteschi".

[59] Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*, ed. John Swayer, Christopher Rowland, and Judith Kovacs, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Williston: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 33.

[60] None of the following recent and authoritative analyses of apocalyptic representations mention any illustrations of Revelation 9:6: Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the end: apocalyptic traditions in the Middle*

illustrated, it seldom shows the men seeking death, and when it does, Death itself is almost never personified. Indeed, I have only been able to find four illustrations of Revelation 9 that include verse 6, only two of which include a personified figure of Death.[61]

Both of these are miniatures found in versions of the *Bible moralisée*, a small and very exclusive group of enormous and sumptuously illustrated picture bibles with a complex typological visual program made for the French royal family. They provide commentary and interpretations on selected biblical texts. Personified Death appears in the earliest depiction of this passage known to me, the c. 1234 Harley 1527 *Bible moralisée* (figure 69), and in another copy (not mentioned by Jordan) dating some fifty years later, to c. 1280.[62] Both present four men pursuing personified Death, a demonic figure who flees. Like the figures in the Triumph, the men who seek Death in the illuminated manuscripts move as a group, reaching their hands towards Death. Unlike the beggars, they are depicted as wealthy young men, as indicated by their neat, jaw-length hair and pointed-toe shoes.[63] Unfortunately, as art historian Richard Emmerson notes in his 2018 book *Apocalypse illuminated*, the illustrations of Revelation in the *Bibles moralisées* have not yet received systematic and extensive analysis, so it is not known why this verse was illuminated.[64] I conclude that the general lack of

Ages, Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Lewis, *Reading images*; Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*.

[61] Images of Revelation 9:6 which include the men seeking death, *without* a figure of personified Death. The first image is in the c. 1086 library of the Cathedral of Burgo de Osma, Beatus of Liébana, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, Cod. 1. For this manuscript see, Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 47–82. The second is found in the Padua Duomo's Baptistery, frescoed around 1375 by Giusto de' Menabuoi (c. 1320–91). See: Meg Gay, "Monumental Apocalypse cycles of the fourteenth century" (D.Phil., University of York, 1999), 26–29, 118–128; Anne Derbes, "Washed in the blood of the Lamb: apocalyptic visions in the Baptistery of Padua", *Speculum* 91, no. 4 (2016), 953.

[62] Thirteenth century British Library *Bible moralisée*, Harley 1527, folio 128 verso. For this manuscript see: John Lowden, *The making of the Bible moralisée*, II vols., vol. I: the manuscripts (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 139–87. For the figure of Death in this miniature see: Jordan, "The iconography of death", 160. Also, the thirteenth century British Library *Bible moralisée*, MS Add. 18719, folio 305 recto. For this manuscript, see: Lewis, *Reading images*, 203; Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 131; Lowden, *The making of the Bible moralisée*, I: the manuscripts, 189–219.

[63] Scott, *Medieval clothing and costumes*, 67 n38.

[64] Lowden, *The making of the Bible moralisée*, does not mention either miniature. The state of scholarship on these famous bibles and the many puzzles that still remain has been noted by Emmerson, *Apocalypse illuminated*, 95.

illustrations of Revelation 9:6 and the inaccessibility of the *Bibles moralisées* make it unlikely that the pleading figures in the Triumph of Death were part of an ongoing visual tradition for this verse.

Yet the authors of the Triumph of Death would have been familiar with the text of Revelation. In the Triumph, the essence of the verse—that Death will temporarily ignore sinners as part of their punishment—is innovatively reimagined. The reasons that people might seek out death are transformed from an apocalyptic, and rather abstruse, vision of armored locusts to the more naturalistic, quotidian, and understandable experiences of poverty, illness, and old age. In the Pisan image, this interpretation is supported by a scroll beneath the group pleading for Death in the now-lost frame of the Triumph, which read:

> O death, how acceptable is thy sentence unto a man that is needy and that faileth in strength, that is in extreme old age, and is distracted in all things, and that looks for no better lot, nor waiteth on better days! (Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 41:3)[65]

Like the depictions of the worldly hunted by Death, those who plead for Death are figures of the urban milieu, contributing to the overall purpose of the Triumph as a targeted criticism of the sins of the city. Just as the miser was as culpable for the sin of avarice as the spendthrift, those ignored by Death are punished equally with those hunted in the prime of their lives.

The connection with Revelation 9 may also explain a peculiar figure identified by Jordan in the Tyrolean versions of the Triumph of Death.[66] In the Aufenstein, the

[65] 'O mors, bonum est iudicium tuum homini indigenti et, qui minoratur viribus, defecto aetate et, cui de omnibus cura est, qui fiduciam amisit et perdidit patientiam!' The fresco read: 'O Mors, bonum est iudicium tuum / non indigenti cur … / … capite'. The transcription is from a 1561 letter from Cosimo Bartoli to Giorgio Vasari: Giorgio Vasari et al., *Il carteggio di Giorgio Vasari: dal 1563 al 1565*, Edizione Italiana / a cura di Alessandro del Vita. ed. (Arezzo: Tipografia Zelli, 1941). Letter 340, 148. This letter was unknown to Morpurgo, "Le epigrafi volgari", and thus does not appear in his discussion of the texts in Pisa. The verse was identified as Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) and the English translation was provided by: Carletti and Polacci, "Transition between life and afterlife", S109, fn60. On this bible passage, see also: John J. Collins, "Ecclesiasticus, or the wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach", in *The Oxford Bible commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 693.

[66] Jordan, "Chapel of St. Kathrein", 489.

St John chapel, and the Cornedo versions of the Triumph, there appears to be a figure or figures who are narrowly missed by Death's scythe. Unfortunately, in all three instances the frescoes are terribly damaged, which impedes a detailed assessment. In the Aufenstein *sinopia*, the figure is found in the lower left corner of the pictorial field (figure 169).[67] He is in a prone position, and appears to be actively pulling himself from beneath the hooves of Death's horse. The 'survivor' is thus quite distinct from the existing dead bodies, who all appear framed within the curve of Death's scythe (figure 64). In the St John chapel *Triumph* the figure of the surviving man lies on his back as Death's scythe passes narrowly over him (figure 170).[68] He has pulled his arms up and away from the scythe, shrinking back from its blade. A wimpled woman (not noticed by Jordan) appears next to him and is also passed over by the scythe (figure 171). As I argued in chapter two, the dead bodies in the St John chapel *Triumph* are depicted standing upright. The supine position of these two 'surviving' figures clearly demarcates them as separate. Likewise, the 'survivors' appear underneath and behind the scythe, while the dead bodies are above and in front of the blade (figure 85). The final figure identified by Jordan appears in the Cornedo *Triumph*, where he is huddled between the back leg of Death's horse and the heel of the scythe (figure 172, 1366).[69] He seems to be standing upright and looking with horror at either the scythe or the dead bodies in front of the blade (figure 173). All of the 'survivor' figures are thus carefully distinguished from the dead bodies, suggesting that they are still alive and have somehow been missed by Death. Jordan unfortunately offers no interpretation as to why any of these figures have, temporarily, survived their close call with Death. However, if we apply the lens of Revelation 9, it is possible to interpret their 'survival' as a punishment. Indeed, all of the 'survivors' appear in proximity to the figures who plead for Death: in the Aufenstein and the St John chapel images of the Triumph, the 'survivor' appears directly under the feet of the group of beggars.

The extensive damage to the frescoes prevents any secure analysis of what type of person the 'surviving' figures were. Although Jordan identifies the man in the

[67] Ibid., 491 fn23.

[68] Ibid., 489.

[69] Ibid., 489.

Aufenstein *Triumph* as a monk, asserting that he is clean-shaven with tonsured hair, I don't believe this identification is secure because the damage to the image is too great.[70] For instance, the illusion of a tonsured head may have been produced by a coif or another type of head covering, such as the bandage worn by one of the pleading figures who appear directly above the 'survivor' (figure 162). In the St John chapel *Triumph*, there is a sense of a mirroring between the two survivors and the two figures who plead for Death. Both couples consist of one male and one female figure. As well, the two groups wear similar clothing: both women wear wimples, and both men are dressed in purple garments and *berrette*, a common Italian round hat with the brim folded up.[71] Possibly the 'surviving' figures have been temporarily saved from Death in order to suffer the indignities of old age, poverty, and ill health as punishment for their sins.

In his explanation on how sin might appear as virtue, Gregory the Great explained that:

> … there are some vices which give the appearance of righteousness, but they proceed from a twisted depravity, for the malice of our enemy hides itself with such art that it often depicts errors before the eye of the deceived mind as virtues … [72]

In this chapter I have argued that, despite their appearance as the humble and needy, the group pleading for Death were intended to be understood as sinners. My argument rests on a close reading of the relationship between their appearance, actions, and speech. Although the poor, infirm, and elderly often appear in medieval art as subjects of charity or miraculous cures, the figures in the Triumph do not receive any such intervention from either saints or charitable organisations. Furthermore, they are carefully distinguished from the dignified and worthy poor by the appalling state of their clothing and the explicit representation of their diseases. Thus, the group would

[70] Ibid., 491 n23.

[71] Scott, *Medieval dress and fashion*, 145; Herald, *Renaissance dress in Italy 1400–1500*, 210.

[72] From Gregory's commentary on Job 40:13 and quoted in Newhauser, "On ambiguity in moral theology", 10.

have invoked the reviled crowds of infectious beggars that gathered in fourteenth-century cities. I have put forward the argument that their poverty and illnesses were particularly associated with the sin of avarice. Their unchristian plea to Death, expressed both figuratively and textually, reveals that they have not reformed. Quite at odds with the model of the patient and holy Lazarus, their unrepentant avarice is demonstrative of the worst excesses of sin.[73] The pleading figures thus complete the extended critique of the dangers of the new money economy by the authors of the Triumph of Death.

[73] Karris, "The interpretations of the parable of Dives and Lazarus", 102.

Conclusion

It is astonishing that among the plethora of articles and books about the development of macabre art during the European Middle Ages, no comprehensive, in-depth study has previously been undertaken into the iconography of the Triumph of Death. This lack of scholarly attention is all the more striking given the noteworthy number of images of the Triumph that appeared across the Italian peninsula over the course of the Trecento, marking it as the pre-eminent visual expression of the fourteenth-century Italian macabre. In contrast to other macabre motifs, which appeared in multiple countries, the Triumph of Death was contained within a discrete geographic boundary, offering historians unique insights into fourteenth-century Italian attitudes to society, mortality, and death.

This thesis has argued that the distinctive imagery of the Triumph of Death visually articulated contemporary religious responses to Italy's rapidly changing social and economic spheres. Widely adopted by the clergy and vigorously promoted by the Dominicans and Franciscans, the Triumph of Death gave memorable visual form to the dire warnings of mendicant preachers about the dangers of pride, avarice, and lust. The iconography advances its didactic message first through the personification of Death, a visual device that transforms dying from an inherent bodily process into an external force. As the protagonist of this new macabre motif, Death itself is not simply a reminder or a symbol of mortality, but a divinely willed agent of punishment. Each version of Death's body—varying in appearance from animated corpses or skeletons to demonic women and hairy, diabolic beasts—communicates its purpose as the consequence of human sin. Far from an impersonal and universal inevitability, Death strikes at its next victims in a targeted attack, delivering a sharp refutation of their worldliness.

Death's pointed actions in the Triumph give weight to Ariès's view that the macabre emphasised the biography of the individual over the community.[1] Indeed,

[1] Ariès, *Western attitudes toward death*, 45–51.

while earlier images of mass death—such as scenes of battle, or depictions of the last days in Apocalypse manuscripts—mostly showed the dead as an anonymous collective, representations of the Triumph of Death take pains to ensure that each corpse has a clearly legible social identity. Always accessible to the laity, the careful depiction of the clothing and attributes of the dead invited audiences to associate themselves with the corpses. In this sense the Triumph does indeed accord with the definition of the macabre proposed by scholars such as Binski and Gertsman, since the careful demarcation of social identity seen in the heaped corpses encouraged viewer self-projection and empathy, evoking the *doppelgänger* motif found in the Encounter, now writ large. While the Encounter, with its crowned or richly dressed protagonists addressed only nobles or the aristocracy, the Triumph broadened the catalogue of Death's victims considerably. Now the dead included not only those from the traditional strongholds of secular and ecclesiastical power, but representations of clerics and mendicant friars as well as figures from the professional and intellectual classes.

Yet, images of the Triumph of Death stopped short of universal representation. People at extremes of age, those from many common professions, such as farmers, labourers and shopkeepers, the very poor, and those with disabilities are not shown among Death's victims. The Triumph thus located its audience among the better-off segments of the urban population, who were by this time a major source of income for both the clergy and mendicant friars.[2] The distressing treatment of the dead, who are left exposed without any funerary or burial rites, seems designed not only to provoke anxiety about death, but to promote the services of the clergy and friars in addressing this anxiety through honourable burials, the absolution of sins, and funerary masses: all available for a fee.

While the dead bodies are ultimately treated as morally ambivalent—no version of the Triumph commits any particular social group to heaven or hell outright—the iconography is nonetheless univocal in its criticism of those who thoughtlessly indulge in the pleasures of the material world. In contrast to the more cosmopolitan and varied

[2] Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy*, 205.

characters found among the pile of dead bodies, those actively hunted by Death represent only the extreme elites of contemporary society. Hence the imagery of the Triumph visualises the ongoing criticism of pride, avarice, and lust levelled not only by regular clergy, but also by the mendicant groups, who are often thought to have exerted considerable influence over the creation of this dramatic new theme, such as in the Dominican versions in the Pisan Camposanto and the funerary chapel or the nave frescoes in Franciscan churches. Like other macabre themes examined by Tenenti, Ariès, and Bynum, the Triumph thus emphasised the need for the individual to take immediate personal responsibility for leading a good life in order to experience a good death, and ultimately, to attain salvation.[3]

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the Triumph is that Death passes over a group of the old, poor, and ill, who in vain plead to die. While the macabre always stresses the inevitability of death, the Triumph shades this message with nuance. Despite, or indeed perhaps *because of* their pleas, Death spares these figures. As I have argued, contrary to their appearance as the humblest and hence most pitiful members of fourteenth-century society, the inclusion of these figures illustrates how sin can hide in plain sight. Indeed, their chief role is to emphasise the pernicious effects of avarice, considered by theologians to be the most dangerous vice of the new cash economy.[4] Death's function as the executor of God's punishment for sin thus finds ultimate expression in the continuation of their physical suffering in life. In their unique countermanding of the universality of death, images of the Triumph thus show a highly sophisticated articulation of the macabre impulse.

Unlike most scholarship on the subject of the Triumph, this thesis has considered the complete catalogue of all extant Trecento representations rather than focussing on certain celebrated examples (foremost the one in the Pisan Camposanto). A key result of my research has been to restore the three previously neglected Tyrolean versions of the theme to their proper places in the historical development of the Triumph. As I have suggested, such a reintegration of the full surviving corpus produces

[3] Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita*, 41–3; Ariès, *The hour of our death*, 95–139; Bynum, "Death and resurrection in the Middle Ages", 589–96.

[4] Newhauser, "Towards modus in habendo", 2.

fresh understandings of the development of the iconography. Most significantly, I have highlighted the appearance of the Triumph of Death in Aufenstein in the same five-year period as in the much better-known frescoes at Pisa; indeed, as we have seen, it is possible that this little-known cycle might even predate those in the Camposanto. This challenges the assumption that the Triumph is of Tuscan origin,[5] and is yet another disruption to the Tuscan hegemony often found in the history of Trecento art.[6] The near-contemporaneous appearance of this dramatic new rendition of the macabre in multiple sites widely separated across, and indeed beyond, the Italian peninsula is highly suggestive of a lost prototype, but no such exemplar has yet been uncovered. Despite the influence of Francesco da Barberino's carefully crafted visual allegories of death, too many key components of the Triumph are missing—particularly the figures who plead to die—to accept the *Allegory* as the theme's sole archetype. On a prosaic level, this thesis provides an up-to-date catalogue of the extant versions of the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death, many of which have not been documented by researchers for decades.

My aim in this thesis has been to establish the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death as imagery worthy of scholarly attention. The findings of this thesis could form the basis of further investigation into the relationship between the Italian Triumph of Death and the theme of the macabre more broadly. As in other macabre motifs, in the Triumph we find temporal ambiguities, dead bodies illustrating the concept of death, death exemplifying a moral predicament, and a preoccupation with the spectacle and display of death.[7] In what ways did this powerful new iconography influence the development of later macabre themes? Certainly, it seems that the active role of personified Death and the broadening of the social identities of the dead presage some key aspects of the Dance of Death. Likewise, one might consider in what way the scenes of angels and demons gleaning souls from the dead influenced the deathbed scenes in the *Ars moriendi*.

[5] See discussion on Pisa in the introduction of this thesis.

[6] A critique against such hegemony is found in Maginnis, *Painting in the age of Giotto*, 192–205.

[7] Binski, *Medieval death: ritual and representation*, 134; Gertsman, *The dance of death*, 23.

Indeed, even a superficial examination of the fifteenth-century Triumph of Death shows that the remarkable stability of the fourteenth-century iconography over an 800-kilometre and 70-year span was not sustained. Some fifteenth-century versions reflect the influence of the newer theme of the Dance of Death, in showing the Triumph with multiple personifications of Death.[8] An illumination of Petrarch's *I Trionfi* seems to show the influence of Lorenzetti's personification of Death.[9] Other images radically revise the standard components of the fourteenth-century Triumph: the pile of dead bodies is missing, or the figures who beg for death are absent.[10] Yet all of the fifteenth-century images show Death hunting down figures of the elite, who are seen begging for their lives, or gambling, or as young hunters, or gathered in an elegant garden.[11] In what ways is the sustained criticism of misused worldly wealth that is so characteristic of the Triumph of Death nuanced by these changes to the fourteenth-century iconography? What can the fifteenth-century examples tell us about contemporary attitudes to society, mortality, death, and the afterlife?

Conversely, the dynamism found in the fifteenth-century examples reaffirms that the fourteenth-century Triumph of Death was tightly linked to its circumstances. While the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead restricts its protagonists

[8] In the 1485 version on the façade of the Oratorio dei Disciplini, Clusone, Lombardy, Death appears three times as animated skeletons. The central figure wears a crown and holds two scrolls in its upraised hands. It is assisted by two skeletons who are armed; one fires three arrows notched to its bow, while the other shoots with a *colubrina*, or matchlock gun. A 1493 illuminated version of the High German work of prose *Der Ackerman und der Tod* (*The Ploughman and Death*) shows two personifications of Death, one riding on a horse and firing a bow and arrow at a fleeing knight, and the other on foot and reaping a crowd with a scythe.

[9] Death has been liberated from its bull-drawn chariot and is pictured as a black demon flying on batwings and swinging a scythe above a pile of corpses. *I Trionfi*, MS. Canon. Ital. 62, (c. 1470–80). Bodleian Library, Oxford, folio 165 verso.

[10] The figures of the dead have disappeared entirely in the fresco of the Triumph found in the first bay of the nave in the basilica of Santa Caterina, Galatina (1470). See: Steffi Roettgen, *Italian frescoes: the early Renaissance, 1400–1470*, trans. Russell Stockman (New York: Abbeville, 1996), 78–91. Meanwhile a 1437 version by Giovanni di Paolo found on a Sienese *biccherna* (an account book cover) does not include the figures pleading for Death. See: John Pope-Hennessy, *Giovanni di Paolo 1403–1483* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1938), 153–55.

[11] As well as those examples already mentioned above, see also the version now housed in the Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo, Sicily. See: Jane Bridgeman "The Palermo Triumph of Death", *The Burlington Magazine* 117, no. 868 (1975), 480–84; and Vincenzo Abbate and Michele Cordaro, *Il 'Trionfo della morte' di Palermo: l'opera, le vicende conservative, il restauro: Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1989).

to three kings or aristocrats and is depicted as taking place in remote and wooded settings, the Triumph of Death levied an aggressive censure towards the sins of a powerful urban populace. This criticism was put forward largely by the mendicant orders, whose own interests and goals were inextricably intertwined with the growing influence of the city sphere. As Italy continued to grow its money economy and the balance of power swayed ever more towards urban elites and to urban spirituality, so too did Death become a citizen of the city.

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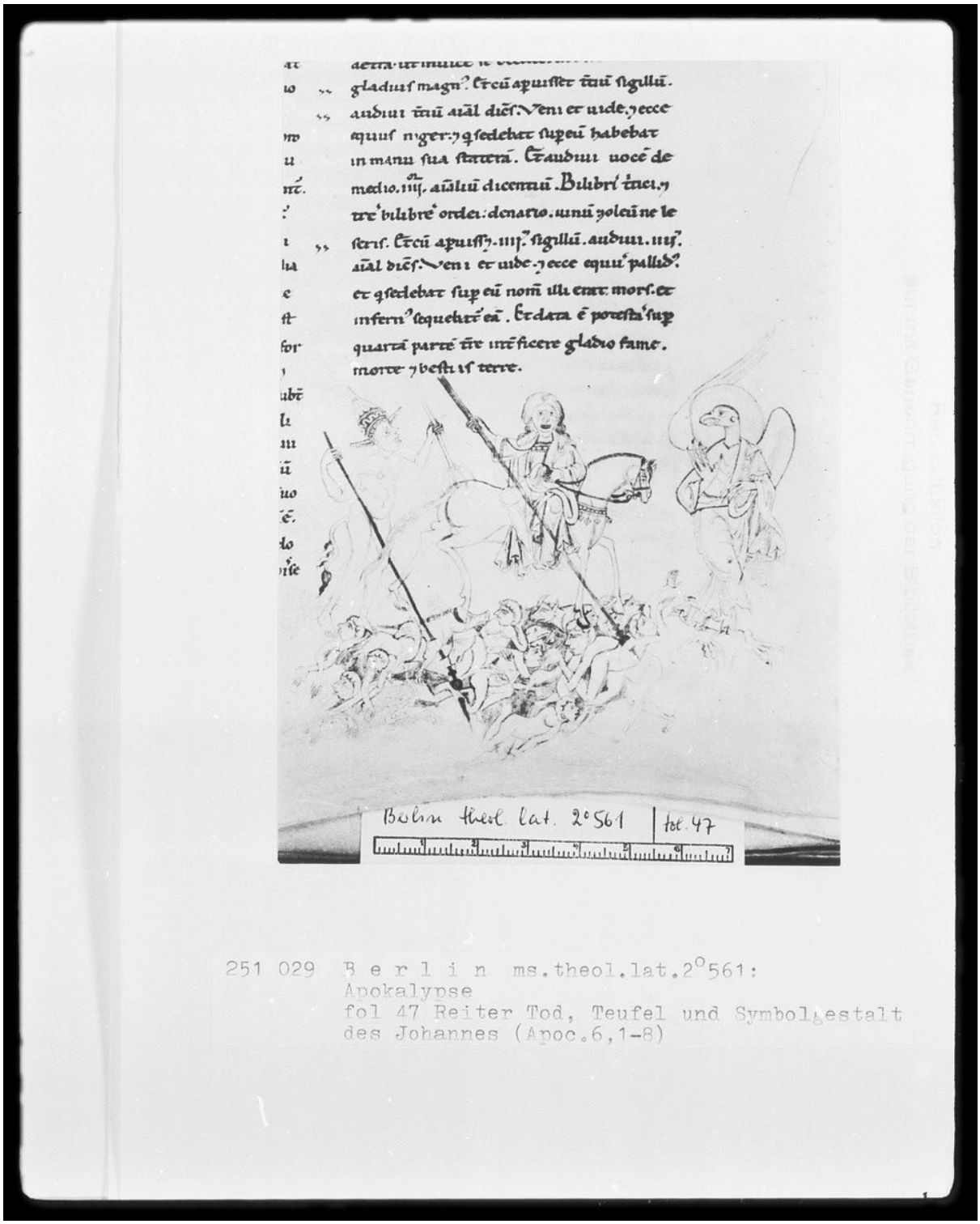

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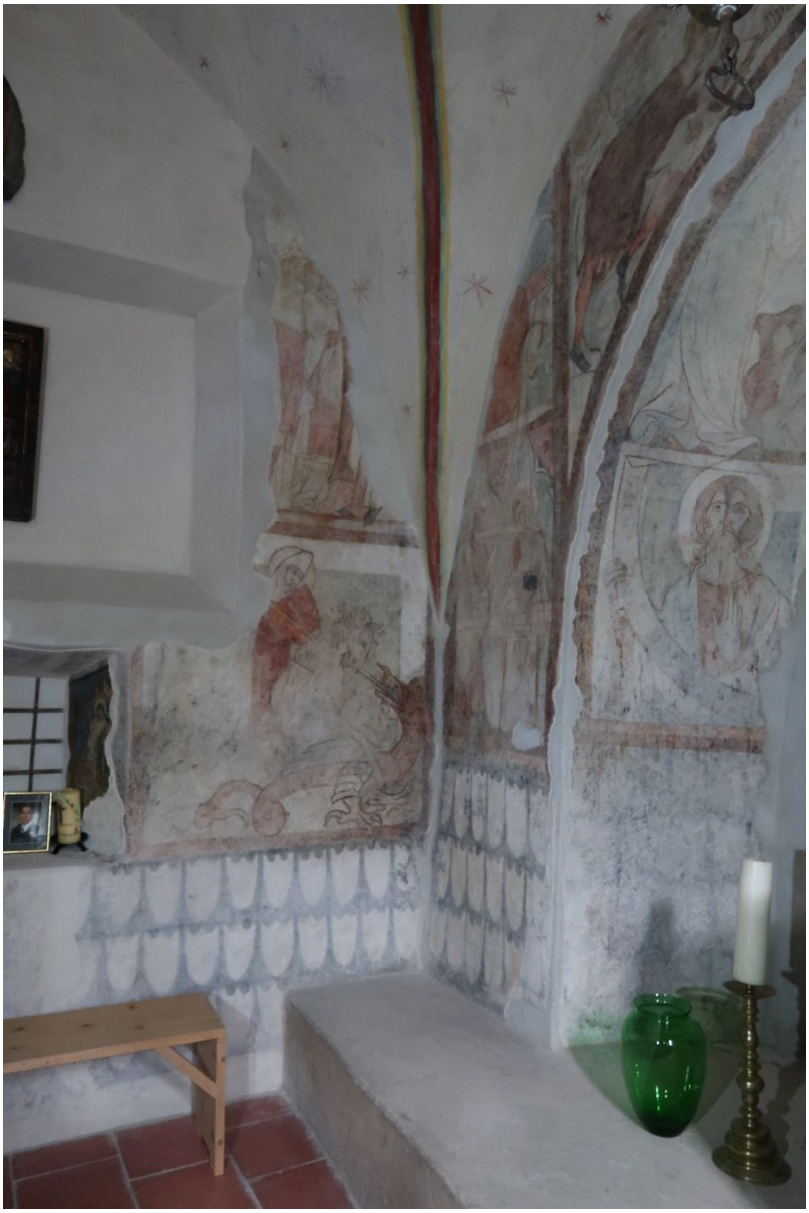

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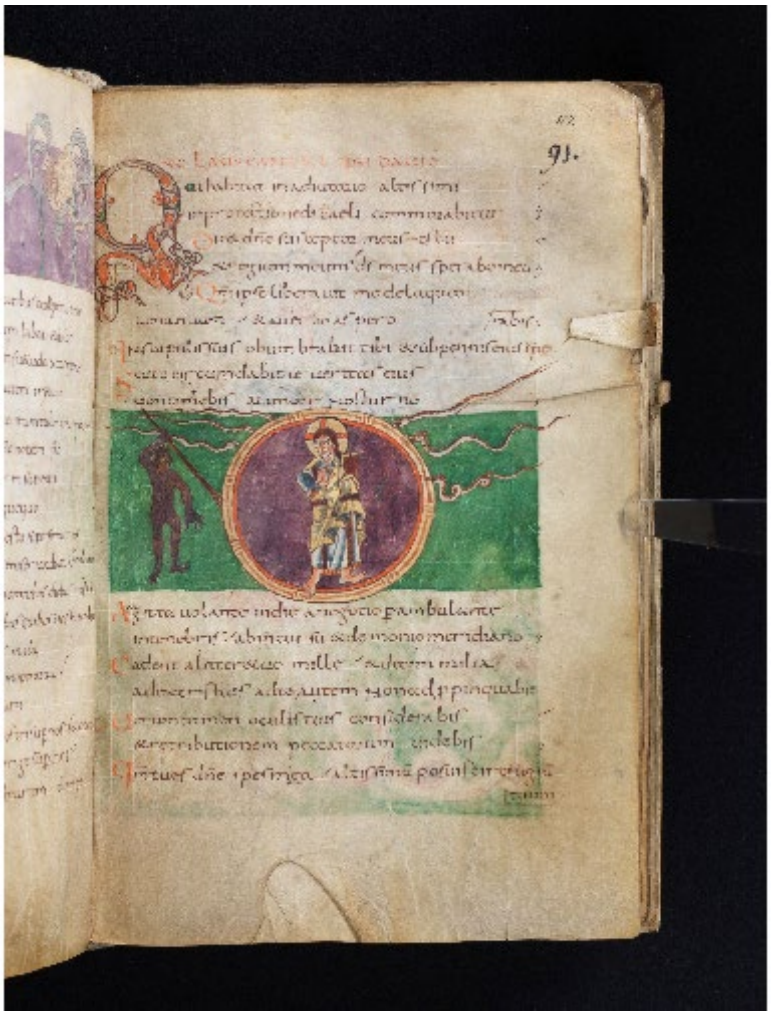

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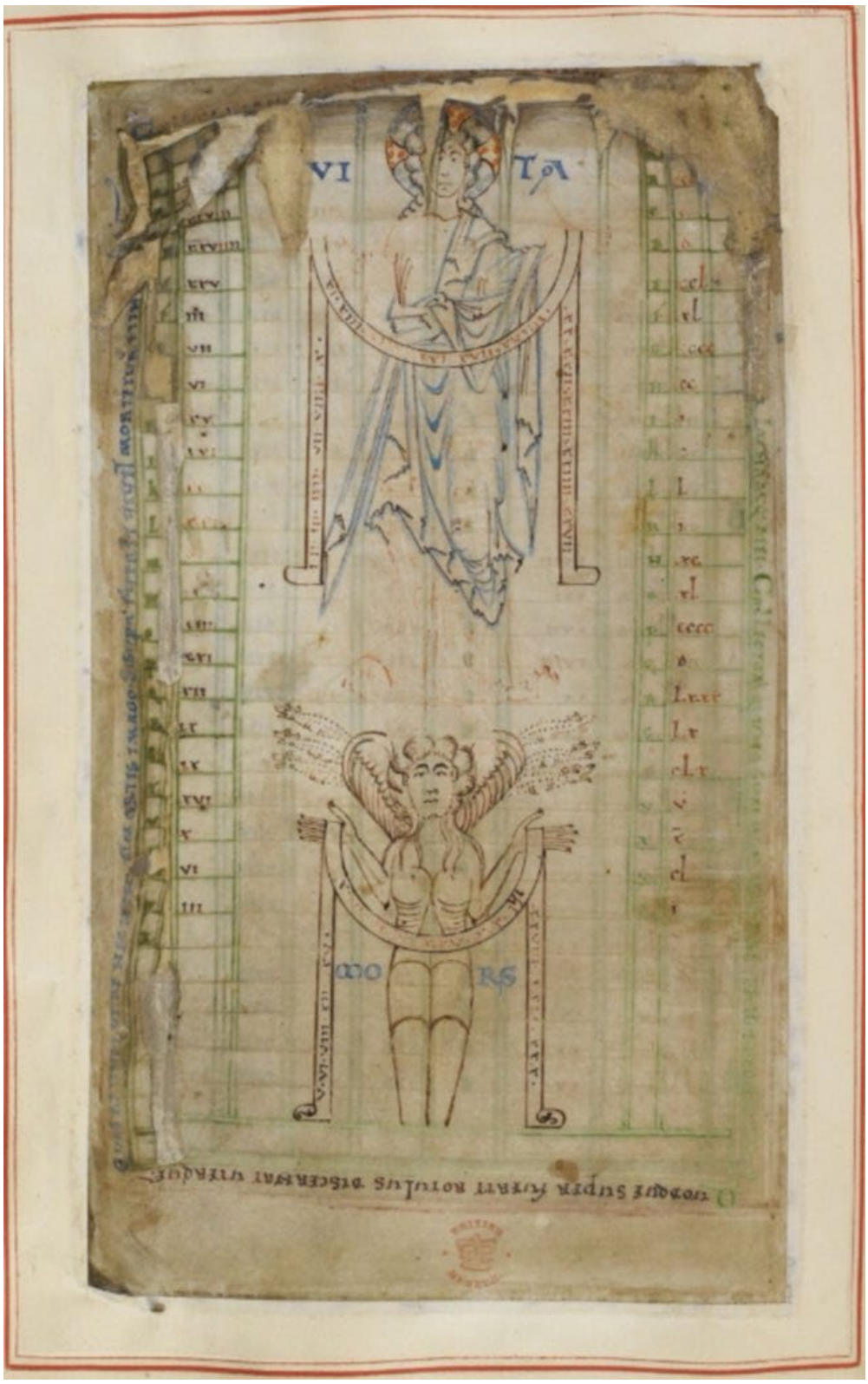

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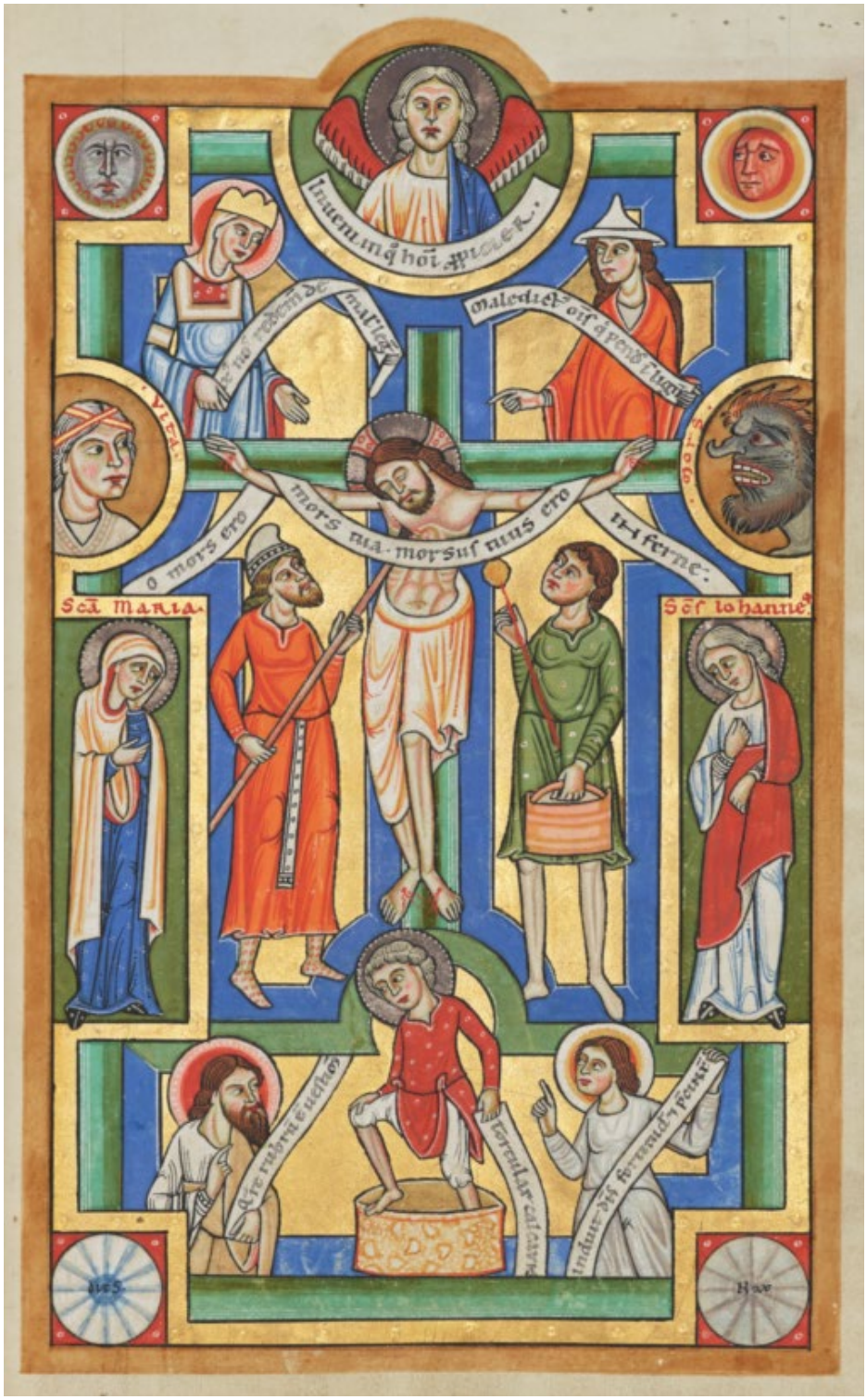

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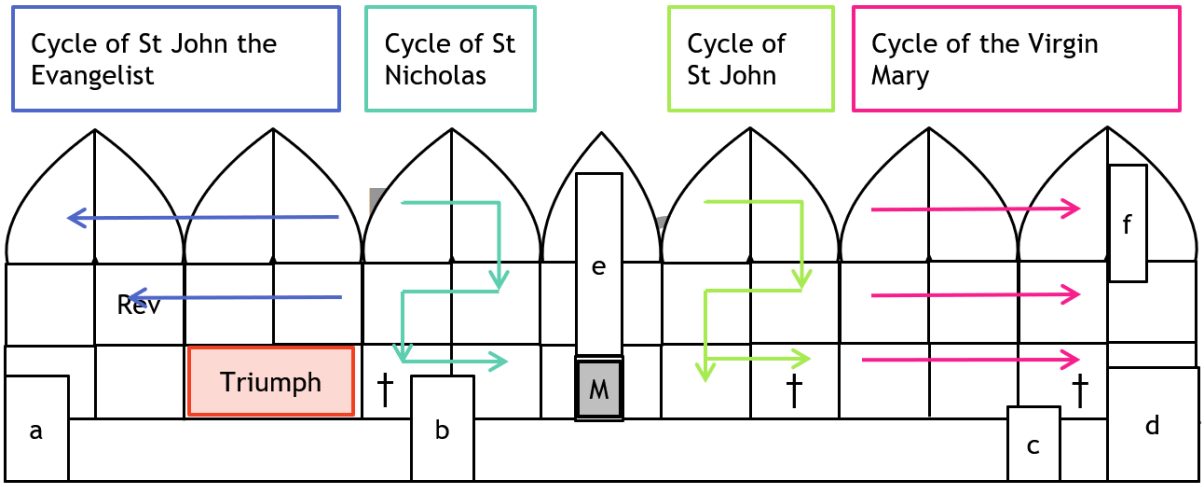

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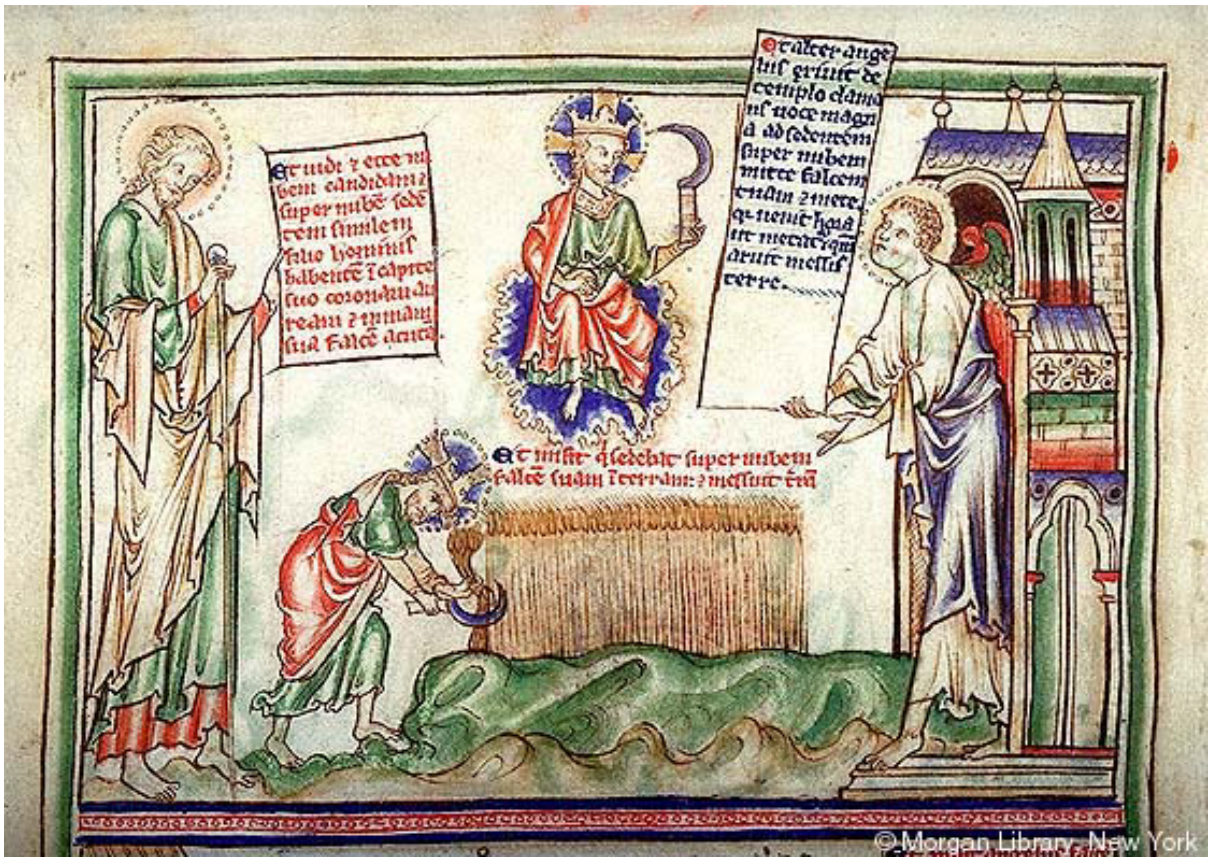

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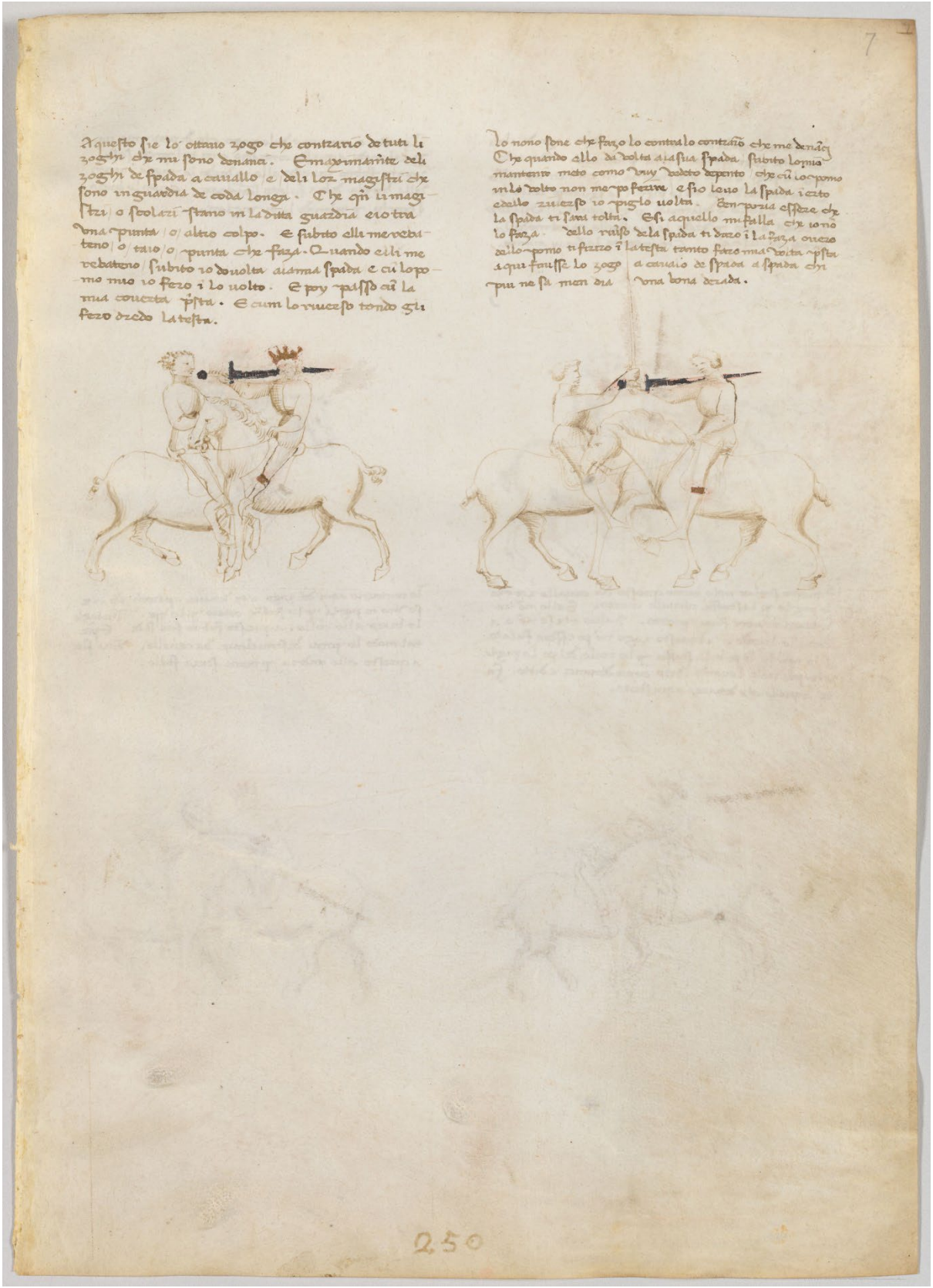

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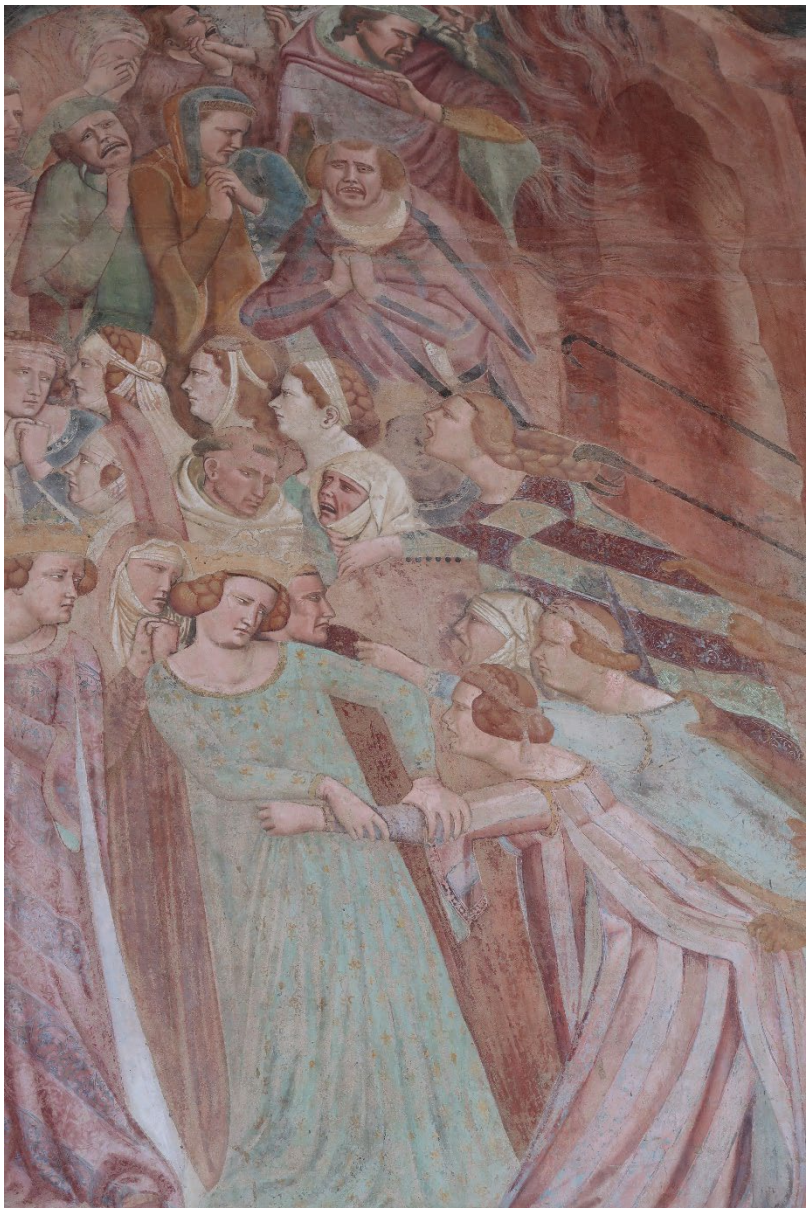

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Figure 102 Demon stuffing a woman's soul into a flaming fissure in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 103 Demon stuffing a man's soul into a flaming fissure in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 104 Angels (and demon?) collect souls from the dead in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 105 Particular judgement in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 106 Moneylenders in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, Matrei am Brenner, Navis, 1330s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 107 The death of St Gregory and the particular judgement in the *Seitenstetten missal*, MS M.855, folio 206 recto, c. 1265. Photo: Morgan Library & Museum, New York (https://www.themorgan.org/collection/seitenstetten-missal/158991/414), accessed 2024.

Figure 108 Soul being welcomed at the gates of heaven by St Peter in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 109 Demon carrying damned souls into a hell-mouth in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 110 Depiction of Revelation 12:7 ('Michael and his angels fought against the dragon') in the *Arnulf prayer book*, Egerton 3763, folio 104 verso, eleventh century. Held at the British Library. Photo: © Petrus.Agricola, flickr, 2011.

Figure 111 The four types of hell, Matfre Ermengaud, *Breviari d'amor*, ms esp. F V XV 1, folio 187, c. 1310–20. Photo: National Library, Saint Petersburg, accessed 2024.

Figure 112 Particular judgement above the *Triumph of Death* in Merano, 1380–90. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 113 Demon with soul in the *Triumph of Death* in Merano, 1380–90. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 114 Remnants of angel with soul in the *Triumph of Death* in Merano, 1380–90. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Chapter three

Figure 115 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of the *Allegory of tyranny*, personifications of Avarita, Superbia, and Vanagloria above the Tyrant, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. 1338–39. Photo: © 2006, SCALA, Florence / ART RESOURCE, N.Y.

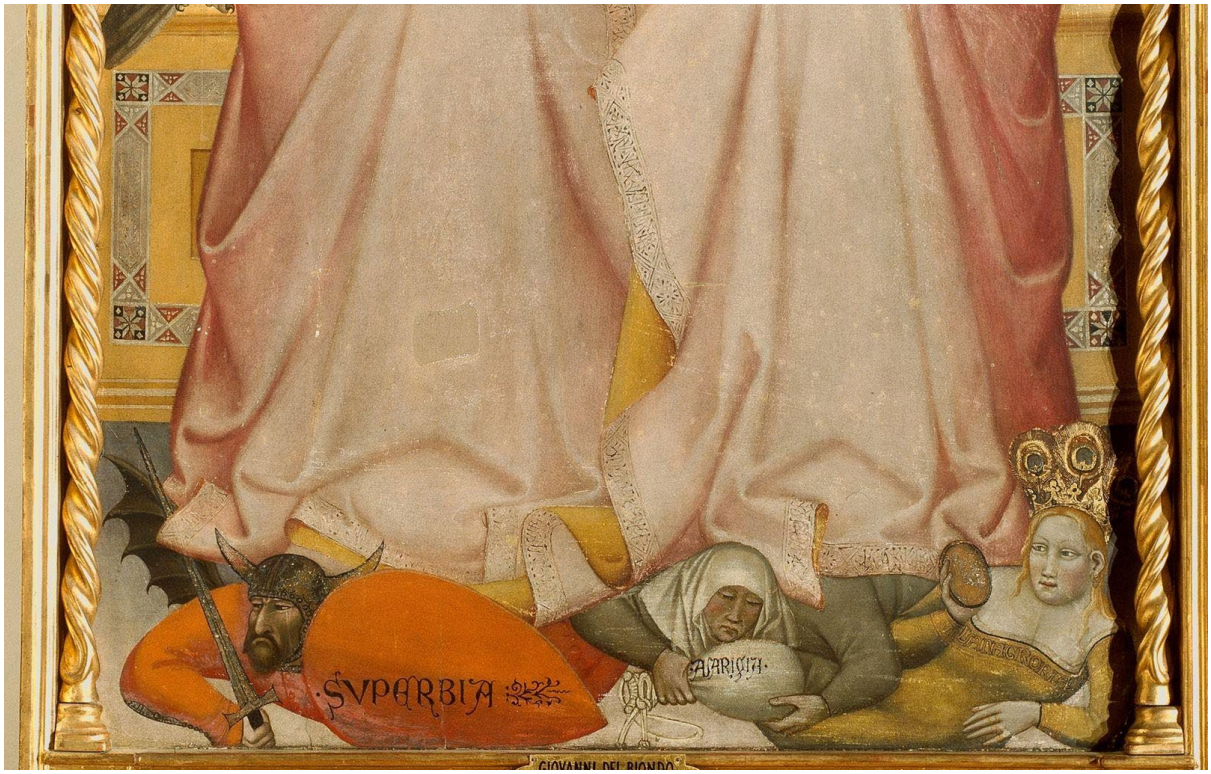

Figure 116 Giovanni del Biondo, detail of *Saint John the Evangelist* personifications of Avarita, Superbia, and Vanagloria, late fourteenth century. Held in the Accademia del Cimento (Florence, Italy). Photo: © 2006, SCALA, Florence / ART RESOURCE, N.Y.

Figure 117 West wall in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo (edited): Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

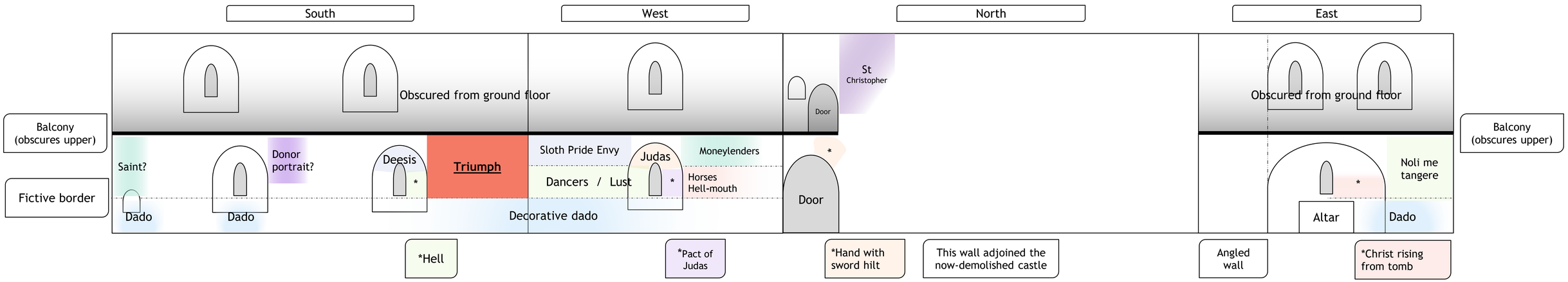

Figure 118 Schematic of the decorative cycle in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Image: Stephanie Swanson, 2023.

Figure 119 Death of Judas, detail of the west wall in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo (edited): Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 120 Pact of Judas, detail of the west wall in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo (edited): Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 121 Demon with a promissory note, detail of the west wall in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo (edited): Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 122 Detail of the circle dance on the west wall in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 123 Detail of the circle dance on the west wall in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 124 Detail of the circle dance on the west wall in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 125 Personifications of Pride, Sloth, and Envy, detail of the west wall in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo (edited): Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

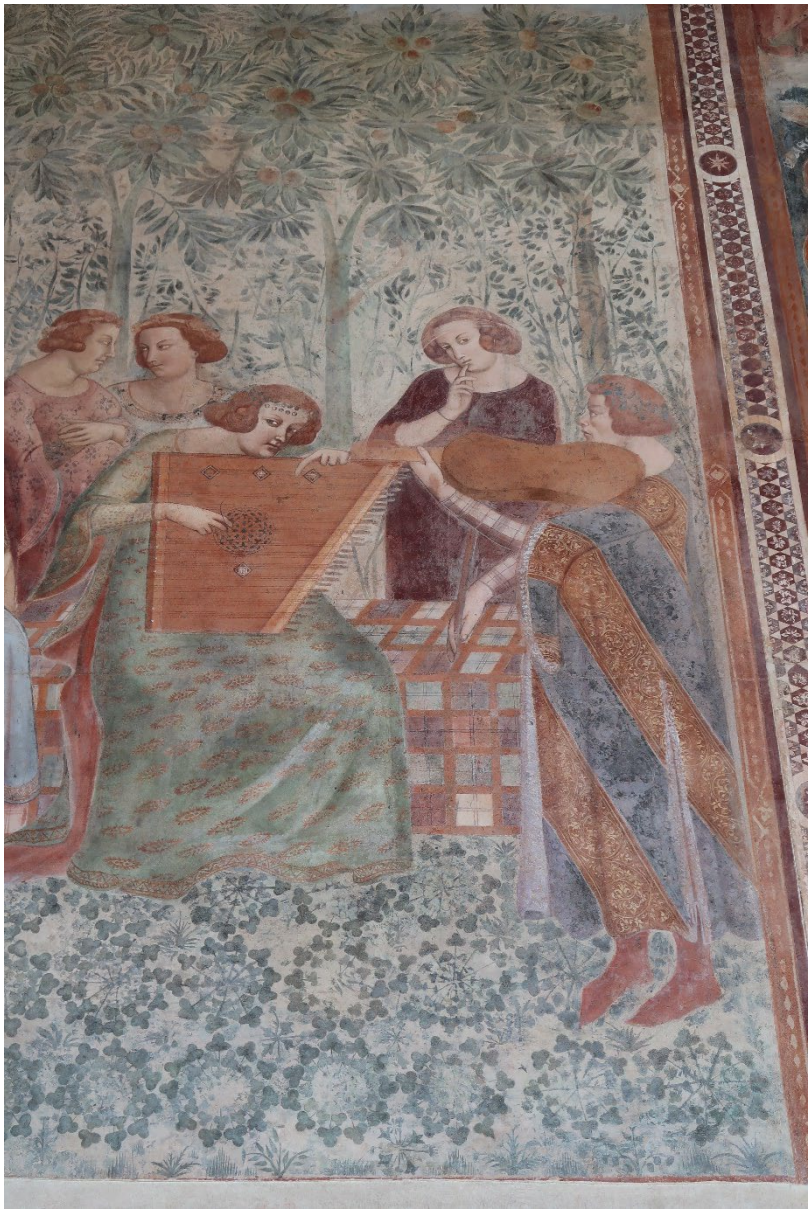

Figure 126 Musicians and wealthy figures in the garden in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 127 Ivory mirror-case showing a lady and gentleman seated on bench, French, fourteenth century. Photo: British Museum, 1856,0623.109, accessed 2023.

Figure 128 Ivory mirror-case showing a love scene in garden, French, late fourteenth century. Photo: British Museum, 1856,0623.107, accessed 2023.

Figure 129 Tristan and Isolde in the *Maastricht hours*, Stowe MS 17, folio 273 recto, first quarter of the fourteenth century. Photo: British Library, accessed 2023.

Figure 130 Hermit in the *Encounter*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 131 Three fashionable women in the *Allegory of Redemption*, c. 1338. Detail of figure 4.

Figure 132 Young hunters in the *Allegory of Redemption*, c. 1338. Detail of figure 4.

Figure 133 Court scene showing contemporary dress, Helie de Borron, *Roman du Roy Meliadus de Leonnoys*, Add. 12228, folio 220 recto, c. 1352. Photo: British Library, accessed 2023.

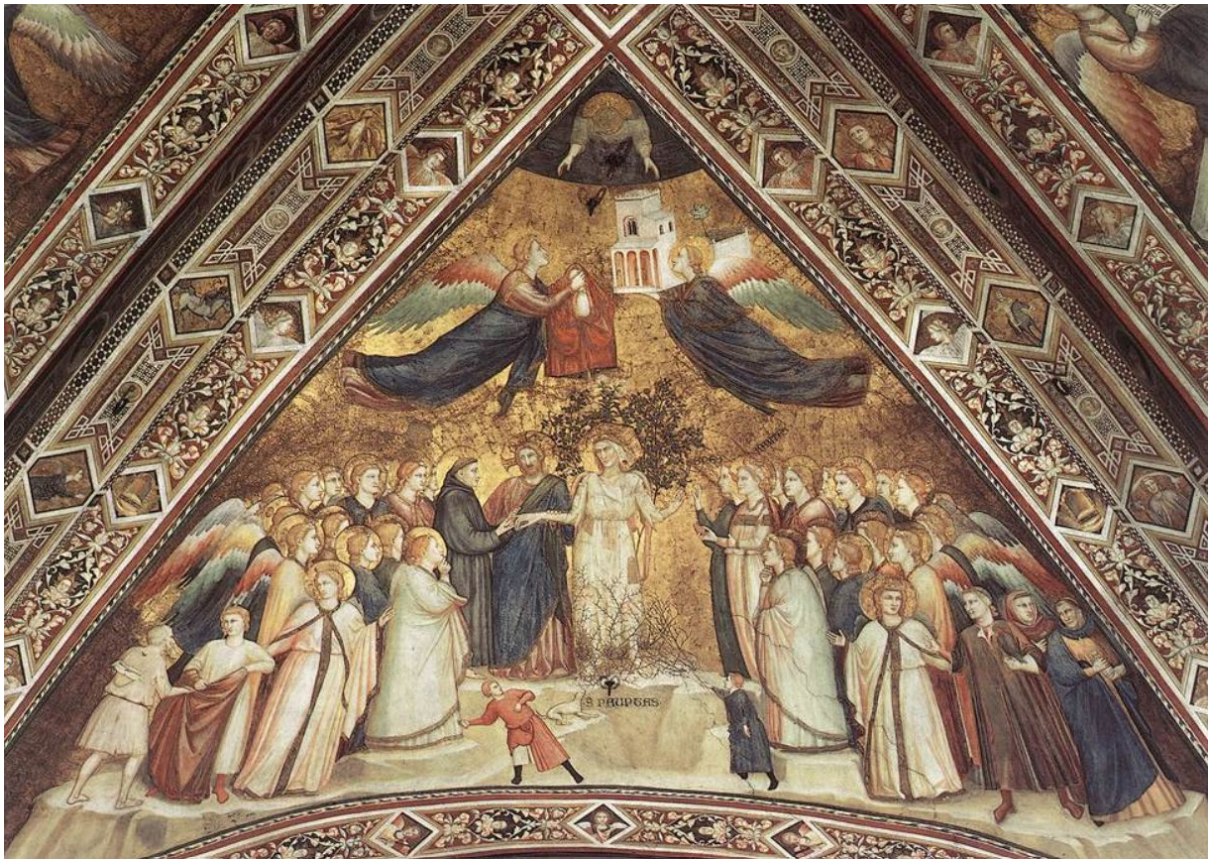

Figure 134 Franciscan Allegories: *Allegory of poverty*, Lower Church, Assisi, c. 1330. Web Gallery of Art, accessed 2024.

Figure 135 Man holding two children by the wrists, buttress in the south transept of the Portail de la Calende, Notre-Dame Cathedral, Rouen, fourteenth century. Photo: © Colum Hourihane, accessed 2024.

Figure 136 Hermit and merchant in conversation in the *Allegory of Redemption*, c. 1338. Detail of figure 4.

Figure 137 Merchant and young men in the *Allegory of Redemption*, c. 1338. Detail of figure 4.

Figure 138 Giotto, *Pact of Judas*, east wall of the Arena Chapel, 1305. Photo: © Francesca Flores D'Arcais, New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1995.

Figure 139 Dead figures in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 140 The living in the *Encounter*, Subiaco, 1340s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 141 Detail of churchman and knight in *Le songe du vergier*, Ms. Royal 19 C IV, folio 1 verso, c. 1378. Photo: British Library, accessed 2023.

Figure 142 The dead in the *Encounter*, Subiaco, 1340s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 143 *Putti* holding up the didactic scroll in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 144 Roman sarcophagus repurposed as a tomb for Gallo dell'Agnello (d. 1297), Camposanto, Pisa: Photo DmitriiLD, 2017. CC BY-SA 4.0.

Figure 145 Living figures hunted by Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Subiaco, 1340s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 146 Living figures hunted by Death in the *Triumph of Death* in Lucignano, 1380s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 147 Detail from Cristoforo di Bindoccio (Meo di Pero), *Rota di Barlaam*, Palazzo Corboli, Asciano, late 1300s. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Figure 148 Living figures hunted by Death and city tower struck by arrows in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

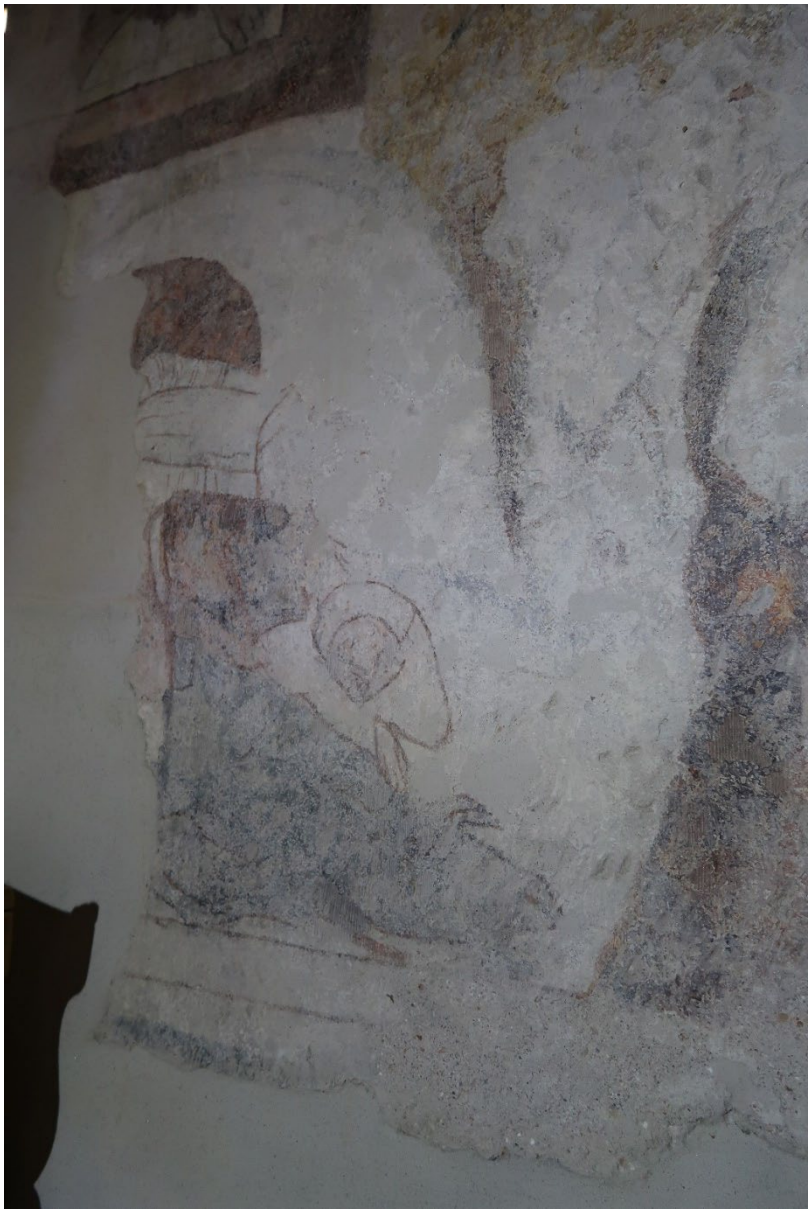

Figure 149 Dead knight in the *Triumph of Death*, Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, 1366. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 150 Detail of a living figure hunted by Death in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 151 Detail of living figures hunted by Death in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 152 Death's scroll in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 153 Scroll above the living in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 154 Detail of living figures hunted by Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, 1366. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 155 Detail showing the *kruseler*, a ruffled headdress, Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini portrait*, 1434. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Figure 156 *Triumph of Death*, *Dance of Death* and fragments, Clusone, façade of the Oratorio dei Disciplini, 1484. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 157 Detail of the *Triumph of Death*, Clusone, 1484. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 158 Shoes of the living figures hunted by Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Subiaco, 1340s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Chapter four

Figure 159 Figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 160 Figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Santa Croce, c. 1345. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 161 Figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death* in Lucignano, 1380s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 162 Edited image showing figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, in Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 163 Penitents in the *Allegory of Redemption*, c. 1338. Detail of figure 4.

Figure 164 Detail of figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Camposanto, Pisa, 1330–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 165 Figures pleading for Death in the *Triumph of Death*, Subiaco, 1340s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 166 Illumination of the dearth of Florence, Domenico Lenzi, *Lo specchio umano*, 1329. © Scala, Florence.

Figure 167 The personification of Mercy contrasted with the personification of Avarice, Frère Laurent, *Le somme le* Roi, detail of folio 136 verso, 1295. Photo: Artstor Collection, accessed 2024.

Figure 168 The personification of Miserliness, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, MS. Douce 332, folio 002 verso, end of the fourteenth century. Photo: © Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, accessed 2024.

Figure 169 Detail of the 'surviving' figure in the *Triumph of Death*, in the St Kathrein chapel, Castel Aufenstein, 1330s. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 170 Detail of the 'surviving' figures in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 171 Drawing of the 'surviving' figures in the *Triumph of Death*, St John chapel, 1329–35. Image: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 172 Detail of the 'surviving' figure in the *Triumph of Death*, Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, 1366. Photo: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.

Figure 173 Line overdrawing of the 'surviving' figure in the *Triumph of Death*, Castel Cornedo, Bolzano, 1366. Image: Stephanie Swanson, 2019.