

THE MEETING OF THE THREE LIVING AND THE THREE DEAD

The *meeting of the three living and the three dead* shows an occasional meeting of three carefree very relevant men (normally three kings or a priest, a nobleman and a member or the upper-middle class) who enjoy life in their adulthood. These three men, apparently not acquainted with pain, go hunting and, on turning a curve or reaching a crossroads marked by a landmark, come up against three dead whose corpses are rotten and eaten by maggots. In some versions the dead ones regain consciousness for a moment to warn the living ones, *we once were as you are, as we are so shall you be*. However, in others the dead ones lie lifeless inside their coffins and it is a hermit that warns the living ones about the expiry of earthly goods. The living ones, impressed by the vision, change their existential attitude and, from that moment on, look after their souls, afraid of death's proximity. The topic comes from the Buddhist sapiential literature by which the Prince Siddhartha Gautama had four meetings, one of them with a dead, before becoming Buddha. It must have passed to both the Persian and Abbasid literature through the trading routes and it reached the West deeply transformed, with the main characters tripled to gain dramatic intensity.

Keywords: Dead, living, skeletons, hermitage, hermit, hawk, hunter, harnessed horses, noblemen, princes, kings, crossroads, landmark, cemetery, crown.

Subject: The meeting of the three living and the three dead is found in French literature and bibliography under the expression: *le dit des trois morts et des trois vifs* or *les trois vivant et trois mortis*. In English bibliography: *the three living and three dead*, *Legend of the three living and the three dead* or *the three quick and the three dead*. In German bibliography as: *Die drei Leben und drei Toten*, *Die legende der drei Lebendigen und der drei Toten* or *Der spruch der Toten und der Lebenden*. In the Italian one as: *Il contrasto (l'incontro) dei tre vivi et dei tre morti*. Eventually, in Dutch as: *legende van de drie levenden en de drie dooden*. Since it is not a doctrinal subject, but an allegorical one linked to the sapiential literature, the ways to express it are very heterogeneous, sometimes including the terms *kings* to stand for the living and *meeting*.

The study of the iconography and iconology is one of the most fascinating fields of Art History. In order to properly interpret images, their meaning and the usage that was made of them it is necessary the knowledge of the history of minds, literature, written sources and both the material and historical realities of the past. Particularly interesting is the study of the iconography in the Lower Middle Age (13th, 14th and 15th centuries), its antecedents and consequences. That interest derives from the abundance of material rests that can be related to all sorts of written documents that have reached our days. Both of these are also linked to social history and the history of minds. One of the most suggestive fields of study analyses the way in which the images come to life and pass from culture to culture, from context to context, from civilization to civilization. By doing so, they either maintain or modify their form and attributes, achieve a new meaning and become either enriched or impoverished in their semantics and symbolisms, meeting the need to express the varying feelings and realities in each age and geographical area. One of the themes that has worked out better in historiography, when researching the ways of transmission of the forms, is the *meeting of the three living and the three dead*, an iconographic theme born in Buddhist India. It then passed to the Muslim world through Persian and Abbasid literature to reach the West very transformed as an allegory of both the mental and moral reaction undergone by three socially relevant living, who suddenly meet three dead and eventually ended up

generating themes as apparently unconnected as the Danse Macabre (the Dance of Death)¹.

Summary: The iconographic subject matter of the three living before the three dead shows an occasional meeting in which three healthy and unconcerned men who enjoy life in their adulthood. These men, apparently not acquainted with pain, go hunting and, on turning a curve or reaching a crossroads marked by a landmark, come up against three dead, described by written sources as: *rotten and eaten by maggots*. Depending on the literary sources, the living may be the symbol of the three social levels on showing either a king, a priest and a member of the upper-middle class or three monarchs or a king and three princes or the aristocratic hunters or even three wealthy members of the upper social class, in any case, three well-off and elegantly dressed gentlemen. The dead can be lifeless inside their coffins or sit up and try to get out of the ossuary or the sepulchre. If they are lifeless, the living become astonished on gazing at the corpses in a state of putrefaction and this makes them reflect about life expiration. Together with the dead there can be a hermit who initiates a dialogue with the living and warns them about both life's brevity and the necessity to conduct it along the straight path of good behaviour. If the dead return to life they are depicted sitting up or leaving their tombs either relaxed and still life or advance toward the living. In both cases the dead, with no need of the hermit, start talking and develop a dialogue with the living. The reflection on the expiry of earthly goods arouses from the awareness of the living about what they are to be in a near future since the dead ominously warn them: *we once were as you are, as we are so shall you be*. The living, impressed at the vision, change their existential attitude and, from that moment on, look after their souls, afraid of death's proximity². In some stories, after the dialogue, the dead assume an aggressive attitude to the living and either pursue or threaten them.

The scientific community agrees that the image of the meeting of the living and the dead comes from Eastern literature. It must derive from the theme of Buddha's four encounters and was transmitted via Islam into Christian Europe³, trebling the characters to make the scene more impressive. According to Reau: *its popularity is mainly due to preachers, who willingly used to threaten their flock with this story of ghosts whose morals they employed in the sermons. Particularly, it was the mendicant orders of Franciscans and Dominicans that contributed to its diffusion*⁴.

¹The emotional impact the vision of death has for a living needs no explanation. It has existed since the beginning of man on earth. The most ancient written reference about it is the narration of the four meetings of the Prince Siddhartha Gautama (the third of which is a funeral cortege), who lived in the 6th century BC. Western lines of argument are alike to those of the East and Islam, although its sense is slightly different. The moral within Prince Siddhartha's story is universally valid as it raises the contrast of the beautiful, young, fully alive body that comes up against the decay of the flesh. In the Christian West this contrast ends up being a *memento mori et nunc pecabis* or a *mundi transit*. In Baltrusaitis' opinion: Buddhistic development gets abbreviated but it expresses the same idea in the same terms. BALTRUSAITIS, Jurgis, *La Edad Media Fantástica (The Fantastic MiddleAge)*. Madrid, 1983.

² The warning made to the living by the dead, *we once were as you are, as we are so shall you be*, is a replica of the Latin epigraphy, *sum quod eris/ quod es olim fui/ hodie mihi eras tibi/ et in Arcadia ego*. On the gates of many cemeteries and ossuaries, together with the representation of two shinbones and a skull, the following epigraph can be read: *Stop, traveller, look and consider if there is such a pain as ours. I once was as you are, as we are you shall be*.

³ In both the Arabic poet Adri and ancient Arabic literature it is documented the meeting of the king Norman of Hira with the dead in a cemetery.

⁴ REAU, Louis, *Iconography of Christian art. New Testament*, Barcelona, 1996, Book 1: vol. 2, p. 664-5.

Attributes and forms of representation: We know two basic Western versions of the meeting of the living and the dead which must be dated in the 13th century. They became enriched with anecdotes and local details along the 14th and 15th centuries and originated specific national variations, although the common trunk is always easily recognised. The Italian version from the 13th century, which we only have iconographic examples of, has been compared to the French one, from mid 13th century, of which we have both literary and iconographic examples that were projected throughout Europe. Both versions are almost identical in their form, with the dead, static, either lying in their coffins or standing, back to life, but clearly separated from the space occupied by the living.

The Italian story is known through two iconographic examples and it develops the meeting of the three living (occasionally, noblemen, clergyman, and member of the middle-upper class or, simply, three richly dressed noblemen) with three dead. The living ones are astonished at the vision of the dead. There is no dialogue as they keep the image of meditation reinforced by the presence of a shrine and a hermit who contemplates the scene and reflects about life expiration. The appearance of the three social levels symbolizes the idea of the universality of death, which there are no privileged for. In principle, the three gentlemen are hunters who usually appear on horseback, one of them being a falconer. The three dead either appear both lying and lifeless inside their coffins or are depicted just as they return to life, stand up and live their tombs as though they stood up from bed, as they are depicted in Atri cathedral toward 1260⁵. Occasionally, the dead adopt an aggressive attitude before the living. The Italian iconographic model is very flexible and open to introduce anecdotic details. In order to enhance the theme, the servants who attend the noblemen in the shooting can be depicted with a fearful attitude; as fearful as the ones of the dogs or the hawk which, scared by the appearance of the three dead, flies off. From the 14th century on it is included a hermit in the composition, this way the living can talk to the hermit, who shows them life's reality. The hermit has been identified as the Egyptian anchorite,

⁵ The frescoes of the cathedral of Atri, carried out towards 1260, are a perfect iconographic model for the Italian way to depict the meeting in the 13th century. The fresco is distributed along two walls so that the corner of the room serves for separating the background of the living from that of the dead. On the wall at the left of the spectator are situated three skeletons sitting on a kind of coffin-ossuary. The skeletons are quiet, with their hands on their legs. Reau states the primitivism of this composition on the fact that only two skeletons were depicted. That is to say, originally they were three living that met a certain number of dead, which resulted into three, perhaps due to a mimetic contamination with the story of the Three Magi. Nevertheless, the reason could also be the symbolism of the number three linked to the universality of the message given to the living, as it was valid for the three known continents at that time: Europe, Africa and Asia. Other factor that could explain the iconic loan is that, in the iconography of the Three Magi, they meet at a crossroads and from it they ride together to their destination. This representation matches exactly the way the living are depicted before the dead, since their meeting, according to certain versions, takes place at a crossroads while they are riding their horses. But, this time, the gentlemen meet the dead, not the Saviour. In Atri, the living are distributed on the right wall. The first living is a priest dressed in alb and a Franciscan brown habit. The second one is an armed man with a sword, wrapped up in a cloak and a rich cap, who declares to be a nobleman. The third one is young man likely to be a member of the middle-upper class, with uncovered head, gloves in his hands and a sword strapped on his waist. To the right of the composition, a crowd of men and a horse represent the entourage which goes with them. A bird, whose species cannot be identified, flees, afraid, turning its back on the dead as if it fled in the opposite direction. The landscape has not been developed as there are only grass blades on the feet and monochrome horizontal stripes that evidence a certain formal dependence on Late-Romanesque painting. REAU, Louis, *Op. Cit.* 1996, Book 1, volume 2, p. 665.

Saint Macarius, however, his identification with the saint from the Thebaid seems very difficult to support⁶.

Summarising, in the Italian-like story prevails the idea of showing death through three dead before three relevant men embarrassed at the vision together with an ascetic who calms down their spirit and releases the tragic revelation. The dead and the living get trebled so as to increase the dramatic force and the hermit contributes to redirect the scene.

In the middle of the 14th century, as a consequence of both the convulsion triggered by the Black Death in 1348 and the vision of manifold epidemics, the corpses of the three dead started to be depicted at different stages of the corruption process. It has been attempted to compare the iconography of the corrupted corpses with the description of the nine phases of the corruption of corpses both in Chinese and Japanese literature⁷. However, it is not necessary to consider the arrival of Eastern literature to the West in this case as it is enough to watch the degradation of a corpse to establish how the passage of time affects bodies⁸.

From the French story we have both written texts from the 13th century and iconographic examples that get slightly farther from the Italian iconographic model. The French story generates a different figurative system because in it are represented three corpses, who are standing, once returned to life, before three elegantly dressed gentlemen, --usually aristocrats, princes or kings, on attitudes of dialogue. Living and dead appear in an attitude with gesticulating hands, as though they were arguing their opposing and contrary ideas. The dead either have returned to life or have turned into three spectra that adopt an active role in the dialogue. The living are not afraid of the dead and, from separated places, they talk about the sin of pride, as if the living had some specular image of the dead to see themselves on⁹. The three gentlemen, richly dressed, may take a crown on their forehead and one of them carries a hawk to indicate that they master the art of falconry, an inherent prerogative of the nobility. The meeting is composed in a specular way by reduplicating their hands gesticulation, heads, eyes and mouths, with the only exception that the living are sad and the dead are laughing at

⁶ On touching a Skull found in the desert with a palm leaf, St. Macarius heard the dead confess his torments [.....]. *St. Macarius serves for opposing the inspirational life of the anchorites from the Thebaid to the frivolous riding of the three young rich men. In any case, the anchorite has the mere role of a reciter who started declaiming at the beginning of the allegorical religious plays. This figure is also found at the beginning of the Danse Macabres. The moralizing intention is deeply underlined.* REAU, Louis, *Op. Cit.* 1996, p. 666.

⁷ The rejection of old age, ugliness, disease and death originated an Eastern literary subgenre called *bibhatsa rasa*, which means *feeling of filthiness*, common to the rejection of the body as is was understood by monks by their sermons in the Middle Ages. Some interesting examples are the description of the tomb of an emperess Dan Rin, the tomb of the female poet Ono no Komachi and the sermons by Odón de Cluny, *The beauty of the body relies only on the skin. As if men knew what there is under their skin [...], they would feel disgusted at the sight of women. Its attractiveness consists of blood and mucosity, bile and wetness. [...] finds dirt everywhere. And, if we cannot touch any mucosity or excrement with our fingertips, how can we feel the wish of embracing the very wineskin of the excrements?* HUIZINGA, Johan, *The autumn of the Middle Ages*. Barcelona, 1995, p. 198-199. HUIZINGA, Johan, *De Vidushaka in het Indisch tooneel*. Groninga, 1887, p. 77 y ss.

⁸ ANDERSON, W. *A collection of Japanese and Chinese Painting in the British Museum*, London, 1886, p. 87, no. 77 y p. 121, no. 205.

⁹ SERVIÈRES, G. "Les formes artistiques du Dict des trois morts et des tyrois vifs" en *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1926.

the living. A good example of this can be appreciated in the Arundel Psalter, a work by Robert de Lisle, preserved in the British Library. This work was carried out between 1310 and 1339 –depending on the historiographic trend that analyses it— and its aesthetics is classified within the linear Gothic strongly influenced by French artistic modes¹⁰.

In the French-like meeting it prevails the direct dialogue between living ones and dead ones, so the presence of a hermit is unnecessary. According to Huizinga *in all these reflections there is, without doubt, an extremely materialistic spirit that cannot support the idea of beauty's expiry, without any hesitation about beauty itself*. The plastic forms to express the idea of death are very lively, but also *very simple, direct, rough and strident. All the monk of former ages had reflected on death was then compressed into a particularly primitive, popular and lapidary image of death. And this is the way the idea was verbally and plastically exposed to the crowd. This image of death has only truly been able to grasp one element from the complex of ideas that get around death: the element of life expiration. It is as though the latest medieval spirit hadn't been able to contemplate death from a point of view other than that of expiration exclusively*¹¹. Iconographically, the image usually opposes three beautiful, firm and soft bodies to three corrupt, flaccid, fetid and decomposed corpses. In fact, it is the living image of the literary topic *Ubi sunt?*, characteristic in the elegies and sermons from the High Middle Ages. The image leads to the question: *where are ancient earthly glories?* The literary topic is already present in the twelfth-century literature, in Bernardo de Morlay's writings¹², but it took very long to become visually expressed. In fact, it was not until the middle of the fourteenth century that it definitely did it. Many Art historians have wondered why the topic of life expiration took so long to integrate the repertoire of visual arts. There is not a clear or univocal answer but there is no doubt that in order to

¹⁰ Dead and living make a specular image. The living are three crowned and richly dressed kings wearing robes and cloaks. One of the monarchs is holding a sceptre and takes his hands in a contrite gesture. The other two, depicted with bent bodies, take each other's hands and look at the dead openly. One takes his hand to his chin and the other carries a hawk on his left hand. The dead gather in a specular way. The two dead closer to the kings that take each other's hands also touch each other. One of the corpses places his hand on his chest and has his stomach full of worms that are devouring him, while the other touches his mate's shoulder without enough strength in his vertebrae to support his head on his neck. The last dead is depicted full-face. The three of them look with their eyes open wide and oppose their smiling grimaces to the sad faces of the three kings. They are depicted just at the moment when the dead address to the living to tell them: *You shall soon be as me, a fetid corpse eaten up by maggots*, this last detail incorporated to all the stories that include the dialogue. British Library, Arundel, MS. 83 II, p. 127. The dependence of the British and French models is easy to notice in this miniature when compared to other one illustrated by the poem of Baudouin de Condé, which is preserved at the National Library in Paris. The last one formally depends on the English miniature but it stylises the figures and kills colour intensity. Arsenal Library, MS. 3142, p. 311v. ver 1285 and ss. Walters art gallery at Baltimore, MS. 51, p. 1-2.

¹¹ HUIZINGA, Johan, *Op. Cit.* 1995, p. 199 & 194-195. *In the wish to directly make death with sensitivity only the most vulgar aspects were brought to awareness, being forced to abandon what couldn't be depicted that way. The macabre vision of death doesn't know either of the elegiac aspect or tenderness. And deep inside it is an extremely earthly and egoist attitude before death. It is not about the pain for the loss of beloved people, but about regretting the very death while approaching, as it means evil and dread. In it is found neither the idea of death as consolation, nor the end of affliction, nor the desired rest, nor the realised work that ends up destroyed, nor even a tender memory or an act of resignation. Ibidem, p. 211.*

¹² *Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemos* means for its name the ancient rose persists, we are only left with the bare names. What is left of all the human beauty? only the memory and the name. WRIGHT, Th. *The Anglo Latin satirical poets and epigrammatists of the twelfth century*. London, 1872, vol. II, p. 37.

comparatively represent a beautiful body in fullness, opposed to one in a state of putrefaction and deterioration, it is necessary both a certain degree of plasticity and a remarkable technical skill in visual arts, only achieved at the end of the Middle Ages. It is also necessary to count on an ability to observe nature, which was not achieved until the middle of the thirteenth century. Thus, natural realism, even dramatic expressionism, breaks into Western sensitivity. There are good examples of this in both Franco-Flemish and German versions of the meeting of the living and the dead during the 15th century. It was precisely this new perception of the world that made it easier to turn into either pictorial or sculptural images what, up to that moment, had remained expressed in the world of the abstract thought of both poetry and sermonaries¹³.

Originally, the three living find the three dead lying in their tombs, in complete silence, reduced to both the tranquillity of a cemetery and the ruthless realism of the degradation of the lifeless body. This image gave way to skeletons that stand up, leave their tombs, invade the space of the living, come to life, speak and since the fifteenth century they have moved with such a rhythm that they have got to dance and have become depicted with similar or more vitality than the living. It is then that the dead transgress the laws of nature. In Professor Richard Buxton's opinion, verbally explained, a dead man's place is his tomb and afterlife. When a living is gets faced with a revitalised dead, who comes out of his tomb and either stands or dances, the dead transgresses the natural order of the place that is due to him. In the supernatural vision of the three meetings the dead return to the century, they are not in the place that matches them. They get up and it is as if they could not rest, possessed by an uncontrollable activity that borders on evil. Something supernatural makes them speak at the meeting.

Since the second half of the 14th Century some pictorial and sculptural groups have been documented to associate the representation of the meeting between the three living and the three dead to death's triumph and the Danse Macabre. This iconographic association does not depend on any geographical area but it seems to respond to a moralizing exaltation of life expiration and death's proximity. Within this category it must be studied the paintings devoted to death's triumph at Pisa's graveyard. They were painted between 1350 and 1360 by the trecentist Francesco Traiani. In them there is a landscape with some praying hermit monks who have renounced the world. The three dead are inside their coffins, in different states of decomposition: one of them with a rich shroud and a swollen stomach, other with snakes and different vermin typical in decomposing bodies. It is precisely the fright at the decomposition of the body that helps explain the particular value attributed to the incorrupt bodies of the Saints, Christ's ascension to heaven and the Virgin's ascension, so released from earthly corruption. The retinue of living, nobly dressed, accompanied by their dogs and birds of prey, are afraid, which is grasped by means of their different gestures. A horse snorts at the smell of the corruption of the bodies, a gentleman takes his hand to his chin in a suffering attitude similar to the one adopted by Saint John at the foot of the Cross. One of the living points to one of the corpses and talks to his mate afraid of what he is contemplating. It is an interesting catalogue of dramatic gestures that concentrates its attention on hands and faces. The animals are also in a state of panic as they are also subject to death. The horses neigh, the dogs howl at death, the hawks break their hindrances and fly as far as possible¹⁴.

¹³ HUIZINGA, Johan, *Op. Cit.*, 1995, p. 197-198.

¹⁴ This triumph of death grasps the panic atmosphere brilliantly, caused by the epidemics and calamities of the middle of the 14th century. The Goddess of Death, with bat wings, overflies the corpses waving her

In the paintings of the cloister of Clusone, near Bermamo, a work by Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, was represented death's triumph and the Danse Macabre. On of the skeletons, in an aggressive attitude, is depicted according to traditional models that derive from the image of Apollo as the giver of death. He is shooting arrows at the three living hunters, who are riding their horses with their hawks and hounds, reaching one of them, who gets knocked down¹⁵.

Perhaps the most important Collection was the missing paintings and reliefs of the chapel of the cemetery of the Innocent in Paris. They became the model imitated by many artists (among them the scenes of the Danse Macabre by Guyot Marchant). In 1408 Duke John de Berry had a relief made about the meeting of the three living and the three dead to be placed on the south façade of the ossuary-cemetery of the Innocent in Paris in memoriam of his nephew, Duke Louis of Orleans, assassinated in 1407. The relief, placed in 1424, got destroyed in the 17th century in the restoration of the portico of the church, which was decorated with frescoes of the Danse Macabre accompanied by epigraphs. The figures were simple, expressive and the verses of the didascalias were likewise easy to understand. Each stanza concluded with a popular proverb¹⁶.

scythe. Some beggars and some sick implore Death to be released from their ills, but she rejects them, waiting for a more succulent booty. In the centre of the composition, some angels are carrying a sign: *Neither the world, nor knowledge, nor wealth ... shall save them from death*. BUCCI, Mario, *Le camposanto monumental de Pise: fresques et sinopie*. Pisa, 1960. CARLI, Enzo, *Il camposanto di Pisa*. Roma, 1999. GUERRY, L. *Le Thème du Triomphe de la Mort dans la peinture italienne*. Paris, 1950, p. 38-57.

¹⁵ The paintings of the cloister of Clusone are organised into three friezes. In spite of the alterations suffered by its wall facing with the opening of windows and doors, the iconographies are perfectly easy to identify. It is topped off by a sort of pediment which depicts death's triumph as though it were an impressive papal tomb featuring three skeletons. The one in the centre is wearing a crown and a rain cloak and is smiling in a macabre gesture. The other two, symmetrical, are shooting at the living. The skeleton situated at the left is shooting a harquebus. Neither power, nor earthly glory, nor riches save the living from the common denominator of death. Some living attempt to seduce death by taking coins, crowns, offerings of any kind and nature, with no success. Death's smile is ironic. Meanwhile, the living end up being corpses on a green grassland that reminds the Heavenly Pastoral in the Psalm 23. The lower frieze is a spectacular Danse Macabre in which the living are rigid and the dead are moving frantically. GUERRY, L. *Le Thème du Triomphe de la Mort dans la peinture italienne*. Paris, 1950. PENCO, G. "In margine ad un tema iconográfico" en *Benedictina*. 17, 1970, p. 346-348. SETTIS FRUGONI, Ch. "il tema dell'Incontro dei tre vivi e dei tre morti della tradizione medioevale italiana" en *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Memorie (Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche)* ser. VIII, XIII, 1967, p. 143-252. ROMANO, M. E. "Il detto campano dei tre morti e dei tre vivi", en *Studi Medievali*. XXVI, 1985, p. 405-433.

¹⁶ According to Huizinga the peoples: *both got comforted by everybody's equality in death and shuddered at the idea of their end*¹⁶. *In fact, no place gathered so pathetically what put death before one's eyes as the cemetery of the Innocent in Paris. In it the spirit finished off the horror of the macabre to the bottom. Everything contributed to confer that place both the holy gloomy character and the picturesque shudder that was so appreciated in the late Middle Age. The saints to whom the church and the cemetery were consecrated, the Saints Innocent, sacrificed instead of Jesus, already caused, with their dreadful martyrdom, the intense excitation and bloody emotion enjoyed at that time. Exactly in that century it was very fashionable to worship the Saints Innocent. More than one relic of the children of Bethlehem was owned. Louis XI gifted an Innocent entier to the church of Paris. It was consecrated for them and was enclosed in a large glass urn. A bishop of Paris had some sand of the cemetery of the Innocent place put into his sepulchre because he could not be buried there. Poor and rich rested there close to one another, though not for long, as the burial area, to which twenty parishes had the right, was much requested. Therefore, after some time, the bones were dug up again and their sepulchral gravestones were sold. A body was said to decompose in nine days there, with the exception of the bones. The skulls and the bones were later piled up in the ossuaries located on the portico, which surrounded the cemetery on three sides. Thousands of them lye there, naked and patent, preaching the doctrine of universal equality. Below the*

The paintings of the Chapel of Kermaria Jouet in Côtes du Nord an Isquit, painted by Jouet en Côtes du Nord between 1450 and 1460, are also of utmost interest¹⁷. Equally interesting are the ones of the Church of La Ferté-Loupière in Yonne of the end of the 15th or beginning of the 16th century¹⁸. In both cases it is included the meeting of the living and the dead as well as a complex Danse Macabre in the way of a procession that surrounds all the naves of the church, including the stanzas and getting adapted to the horizontal friezes. In the two cases the meeting of the living and the dead is very similar: the living, on horseback; the standing skeletons, armed and in an aggressive attitude, trying to invade the space of the living and a stone crossing separating the space between living and dead.

Written sources: From a literary viewpoint, the meeting of the three living and the three dead must be studied under the framework of the didactic-sapiential genres of medieval literature. In Italy only two versions of the meeting of the living and the dead are known. One of them is in vernacular language and the other is in Latin¹⁹. Although both versions were regarded as the oldest by traditional historiography, current philological criticism dates them to 14th century and subsequent to the French stories. In fact, in Italy the iconography seems previous to the literary account, which could indicate the possible loss of the most ancient literary sources. However, this issue still has not been satisfactorily resolved.

The French account was defined as the *Arsenal Group* by scientific community due to being studied according to a manuscript conserved in the Arsenal Library in Paris²⁰. This version of the story of the three living and the three dead is considered the pattern and model from which the other versions derive. The manuscripts that constitute the *Arsenal Group* allow studying both the text and the image as parallel and interrelated creative realities. It develops two different argumentative: the first one is the meeting and the second one is the dialogue. Six manuscript versions from the middle of the 13th

arcades, it could be seen the same doctrine in the paintings and verses of the Dance of Death. For the construction of the beaux charriers (beautiful ossuaries) it had been the noble Boucicaud, among others, who had donated money. [...] Later, in the 16th century, still standing over the cemetery, the Great Death, solitary, constitutes in the Louvre the only rest of what was gathered there in one day. [...] There were little shops by the ossuaries and lasses of easy virtue under the arcades. Even a hermit enclosed by four walls was left, at the side of the church. A mendicant friar usually preached in that place, which was itself a sermon of medieval style. Some other times a procession of children got assembled there: 12,500 as a number, says the middle-man of Paris, all of them are candles, who took an Innocent to Notre Dame and brought him back. There were even solemn celebrations held there. So much had the same things become habits that they caused horror. HUIZINGA, Johan, *Op. Cit.* 1995, p. 210-211.

¹⁷ In the Chapel of Kermaria the Danse Macabre occupies the central nave, making an iconographic cycle of round circle reading above the formerets that separate the three naves of the church. The church was founded in the 13th century under Henry d'Avauour, who went to crusades in Holy Land with Pierre Maudere, Duke of Bretagne, and returned to his domain in 1240. In that year the chapel, of funerary use, may have been founded as votive offering. BÉGULE, L. *La Chapelle de Kermaria-nisquit et sa danse des morts*. Paris, 1909. ROTZLER, W. *Die Begegnung der drei Lebenden un der drei toten*. Wintertur, 1961. SOLEIL, Felix, *La dance macabre de Kermaria*. Desclee, 1882.

¹⁸ In Ferté Loupière a horizontal frieze was a fresco painted by taking advantage of the wall canvass that spread over the body of rounded arches that separate the three naves of the church and below the body of windows that enlighten the central nave, within the wall canvass that bridges the difference in height between the central and lateral naves. It was restored by abbot Mertena. MEGNIER, P. *La dance macabre de la Ferté Loupiere*. Peyrannet, 1939 reed. Paris, 1983.

¹⁹ Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale de Florencia: ms. sig. II.I.122, fol. 134v. s. XIV. Including a miniature.

²⁰ MALE, Emile, *L'art religieux a la fin du moyen age*. II, 2.

and 14th centuries are known; 5 of them are complete, coinciding in the argument and diverging in trivial details²¹.

There are two versions of a known author and 4 anonymous ones. The oldest one is the one written by Baudoin de Condé, minstrel at the court of Marguerite of Flanders (1244–1280), who must have composed the poem towards 1275²². The most interesting and known one is, however, the poem written by Nicolás de Margival, which must be dated before 1310 and has been classified by experts as the third oldest text about the subject. The oldest versions are from the middle of the 13th century. Consequently, they are prior to the appearance of iconography in France but subsequent to the appearance of the subject in Italian art. This seems to indicate that the story was transmitted from the East through the Mediterranean, via Islam, perhaps following established trade routes. In England there is an old and complete version in a text written by Gauthier Map which was taken as the original one from the 12th century for very long. Therefore, traditional historiography used to regard it as the first known textual version, prior to versions written in French, Italian and Latin. In addition, it was also considered contemporary to the iconographic versions of Italian painting, yet current criticism dates it to the 14th century and thus subsequent to both the Italian and French versions. There are also German variants of the tale illustrated with miniatures, as the *Dis ist der weltelon Wolfenbüttel* from the 14th century²³.

Non-written sources: They are the figurative representations analysed below.

Geographical and chronological extension: The iconographic examples of the meeting of the three living and the three dead that have reached our days are very geographically disperse but all of them range within the Christian kingdoms of Europe in the atmosphere of the Lower Middle Age. That is to say, they are dated to the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries and there are late survivals until the 16th century. No prior examples are known although they may have existed and become lost. The subject achieves a remarkable influence in visual arts during the second half of the 14th century and along all the 15th century. It runs parallel to the taste for the macabre and the tricky, to a certain extent as a consequence of the visual response to the spiritual convulsions caused by the Black Death of 1348 and its continuous and successive reappearance.

There are three different methodologies to face the analysis of the iconography of the meeting of the living and the dead: the chronological, geographical and thematic ones. None of them is totally satisfactory. The first one aims to both chronologically order the illustrations that have reached our days and determine how the representation and its symbolisms evolved. However, such a thing is not possible in many cases due to the complexity inherent to the exact dating of the reliefs and anonymous paintings, which show a very popular aesthetic language, as they can only be placed within century quarters and, even so without total certainty. The analysis subject to geographical criteria is not exactly appropriate either, since it may lead to the existence of closed iconographic models of national character. This factor makes it difficult to study how, assuming their existence, they may influence each other. The model of thematic analysis concentrates on the iconographic forms associated to non-uniform regions and, within

²¹ GLOXELLI, S. *Les cinq poèmes des trois morts et des trois vifs*. París, 1914.

²² PANUNZIO, Savarino, *Baudoin de Condé, ideologia e scrittura*. Farsano, 1992, Biblioteca della ricerca Medioevo di Francia, 3.

²³ Biblioteca Herzog August, Cod. 16.17, Aug. 4^o, fol. 85v y 87r. KÜNSTLE, K. *Die Legende der drei Lebenden und drei Toten und der Totentanz*. Friburg, 1908.

each one, it follows a chronological order. This third analysis system is the only one that allows achieving a certain global comprehension of the iconographic themes and their symbolisms. According to this model of study two basic categories must be established: the Italian figurative system and the French-Flemish model. To this must be added a third group which is the consequence of the projection of the French-Flemish model with specific Italian iconographic contributions and local variants which result from the contractual impositions of the clients who order the works or from local artists' need to interpret the theme. In such cases other variants are considered in Germany, England, Ireland, Denmark and the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula.

The most important Italian examples in the 13th century are the frescos at Saint Marguerita (Santa Margarita) near Melfi, toward 1250 and the already studied ones at the Cathedral of Atri. In the 14th century stress must be laid on the paintings of Montefiascone, of 1302; the fresco of the Sacro Speco at Subiaco, of 1334 by Meo de Siena; the diptic attributed to Bernardo Daddi, toward 1340, conserved in Cremona; the already studied ones at the graveyard of Pisa by Francesco Traiani; the mural paintings of Santa María de Vezzolano (St. Mary of Vezzolano), about 1354, where there is also a relieve in a sepulchre²⁴ and some miniatures of the Trecento already mentioned on dealing with the manuscripts. Along the 15th and 16th centuries some examples in Italy are documented to support the vitality of the theme out of time since they are examples parallel to the sensitivity of the high Renaissance and Mannerism. Among them must be mentioned the paintings of the sacristy of San Luca at Cremona (St. Luca), of 1419; the paintings done by Jacopo Casetino for the shutter of a triptych conserved at Göttingen University; the above mentioned frescos of the cloister of Clusone; the paintings by Antonio Ferraris, of the Lombard School and the frescos by Pinzolo, of 1539.

In the French-Flemish gothic art a group of monumental representations are found both in the parietal paintings and fresco or dry decorations, being a part of the iconographic programs of diverse churches. There are more than 60 classified examples, from which the most significant ones are the paintings of Mont St. Michael Church, of the 13th century. They may have been inspired by the art of the stained glasses due to their position within tetralobes. In the 14th century, stress must be laid on the destroyed paintings of Sainte Ségolène at Metz, the paintings of Villiers St. Benoit at Yonne and the frescos of Notre Dame des Doms at Avignon²⁵. In the 15th century, some works of art stand out: the frescos of Antigny at Vienne, Jouhet sur Gartempe, the paintings of Ennezat at Puy de Dôme, of 1420²⁶ and the paintings of the church at Halle (Belgium)²⁷.

²⁴ RAGUSA, Elena & SALERNO, Paolo, *Santa María di Vezzolano. Gli affrechi del chiostro. Il restauro*. Torino, 2003.

²⁵ In Notre Dame des Doms at Avignon the meeting of the living and the dead is represented in a very peculiar way as it mixes the French iconography with elements of clear Italian origin. The three dead are represented standing, as if they had been forced into niches, resembling a frieze; that is to say, just the way the three coffins would stand in vertical position. The living appear on the spandrels of the round arch, presided over by Death, depicted as a winged goddess who succeeds and shoots her arrows to the four cardinal points from the key stone of the arch. Her attitude would be similar to the one present in the part of the classical iconography that deals with Apollo as an accurate arch shooter. The living, submitted to the empire of Death, do not start any dialogue and have no connection with the image of Death..

²⁶ DUCHET SUCHAUX, Gastón, *L'iconographie: études sur les rapports entre textes et images dans l'occident medieval*. Paris, 2001.

²⁷ In the paintings of San Martín de Halle (St. Martin of Halle) one of the dead gropes forward since, due to the decay of his corpse and his lack of eyes, he behaves as if being blind. The living, terrified, cling to their horses in fear. At the same church there is other image of the meeting on the reliefs of the cloister. LUISS, A. "La decoration sculpturale des chapelles du choeur at l'église Saint Martin à Hal. I: La

At the first decades of the 16th century, the representation of living and the dead still survives, as it is clearly shown by the fresco paintings of the Castle of Blois of about 1502, whose composition appears in an illuminated scroll kept guarded at the Engravings Room in Paris. Other works must be stressed, such as the frescos of Auvers le Hamon at Sarthe, the frescos of the Church of Meslay le Grenet at Eure et Loir²⁸ and the already studied frescos of La Ferté Loupière at Yonne as well as the frescos of the Chapel of the Treasure of Saint Riquier's Church at Somme²⁹, the frescos of Lacome and the stained glasses of Charme sur Moselle. All these examples turn into image, with either higher or lower accuracy, the French-Flemish manuscript texts of the *Arsenal Group* and generate an exclusive figurative model.

The meeting of the three living and the three dead underwent a special development in the miniatures that illustrate the Book of Hours where they usually fill a whole page of the Office of the Dead. The manufacture and sale of this type of books along the 15th century favoured the projection of the French-Flemish iconographic model throughout Europe. They are usually representations full of anecdotes and both macabre and expressive details, particularly the ones ascribed to Parisian workshops of international style toward 1400 as well as both the Flemish and Burgundian of the second half of the 15th century. There is a certain formal and composite dependence between fresco painting and the miniature. The traditional interpretation stated that the miniature provided parietal painting with the models, but currently, they are thought to be two interacting figurative systems. The manuscripts that contain the most remarkable images integrate the poem of Baudoïn de Condé, conserved at the Arsenal Library, which gives name to the French-Flemish iconographic model. It contains a collection of poems composed for María de Brabante (Mary of Burgundy), the second wife of Philip the Bold, at the end of the 13th century³⁰. The manuscripts of the 13th and 14th centuries laid great emphasis on depicting the dialogue between dead and living exactly at the moment when the dead explain to the living that in the past they were as powerful as them, but now they suffer in Hell for their sins of earthly pride. At the time of the warning, the dead laugh at the living. That is the way they are represented in the Psalter of Bonne in Luxembourg, toward 1345-1350, conserved at the library of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, where the frightening scene illustrates the part of the codex devoted to the Office of the Dead³¹. In the 15th century stress must be laid on

rencontré des trois morts et des trois vifs" en *Revue Belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art*. IV, 1936, p. 13-30.

²⁸ UTZINGER, Héléne, *Itinéraires des danses macabre*. Chartres, 1996.

²⁹ The three dead, rotten and eaten by maggots, hold a dart, a scythe and a spade, and move ahead toward the young riders accompanied by the inscription: *Tels comme vous un temps nous fumes./ Et tells serez comme nous sommes./ La mort en tout tems vous épie/ Pour vous ôter du corps la vie. And as we are now so shall you be. Death at any time spies you to take your life out of your body.* MAGNILLON, Aline, *Saint Riquier: une grande abbaye bénédictine*. Paris, 2009.

³⁰ Arsenal Library, Paris, ms. 3142, fol. 311v.

³¹ This Psalter is a key work for the study of the International Style manuscripts. The meeting fills two pages framed by marginal vegetal decoration consisting of golden thistle, birds and heraldic emblems. The page of the living depicts them riding nervous horses on neutral red bottom. The horses feel aversion for the smell of the dead. One of the living, crowned, turns round to one of his companions, who wears a pointed cap and holds the handkerchief to his nose. The third rider, of disheveled blonde hair, holds a hawk on his hand. The expressive skeletons, represented on blue bottom, are standing and show three different degrees of decay. The first one has an intact shroud and his hands crossed on his chest. The second one has a torn shroud and addresses to the three living by speaking and gesticulating. Whereas, the third one, the most expressive, is laughing at the living until he gets his jaw dislocated on realizing how

The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry, a codex conserved at the Condé Museum at Chantilly. The codex, which contains 206 pages, written in Latin and illustrated by 131 miniatures, was composed for the Duke Jean de Berry by the copyist Yvonet Leduc and illustrated by the Limbourg brothers, (Paul and Jean) and Hermann Malouel of Gueldre, who worked between 1408 and 1416. It is considered one of the masterpieces of International Style even though its author's death left it unfinished. In 1484 it was inherited in 1484 by Charles I of Savoy, who commissioned its completion from the painter Jean Colombe, from Bourges³². In contrast to the way of depicting the three dead in the 13th and 14th centuries, who used to appear serene or only laughing at the living, the three dead of the 15th century are shaking, aggressive and invade or try to occupy the space of the living by pursuing them. The miniature of the Book of Hours of Anne de Beaujeu, Lady of Baudricourt, of about 1470 is also very interesting. Reau studied it in the collection of Countess P. Durrieu³³; in Jean du Prè's printed books; the Book of Hours of Bouges and in the Book of Hours which belonged to Edward IV of England, in which marginal decoration consists of flowers about to shrivel³⁴. At the end of the 15th century the system of representation was altered by substituting one of the gentlemen for a woman riding in the jennet style. This iconographic variant usually appears when the recipient of the codex is a princess such as it happens in *Mary of Burgundy's Book of Hours*³⁵ and in *Juana I of Castile's Book of Hours*, of the beginning of the 16th century³⁶.

vacuous earthly concerns become. His shroud is totally rotten and shows his stomach full of maggots. Eventually, their coffins are represented behind them. Metropolitan Museum of New York, *Psalter of Bonne at Luxembourg*. P. 321-322. DEUHLER, Flores, "Looking at Bonne of Luxembourg's Prayer Book" at *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New York, 1971, vol. 29, n° 6.

³² The scene has been imagined as if it had happened in a cemetery enclosed by a stone wall with a lintelled gate and a boundary cross at the centre of the composition, which contributes to separate the space of the from that of the dead. To the left, the three dead, standing, attempt to cover their nakedness with white shrouds, move toward the living, point at them with their hands and laugh at them when they find out how frightened they are when fleeing by spurring their horses, depicted at full gallop. *Condé Museum, The Very Rich Hours of Duke of Berry*, p. 86v. MEISS, M. "La Mort et l'office des morts à l'époque du Maître de Boucicault et des Limbourg", en *Revue de l'Art*. N° 1-2, 1968, p. 17-25.

³³ REAU, Louis, *Op. Cit.* 1996, Book 1, vol. 2, p. 666. BOURDICHON, Jean, *Ann de Bretagne's Book of Hours*. Madrid, 2003.

³⁴ The three dead, armed with iron Spears and carrying wooden coffins under their arms, have knocked down one of the living and hound him while the other two, filled with fright, and riding their horses richly harnessed, try to escape. Although the traditional stone cross, typical in the French-Flemish compositions, is maintained, it does not separate the spaces any more since the dead invade the space of the living in a belligerent and aggressive.

³⁵ Daughter of Charles the Bold and wife to Emperor Maximilian. Her manuscript offers a very particular version of the theme: *Among the three riders, who flee at full speed before the three living who, wrapped up in their shrouds, make an effort to chase them, a woman stands out at the forefront. She is a young woman wearing the same pointed hood as Mary of Burgundy. This anomaly can only be explained as an allusion to the early death of Charles the Bold's daughter, who died in 1482 after a fall from her horse, victim of her passion for hunting.* REAU, Louis, *Op. Cit.* 1996, Book 1, vol. 2, p. 665-666. PACHT, Otto, *The master of Mary of Burgundy*. London, 1948. UNTERKIRCHER, Franz y SCHRYVER, Antoine, *Mary of Burgundy's Book of Hours: Codex Vindobonensis. 1857*. Vienna, 1993.

³⁶ The manuscript was manufactured in Flanders and illuminated by Gerard Horehout. It could be one of the wedding presents that Marguerite of Austria gave to Juana of Castile for her matrimony with Philip the Handsome. The dead are armed and have violent attitudes against the living. They leave their tombs and pursue them brandishing their spears. Their aggressiveness causes the fear and stampede of the dogs and horses in diverging directions. The macabre is stressed at the inferior part of the miniature with the appearance of a vaulted ossuary with the epigraph: *dies domini sicut rur veniet*, that means: *the Lord's*

The iconographic English-Irish model of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries shows an evident dependence of the French models as a consequence of the dynastic relations between royal houses and aristocratic families, parallel to the intense economic and ecclesiastical relationships³⁷. There must have existed numerous paintings and reliefs about the meeting of the living and the dead in the English art, but the aniconic zeal of the Anglican reform put an end to most of them. The most well-known are the ones present in the manuscripts rather than the ones that adorned temples. Among them it is worth noting the already studied Psalter of Arundel; the paintings of London, dated around 1440 and the schematic and expressive drawings of the mural paintings of the Irish Knockmoy Abbey, of the 15th century, associated to the iconography of Saint Sebastian, the anti-pestilential saint³⁸.

In Germany, centre of Europe and the areas of influence of the route to the Hansa many iconographic examples of the meeting of the three living and the three dead are met³⁹. Some of them are of the 14th century and most of them belong to the 15th century. They show the projection of the French-Flemish visual model with the variant of a marked expressionist pathos characteristic of the German and centre of Europe art of the late Gothic style. However, in the south of Germany there are examples of the dead lying inside their coffins and a hermit, according to the Italian model. The most significant examples are the frescos of St. Martin Church at Sempach, 1300-1310 in Switzerland; the paintings of the Holy Spirit Chapel of the old hospital at Wismar; the paintings of the parish at Bregninge, in Denmark, of 1400⁴⁰; the paintings of the chapel of Jodokus in the church at Uberlingen, of 1424, where the living are represented as if they were the middle-class margraves of the city, one of them with a sceptre shaped as a fleur de lys; the frescos of the church of Tuse, in Denmark, 15th century⁴¹; the paintings of Lübeck, of 1468 and the paintings of Basel. Finally, it is worth citing drawings, illustrations and

Day comes across the countryside. HAVENBART, Gerard, *Libre de horas de Juana I de Castilla*. Barcelona, 2005.

³⁷ STORCK, W. F. "Aspects of Death in English art and poetry" en *Burlington Magazine*. XXI, 1912, p. 249-256, 314-319. WILLIAMS, E. C. "Mural paintings of the three living and the three dead in England" en *Journal of the British Archeological Association*. 3rd. series, VIII, 1942, p. 31-40.

³⁸ STALLEY, Roger, *The Cistercian monasteries of Ireland: An account of the history. Art and Architecture of the white monks in Ireland from 1142-1540*. Yale University Press, 1987.

³⁹ KUNSTLE, K. *Die Legende von der drei Lebenden und der drei Toten und der Totentanz*. Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1908. STORCK, W. F. *Die Legende von drei Lebenden und den drei Toten und das problema des Totentanzes*. Tubinga, 1910.

⁴⁰ The iconography of the three living and the three dead depends in its form on that of the iconography of the Magi since the living, riding on horseback and crowned, appear riding together and gesticulating with their hands, as when the Magi point to the star. Separating their space from that of the dead, there is a tree simulating a symmetrical axis. The dead are crowned standing skeletons who hold phylacteries with the notices. CROUZIL, Lucien, *Le catholicisme dans les pays scandinaves. Danemark et Islande*. Paris, 1905.

⁴¹ The frescos are painted on the ribbed vault that covers the presbytery. They are very rough and of evident chromatic albeit very expressive limitation. The meeting of the living and dead is integrated in a very complete iconographic, narrative and christologic cycle together with the Annunciation, the Birth of Christ, the Adoration of the shepherds, the killing of the innocent... The theme was imagined as if the living were crowned kings on horseback, accompanied by four hunting dogs and a hawk flying off. The three crowned skeletons are sitting on the coffins of the cemetery and carry phylacteries with the warnings. The position of the fresco is opposite to the one occupied by the visit of the Magi. So we are before an antithetical and specular composition. The Magi meet the Saviour while the other kings meet Death, which they are not prepared for. The taste for the pathetic results in the representation of the snakes coming out of the eye sockets of the skeletons.

xylographies, very abundant in the second half of the 15th century and in the first years of the 16th century. Among them, there is one particularly important of a Hausbuch, the drawing of the master of the *Livre de Raison*, who worked for the Lord of Wolfegg and is conserved in the Cabinet of Engravings and Drawings of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and can formally be related to the works of Wolgemut and Dürer⁴². In addition, it must be highlighted a drawing that has occasionally been attributed to Dürer, but is currently considered of the background of Bulding Grieg's style⁴³. Also very important are the xylographies and drawings that contributed to popularise the theme and served as inspiration to compose paintings and reliefs throughout Europe.

In the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula there must have existed representations of the three living and the three dead, but very few have reached our days, showing a formal dependence on the French figurative models in the case of Castile and Navarre. Yet, in Aragon, powerful influences of the Italian figurative model can be detected⁴⁴. The most well-known mural paintings in Castile come from the presbytery of the church at the convent of the Dominicans of San Pablo (St. Paul) at Peñafiel, today conserved at the Archaeological Museum of Valladolid⁴⁵. At St. Michael Archangel's Church in Oñate (Guipuzkoa), there is a relief with the meeting of the living and the dead that adorns one of the fronts of the Reclining Christ by Pedro Pérez de Guevara –whose death is documented in 1414. In it two of the three skeletons and the hermit are still recognised⁴⁶. In the Crown of Aragón it is worth citing the front of a sepulchre in the church of San Pedro (St. Peter) of Fraga, whose reliefs are dated between 1330-1345⁴⁷.

⁴² The dead are depicted standing, at different positions -one of them backward- more or less with the same degree of decay, dressed in ragged shrouds, wearing royal and imperial crowns on their skulls. The living, on horseback, still appear as hunters, as it is easily deduced from the company of the hounds, one of them barking. The three living are richly dressed, wear crowns on their heads and their harnessed horses are depicted in a variety of positions foreshortened to simulate a three-dimensional space. Nothing in the bottom of the landscape suggests that the meeting happens in a graveyard, except for the rib bones, scapulas and tibias that appear first. As there is no hermit or hermitage the expressiveness gets concentrated on the faces, hands and hair blown by the wind on the heads of living and dead.

⁴³ REAU, Louis, *Op. Cit.* 1996, Book 1, vol. 2, p. 667.

⁴⁴ ESPAÑOL BERTRAN, Francesca, “El encuentro de los tres vivos y los tres muertos y su repercusión en la península Ibérica” (The meeting of the three living and the three dead and its repercussion in the Iberian Peninsula) in *Estudios de Iconografía medieval española (Studies of Spanish Medieval Iconography)*, Bellaterra, 1984, p. 53-153. ESPAÑOL BERTRAN, Francesca, “Lo macabro en el gótico hispano” (The macabre in Spanish Gothic Style), in *Cuadernos de arte español (Spanish Art Notebooks)*, Madrid, 1992.

⁴⁵ San Pablo de Peñafiel (St. Paul of Penafiel) was founded by Don Juan Manuel in 1320. The paintings are ascribed to the Spanish lineal style of the first half of the 14th century and are signed as *e pintola Alfonso*. In them, the dead, holding their hands, guffaw at the living, richly dressed while riding on horseback. A tree separates the spaces. The theme is associated to the iconography of the Final Judgement and Santa María Magdalena (St. Mary Magdalene). There are epigraphs with the warning to the dead by the living, today almost illegible. PÉREZ VILLANUEVA, J. “Las pinturas de la iglesia de San Pablo de Peñafiel” (The paintings of the Church of St. Paul of Penafiel) in the *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología de la Universidad de Valladolid (The Bulletin of the Seminar of Studies of Art and Archaeology of Valladolid University)*. IV, 1935-1936 (1940), p. 99-121.

⁴⁶ CASTAÑER, Xesqui, *Art and Architecture in the Basque Country. The heritage from the Romanesque to the 20th century*. San Sebastián, 2003.

⁴⁷ The reliefs were partially destroyed in the war of 1936 and only some scarce fragments –today at the Museo Diocesano de Lérida (Diocesan Museum)— are known. This demands an archaeological reconstruction drawing that allows learning that the meeting was presented as a dialogue, in the French manner, with the living on horseback approaching the dead close to a building with rich traceries which

In Catalonia the most interesting relief is a capital on the western façade of Santa María del Mar (St. Mary of the Sea) in Barcelona, carried out between 1335 and 1340, with the meeting of the dead and the living, all of them standing, conceived as if it had happened in a forest⁴⁸. More surprising are the paintings on the atrium of the tower of Alcañiz in Teruel, where the three kings are represented on horseback. This composition had traditionally been identified as the part of an epiphany until the rests of the three skeletons were discovered on the opposite wall⁴⁹. In the kingdom of Navarre there is knowledge of a meeting between the living and the dead –maybe a work by Martinet de Sangüesa toward the year 1350— painted on the western wall of the church of Ujué⁵⁰.

Supports and techniques: The theme of the three living and the three dead, whose chronology spans the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th centuries was represented on different supports and with diverse techniques and locations. The technique is documented in the dry fresco or parietal painting in the interior of cemetery churches and cloisters, sometimes associated to funerary chapels and nobility boards. It usually fills the western walls of the churches a an admonitory theme that the faithful can see on leaving the temple after the religious services so fulfilling the function of warning and vigilance respect to sin⁵¹. Occasionally, it can fill a wall in the nave or even be depicted in the presbytery, but in such cases it is a complementary theme to the Final Judgment or the Danse Macabre when it is represented along the whole walls of the church. This same use of warning against sin and vigilance can be applied when it appears in the decoration of the cloisters although, in this case, the number of faithful who would contemplate it is much more restricted (friars, nuns, cathedral canons, etc.)

Since the middle of the 15th century it has appeared in cemetery and graveyard decoration with the same admonitory function and with an increasing taste for the

look like a cemetery chapel. BORRÁS GUALIS, Gonzalo, *Studies on the Romanesque and Gothic Art in Aragon. Zaragoza, 1973.*

⁴⁸ MONRREALE, M. “An undocumented subject in Spain: the meeting of the three living and the three dead” in *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, XXXV, 1973-1974, p257-263. AINAUD DE LASARTE, J. “Dos eiximplis en les escultures de l’església de Santa María del Mar” (“Two examples in the sculptures of Santa María del Mar Church”) in *Miscelania en honor del Cardenal Narcís Jubany i Arnau (Miscellany in honour of Cardinal Narcís Jubany i Arnau)*, Barcelona, 1992. According to Francesca Español the vegetable themes must derive from the drolleries of the manuscripts. ESPAÑOL BERTRAN, Francesca, *Op. Cit.* 1992, p. III.

⁴⁹ The paintings have a funerary sense related with the cemetery use of the chapel by the friars of the order of Calatrava, who governed the encomienda of Alcañiz. ESPAÑOL BERTRAN, Francesca, *Op. Cit.* 1992, p. 23. JIMÉNEZ, Francisco J. *El castillo de Alcañiz (The castle of Alcañiz)*. Teruel, 1998.

⁵⁰ The living on horseback close to the dead (today disappeared), associated to the Virgin Kiriotosa accompanied by heraldic emblems that may indicate that the painting was an exvoto. LAZCANO MARTÍNEZ DE MORENTIN, María del Rosario, *Santa María de Ujué*. Pamplona, 2011.

⁵¹ *If the saint waited for Death with joy, it could not be said the same of the large masses of sinners. In this case, it was not exactly meant to invite them to serenely accept the moment of death but to remind them of the imminence of this stage, so that they could repent in time. Consequently, oral preaching and the images appearing in holy places were destined not only to remind the imminence and unavoidability of death but also to grow the fear of infernal penalties. The particular presence of the theme in the medieval centuries (although also onwards) was owing to the fact that people were easy victims of plagues and famines as they lived in a state of almost permanent war in the times when life was much shorter than ours. Therefore, death appeared as a much more inescapable presence than nowadays, when by selling models of youth and beauty, we make an effort to forget it, hide it, relegate it to cemeteries, name it only through periphrasis, or exorcise it reducing it to a mere item of spectacle, thank to which we forget our own death in order to find enjoyment in that of others.* ECO, Umberto, *History of Ugliness*. Barcelona, 2011, p. 62.

representation of the macabre, either on paintings or frescos, as in the graveyard of Pisa. It usually appears on reliefs decorating cemetery access gates, chapels, ossuaries as in the Innocents cemetery in Paris. Exceptionally, it can also appear in funerary reliefs decorating sarcophagus fronts or arcosoliums and even the facades devoted to the Final Judgement as a complementary theme.

It is in the manuscripts and, particularly in the pages devoted to the Office of the Dead in the Book of Hours, where it is represented with both greater iconographic richness and deeper attention to every type of macabre detail. These miniatures were conceived for very specific clients so very few people used to go to see them. During the 15th century, the miniatures display, in the forms of the International and Flemish styles, a remarkable imagination, compositing variety and ornamental details thought to satisfy a sophisticated and cultivated taste which is far from the popular albeit very communicative and easy-going.

Since the middle of the 14th century, the theme of the appearance of the three dead to the three living, always understood as an admonitory theme against sin, became very common in the penitential chapels of hospitals, especially after the development of the Black Death.

Precedents, transformations and projection:

I. Precedents in the art and literature of the Far East: the four meetings of prince Siddhartha Gautama

Siddhartha Gautama was born in 558 BC. After enjoying a life full of luxuries and pleasures, ignoring the existence of death, underwent a spiritual crisis when he was 28. One day, when he was going from one garden to another on a carriage governed by Channa, the groom, he wanted to change his itinerary. It was then that he had four casual meetings fortuitous: with an elderly, an ill person, a funeral cortege and an ascetic. On asking Channa about each one of these realities, he was informed about what he was seeing and his perception of the world changed forever. Before the funeral cortege, impressed by the mourning and grief of the relatives who accompanied the corpse, he knew death and discovered how ephemeral and insignificant life is and facing and ascetic beggar, dressed in rags, albeit with peaceful expression, he became aware that there was a *life without a dwelling*; he discovered injustice: a wise man who lived in indigence. The four meetings reveal the world's vanity and determine his decision to renounce earthly pleasures. Siddhartha begins the way that turns him into Bodhisattva, that is to say, into a soul that seeks light to eventually become Buddha, which literally means the Illuminated⁵². The four meetings of Buddha triggered the prince's direction towards asceticism, the release of the material and the knowledge of spiritual truth.

⁵² Siddhartha retires to meditate and, having resisted Mara's temptations, reaches the light under a dry flowering pear tree, gets to know his previous existences or jatakas and decides to go to Benares (Varanasi) to preach the four truths of Buddhism: I. Any form of existence is source of pain. II. Pain is cause of desire. III. Desire must be eliminated in order for pain to be removed. IV. The eightfold path of illumination: eight gradual steps that teach the faithful to renounce both desire and the superfluous. The ultimate objective is to break the wheel of reincarnations and reach non-existence, Nirvana. MANDEL KHAN, Gabriele, *Buddha. The Illuminated*. Toledo, 2002. MITCHELL, R. A. *Buddha*. Madrid, 1990. NAUDOU, J. *Buddha and Buddhism*. Madrid, 1976. DRAGONETTI, Carmen, TOLA, Fernando, *Major Dialogues of Buddha*. Madrid, 2010. KANJUR, *The heart Sutra in Tibetan: A critical edition of the two recensions contained in the Kanjur*. Wien, 1994. REVERT, Jesús, *The sutra of the Golden light*. Alicante, 2005.

Siddhartha's four meetings are narrated in both the Tibetan and Chinese *Sutras* as well as in the Buddhist Canon, which has gone down in Universal History of Literature as *Tripitaka*, also known as *Pali Canon*. In the iconographic cycles of the Buddhist painting, the meeting with the funeral cortege is seldom represented due to the prejudice of Eastern art toward the representation of the dead. An exception to this are the frescos of the chapel of Sarnat Park, carried out in the 20th century; a painting on silk today in the Guimet Museum, coming from the Chinese Dunhuang Caves, of the 11th century and some paintings in the Nepal Museum that depict Siddhartha and Channa leaving the Kapilavastu Palace, carried out in the 18th century⁵³. The influence of the story of the four meetings of Buddha in the meeting of the living and the dead is merely literary. However, Baltrusaitis believes there can exist a formal relationship between the way the image of the monk before the skeleton is depicted in the Buddhist Caves and the one in the Franciscan convents⁵⁴.

II. Precedents of the meeting of the dead and the living in the classical art related with epicures.

The crisis of the 14th century, caused by the confluence of the Black Death of 1348, derived into a socio-economic and political crisis, as well as a crisis of values, congenital to the inability to give an explanation to the new reality by power institutions and classes. Yet, although it did not originate the macabre in art, it fostered its most repugnant and disgusting facet. In fact, some of the iconographic repertoires should be related to the classical world, particularly to the School of Stoics and Epicurean Hedonists, who praised life pleasures –curiously, something completely opposed to the Christian vital paradigm of the Middle Age. In Epicurean Philosophy men were invited to search for pleasure by means of sensual gratifications, especially culinary and erotic ones. Therefore, the appearance of dancing skeletons in the decoration of banqueting halls is frequent. They, either drinking or drunk, are laughing to encourage both enjoyment of senses and the capacity to celebrate pleasures⁵⁵. For Epicureans earthly

⁵³ HACKIN, H. *Les scènes figurées de la vie de Bouddha, memoires concernant l'asie orientale*. III1916, p. 15, lám. 2. CHAVANNES E. *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale*. París, 1909, lám. CIX, núm. 209. PLEYTE, C. M. *Die Buddhalegende in den Skulpturen des Temples von Boro Budun*. Amsterdam, 1961, fig. 58. GRÜNWEDEL, A. *Mythologie du Bouddhismeau Tibet et en Mongolie*. Leipzig, 1900, p. 3 y 238. CERVERA, Isabel, *Chinese Art*. Madrid, 1989, p. 82-101. GARCÍA ORMAECHEA, Carmen, *Indian Art*. Madrid, 1989, p. 42-50. MARSHALL, S. J. *The Buddhist Art of Gandhara*. Cambridge, 1960.

⁵⁴ Baltrusaitis relates the paintings of the grotto of Marin, in Kizil, in Central Asia, with the attitude of the Franciscan monk painted in the inferior church of Asis in 1325. In the grotto of Marin, the skeleton is standing while turning his head to look at the Buddhist monk as if he were talking to him, while in Asis, the Franciscan monk points to a dead as if he were warning the living about life expiration. An interesting but impossible to demonstrate theory states that the theme of the meeting of the three living and the three dead derives from the image of the monk before the skeleton tripled to gain dramatic intensity. BALTRUSAITIS, Jurgis, *Op. Cit.* GRÜNWEDEL, A. *Alt Kutscha*. Berlín, 1920, lám. XVIII, fig. 4. KLEINSCHMIDT, B. *Die Basilika San Francesco in Assisi*. II, Berlín, 1926, p. 210, fig. 143.

⁵⁵ They can appear in jewels for personal ornament, dressing rings or earrings, on floor mosaics and also in the decoration of daily table implements such as trays, plates, metal or ceramic cups and so on. An interesting example is the philosophical skeleton discovered on a Pompeian triclinium, depicted as if he were reclined next to what seems to be Socrates' philosophical didascalía in Greek *ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ, know yourself*. Sometimes the mosaics of tricliniums show skeletons pouring drinks and carry oinocóes (jugs) and kilices (cups) on their hands. In the Boscorreale treasure, some skeletons that depict envy, pleasures and the writers Sophocles, Moschion, Epicurus and Menander march on the surface of one of the beakers with handle. With elegant movements, the skeletons invite the living to finish off the pleasures of existence before they come to an end. In the Roman pottery of the Augustean period, during the 1st century BC, dancing skeletons can be found in the domestic or funerary oil lamps,

life is true life and it must be enjoyed by means of pleasure⁵⁶. Numerous objects and works are known to have been carried out with macabre representations of dancing and enjoying skeletons within a banqueting context. They are an unequivocal evidence of the penetration of Epicurean ideas within the domestic festive context and prove the interest that the image of the skeleton had for both Hellenistic and Roman art. A likely classical precedent for the theme of the three living and the three dead is located in a bas-relief in Cumas which shows three inhabitants of the Elysium, on one side, and three dancing skeletons, on the other. Either this relief or other similar ones may have been known by medieval artists and may have served as models to resolve the composition of the meeting of the three living and the three dead.

III. The meeting of Prince Norman with the dead of a cemetery.

The story of the four meetings of Prince Siddhartha passed to the West but we ignore how it did it and how the alterations detected in its argument were produced. The story was most likely transformed into a moralizing tale in Persia, being orally transmitted through trade routes. The changes took place to adapt it to hearers' tastes until achieving written support. The four meetings of Buddha became the meeting of living and dead. Although the chain of transmission is not completely known, one of the keys is Adi, Arab poet who lived toward 580 and is the author of a story about Norman, king of Hira. This king, a Hedonist man who threw himself into the pleasures of the world and flesh, rides through the desert and, occasionally, reaches a cemetery where the dead stand and tell him: *We once were as you are, as we are so shall you be*. The impact of this vision modifies the behaviour of the king, who gets to adopt a straight behaviour and starts to fulfil the precepts of Koran. The argumentative line coincides with the meeting of Siddhartha with the dead. Norman, as well as Siddhartha, rides on horseback, is a richly dressed prince, lives in a wealthy palace with gardens and knows no pain. A sudden change along his route takes him to the cemetery and there the meeting with the dead makes him aware of the perishable reality of the world. In Islamic literature a noble prince meets several dead (normally three, although it can be the whole cemetery) but there is no longer a meeting with old age, illness or asceticism. The idea of showing a living before a dead is what passed to the Western world. The dialogue between the living and the dead is an important innovation. The dead address the living and warn him that his life is limited, with terrible sentences. The meeting

of which five different typologies have been classified. The best conserved one is in the Antikensammlungen Museum of Munich. The hard stones of the rings have been documented to contain skeletons dancing to the sound of the aulos and drunk skeletons carrying amphoras full of wine. However, the real question is: How was alcohol going to affect them if they are only bones? BALTRUSAITIS, Jurgis, *Op. Cit.* 1983, p. 239.

⁵⁶ In chapter 34 of the *Satiricon* of Petronius it is told that the image of a tiny silver articulated skeleton was placed on the table for the banquet of Trimalcion. It got grotesquely contorted like a puppet, as if it were a grub, to show the living that, at the end of life, only maggots and bones remained. Thus, the skeleton was exhibited to the guests so as to encourage them to live the only possible life: the corporal and material one. The origin of this habit must be searched in the banquets of the New Egyptian Empire (1550-1070) where it was customary to show the guests a small wooden *ousetbi*, similar to a little toy in the shape of a coffin containing a mummy. This served to warn the participants in the feast about life's brevity. EPICURO, *Maxims for a happy life*. Madrid, 1994, Edition by Carmen Fernández Daza. DIÓGENES LAERCIO, *The Lives of Distinguished Philosophers*. Barcelona, 1981, book X, The life of Epicurus. GARCÍA GUAL, Carlos, *Epicurus*. Madrid, 1981. GRANADA, Miguel Ángel, "Epicurus and Hellenism" in *Philosophers and their Philosophies*. Barcelona, 1983. LLEDÓ, Emilio, *Epicureism, the wisdom of body, pleasure and friendship*. Barcelona, 1984.

leaves the king such a deep footprint that there is no need of any further meeting with the ascetic to amend his behaviour⁵⁷.

IV. The novelistic variant of Barlaam and Josaphat.

In the European manuscripts there are literary variants of the meeting of the living and the dead and of its emotional impact on the living. One of the most interesting ones, due to being set in India and being an example of sapiential literature, is the novel of *Barlaam and Josaphat*, which was collected as a moralizing theme in the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* by Vicente de Beauvais⁵⁸. Josaphat, son of the king of India, has an ascetic vocation and is tempted by evil spirits. The occasional meeting with a decaying human corpse upsets him and makes him reflect about the purpose of life. The manuscripts that contain this story can include miniatures⁵⁹. A manuscript version of this narration is conserved in Madrid's National Library⁶⁰. There are other variants more or less fictionalized with representations of dead possessed by evil or good spirits, who send messages to the living from beyond so that they change their lives⁶¹.

V. The Macabre Dance.

Few themes have been object of so many interdisciplinary studies as the Danse Macabre, analysed from the perspective of philologists and Art historians⁶². In fact, this

⁵⁷ BALTRUSAITIS, Jurgis, *Op. Cit.*, p. 236-250. RUBIERA MATA, Maria Jesús, *Classical Arab Literature: from pre-Islamic age to the Ottoman Empire*. Alicante, 1996. SABH, Mahmud, *History of Classical Arab Literature*. Madrid, 2002.

⁵⁸ JAMES, M. R. *Speculum humanae salvationis: being a reproduction of an Italian manuscript of the parteeenth century*. Oxford, 1926.

⁵⁹ In a Serbian manuscript of the 14th century, Josaphat is shown next to a standing monk, in front of a corpse and before the open tomb. CHIALA, P. "Le roman de Barlaam et Josaphat à l'origine du thème de la Rencontre des trois vifs et des trois morts"; "L'itinéraire européen de la Rencontre des trois vifs et des trois morts" en *Immortalité et Décomposition dans l'art du Moyen Age*. Madrid, 1988, p. 43-126. LIEBRECHT, F. *Die quellen des Barlaam und Josaphat, Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur*. II, 1860, p. 314-335. YULE, H. *Buddha and St. Josaphat, Academy* 1 sept. 1883. JACOBS, J. *Barlaam und Josaphat, English lives of Buddha*. London, 1896.

⁶⁰ Madrid's National Library, ms. 8562.

⁶¹ In page 100 of Codex Rico of the Cantigas de Santa María (Medieval Poems of St. Mary) of Alfonso X el Sabio, a work prior to 1282 that contains the medieval poem (cantiga) LXVII. The protagonist is a demon who, hosted in a lifeless body, obliges the corpse to come to the world of the living in order to warn them about what is going to happen to them. Then, a bishop blesses the corpse and the demon leaves the body through the mouth and the deceased rests.

⁶² The bibliography of the Danse Macabres is very large: LANGLOIS, E. H. *Essai historique, philosophique et pittoresque sur les Dances des Morts*. Rouen, 1851-1852 (2 vol). MONTAIGLON, A. de, *L'Alphabet de la Mort de Hans Holbein*. Paris, 1856. VIGO, P. *Le Danze macabre in Italia*. Bergamo, 1901. MÂLE, Emile, "L'idée de la mort et la danse macabre" en *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April, 1906. FEHSE, W. *Die Ursprung der Totentänze*. Halle, 1907. DÜRRWÄCHTER, A. *Die Totentanzforschung*. Munich, 1914. VICARD, A. *Les Fantômes d'une danse macabre*. Le Puy, 1918. MÂLE, Emile, *L'art reñogieux de la fin du Moyen Age en France*. Paris, 1922, p. 247-398. STAMMLER, W. *Die Totentänze*. Leipzig, 1926. DÖRING-HIRSCH, E. *Tod und Jenseits im Spätmittelalter*. Marburg, 1927. HELM, R. *Skelett und Todesdarstellungen bis zum Auftreten der totentänze*. Strasbourg, 1928. WARREN, F. *The Dance of Death*. London, 1931. MARLE, R. van, *Iconographie de l'art profane*. The Hague, 1931, p. 372 y ss., Reed. Nueva York, 1971. KOZAKY, *Geschichte der Totentänze*. Budapest, 1936. TENENTI, A. *La vie et la mort a travers l'art du XVe siècle*. Paris, 1957. VV. AA. *La mor tau Moyen Age. Colloque de la Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l'Enseignement supérieur public*. Strasbourg, 1977. VV. AA. *Le sentiment de la Mor tau Moyen Age. Cinquième Colloque de l'institut d'études medievales de l'Université de Montreal*. Quebec, 1979. JORDAN, I. e. *The iconography of death in Western medieval art to 1350*. University of Notre Dame, 1980. DOUCE, F. *The dance of death*. London, 1833. KASTNER, G. *Les*

dance is the living expression of a type of Christianity born after the Black Death of 1348, more ascetic, afraid of life and hostile to external beauty. The term *macabre* was first used by the poet Jean Le Fèvre in 1376 *Je fis de Macabré la danse*. Both the dance of the written death and the dance of the painted death respond to a mental image noticeably different to that of the meeting of the living and the dead. However, the origin may lie in the three dead, who invade the space of the three living and, by mixing with them, the six of them try to dance –the skeletons, in frenzy movement, full of rhythm, and the living, rigid and terrified at such a sinister vision. That sense of movement must be put into relation with the dramatic staging of the tale of the living and the dead in the atrium of any church in Lent and in other liturgical penitential periods, which could conclude by showing the three living dancing next to the dead. The idea was showing the faithful that everyone was equal before death, regardless their status. Therefore, the living are sometimes a priest, a nobleman and a middle-class member. This explains why in the Danse Macabre the attributes are more varied.

The Danse Macabre can also be related with Eastern art and Buddhism, as it was quite usual from the 9th century to represent death and demon spirits, the Papajam, as skeletons surrounding Mara while trying to tempt Prince Siddhartha Gautama before becoming Buddha. In the Buddhist temples of the 10th to 13th centuries it was frequent to attend processions and stagings, similar to the theatre of mysteries, in which the Papajam, skeleton demons, used to dance. In Kublai Khan's Mongol court, situated in Khanbaliq, which protected Lamaism, there were accredited ambassadors and bishops for the evangelism of the East. Some of them were Franciscan and, among them, Father Juan de Montecorvino, who lived in Beijing⁶³. In their periegetic writings they describe seen the skeleton dances as an invitation to population for people to adopt a behaviour more honest and more fearful of death. Emile Male thinks these Franciscan missions are the ones which introduced the Danse Macabre in the Catholic theatre of mysteries and maybe the theme of the three living and the three dead as well. The fact is that traditional historiography has widely discussed if the iconography of the Danse Macabre first appeared in Spain, France or Germany, where the most ancient written and iconographic examples have been documented within the first half of the 15th century⁶⁴.

VI. Iconography of the lying in decomposition and the Transi.

The most spectacular image of the three decaying dead before the three living influenced powerfully the funerary iconography of the 15th century in the moment when the laying stop sleeping placidly waiting for resurrection and become represented as

dances des morts. Dissertations et recherches. Paris, 1852. VIGO, P. *Le danze macabre in italia.* Bergamo, 1901. WHYTE, Fl. *The dance of death in Spain and Catalonia.* Baltimore, 1931. ROSENFELD, H. *Der Mittelalterliche Totentanz.* Münster, 1934. ICAZA, F. de, *The Dance of Death.* Madrid, 1981. CORVISIER, André, *Les dances macabres.* Paris, 1998. INFANTES, Víctor, *The dances of death: genesis and development of a medieval genre (13th-18th centuries).* Salamanca, 1997. UTLZINGER, Helene et Bertrand, *Itineraire des Dances macabres.* Paris, 1996.

⁶³ CLEMENTA, Jonathan, *A brief History of Kublai Khan.* Philadelphia, 2010. ROSSAHI, Morris, *Kublai Khan: his life and times.* University of California, 1990.

⁶⁴ E. Male has defended the thesis that the development of the motifs in the plastic arts of the 15th century has got inspired, as a rule, in the spectacle of the dramatic representations. However, this theory has not been able to stand up to criticism, as a whole. Yet, respect to the dance of death, an exception to the rejection of the thesis might have to be done. That is to say, in this case, the dramatic representation may have preceded the plastic one. Of course, either sooner or later, the dance of death was dramatically represented, and not only painted or carved in wood.

decaying corpses. The theme is known as *transi*, since it reflects the idea that, while the body is on its way to degradation, the immortal soul reaches salvation. It understands the body as a part of earthly vanity and occasionally it duplicates the image by showing, in a specular way, the dead slept and his corpse corrupt as a consequence of being affected by the passage of time. In this way does it appear in a miniature of the British Library in the 15th century⁶⁵ and in the relieves of the tomb of Dr. Juan Manuel Grajal, died in 1447 and buried in the cloister of the Cathedral of León⁶⁶. An example of this interest for the iconography of the expiration of the body is the tomb of Cardinal Lagrange, today in the Museum of the Petit Palais of Avignon. He was born in 1325 and was appointed cardinal by Pope Gregory XI in 1373, then he achieved the title of Saint-Marcel in 1394 and died in Avignon in 1402⁶⁷. The images of decaying corpses on sack cloths, in funerary arcosolia or on coffins are quite usual in the English sculpture of the 15th century. An interesting example of this is the sepulcher of the Doctor in Law Thomas Bennet, buried in 1536, who was Vicar-General of the Diocese of Salisbury in the times of Archbishop Wolsey⁶⁸.

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⁶⁵ British Library, London, Ms. Add. 37049, fol. 32 v.

⁶⁶ ESPAÑOL BERTRAN, Francesca, “The macabre in Spanish gothic style”, in *Cuadernos de arte español (Spanish Art Notebooks)*, Madrid, 1992, p. VII.

⁶⁷ He is represented reclining. His body, in state of putrefaction lies on a rich cloak with a galero and, despite the high positions and the wealth of clothes and attires, these serve for nothing in the face of the transience of life. The epigraph goes as follows: *Spectaculum facti sumus mundo, ut maiores et minores, in nobis clare pervivant, ad quem statum redigentur, nimum excipiendo, cuiusuis status sexus vel etatis, ergo miser cur superbis nam cinis es, et in cadáver fetidum, cubum et escam vermium, ac cinerem sic et nos revertís*. A series of heads destroyed in the French Revolution of 1789 leaned from above. They are known by means of drawings and represented diverse social classes contemplating death while holding their hands. PANOVSKY, E. *Tomb sculpture*. London, 1964. BALTRUSAITIS, Jurgis, *Op. Cit.* 1983, p. 243. Mc. LEE MORGANSTERN, Anne, “The La Grange tomb and chair. A monument of the great schism of the west”, en *Speculum*, V.48, n° 1, 1973, p. 56-69.

⁶⁸ TATTON BROWN, Tim y CROOK, John, *Salisbury Cathedral. The making of a medieval masterpiece*. London, 2009.

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FIGURES



Fig. 1 Atri Cathedral (ca.1260)



Fig. 2 The triumph of death. Pisa graveyard. (ca. 1330-1350)



Fig. 3 Clusone cloister.

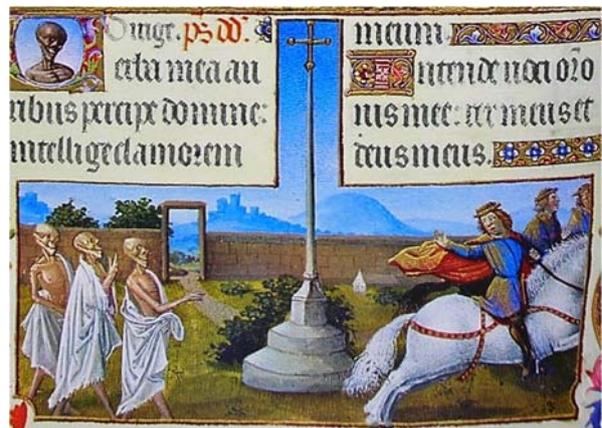


Fig.4 The Very Rich Hours of Duke of Berry (1408-1416)

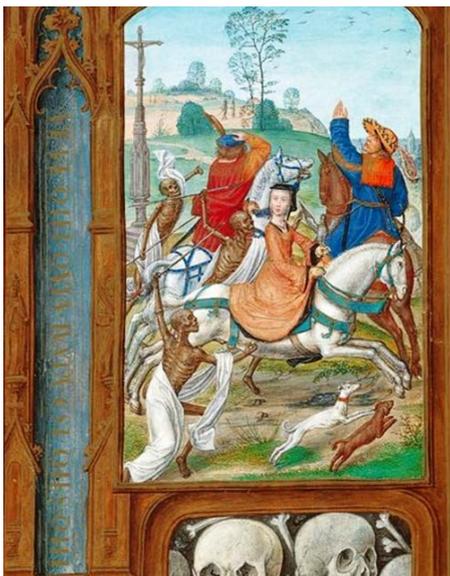


Fig. 5 Book of Hours of Queen Juana I of Castile. (16th century) Spain.



Fig. 6. Church of S. Pablo of Peñafiel (14th century) Spain

