The Theme of Death in Italian Art: The Triumph of Death

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research
In partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of
Master of Arts

Mc Gill University, Montréal

To Alexander

La vita fugge e non s'arresta un'ora,
e la morte vien dietro a gran giornate:
e le cose presenti, e le passate
mi dànno guerra, e le future ancora.

Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, dopo la morte di Laura

Life runs away and never rests a moment
And death runs after it with mighty stride,
And present things and things back from the past
And from the future, too, wage war on me.

Petrarch, Selections from the *Canzoniere*, after Laura's death. (Trans. by Mark Musa)

Abstract

The Triumph of Death in Italian art

This paper focuses on the evolution of the theme the Triumph of Death, the representation of the personification of death and the dead in the late Middle Ages. The first part of this thesis represents different points of view of art historians and historians concerning the death and the afterlife. There follows a short description and analysis of the cultural environment especially regarding literature which closely relates to the visual art and the representation of death. The last part describes three themes of death and the most important representations in frescoes, panels, bas-reliefs of the Triumph of Death evincing the main idea and the underlying structure and composition. Two different ways of representation can be distinguished: the Triumph of Death in the shape of the apocalyptic rider as appearing in the Revelation of Saint John the Evangelist and the Triumph of Death based on Petrarch's poem the *Trionfi*.

Résumé

Le Triomphe de la Mort dans l'art italien

Cette étude s'intéresse à l'évolution du thème du Triomphe de la Mort, soit: la représentation de la mort personnifiée et des morts, allant du 13ᵉ siècle à la fin du Moyen Âge. La première partie présente des points de vue sur le sujet par des historiens de l'art et des historiens. La suite analyse l'environnement culturel, particulièrement la littérature en relation avec les représentations artistiques et sa contribution au développement du Triomphe de la Mort. La fin comprend l'explication des idées et des compositions de fresques, de tableaux et bas-reliefs significatifs du Triomphe de la Mort selon deux visions différentes. L'une celle de Saint–Jean l'Évangéliste perçoit le Triomphe d'une façon plus apocalyptique, tandis que l'autre; celle de Pétrarque dans le poème *I Trionfi* est plus humaniste.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the faculty and support stuff of the Department of Art History for their assistance during my studies at McGill University. In particular, I wish to thank Professor Dr. Hans Böker for his guidance during the evolution of my ideas for this thesis. I would also like to tank to Dr. Margherita Lubin for her assistance, Patrick Lantschner, Gerald W. Blaney, Renzo Macon, Claudel Lalancette and for their encouragements and advices.

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Introduction to the Italian Triumph of Death

'Il fatto è che da sempre l'uomo ha una terribile, inestinguibile speranza di sopravivere. Ha il segreto desiderio di essere eterno, per cui rifiuta l'idea di una morte totale'. (Emmanuel Anati)[1]

A wild fury-like rider gallops over a heap of people stapled like marionettes above each other. The rider -- a skeleton -- is swinging his scythe over the mass of figures lying stiff, pale and lifeless on the ground. An image of death!

This short description of personified death as painted in Saint John's chapel at Bozen, fig.1 and in other churches all over Italy, especially in Tuscany, epitomises my argumentation dealing with the following paper: the Italian Triumph of Death. Frescoes, paintings, sculptures and reliefs on tombstones, illuminated manuscripts[2] showing death as a real figure in action[3] bring to life the universal story of death in late medieval society giving insight into the feelings and experience of death. The mysterious and fearsome natural phenomenon Death, existing as long as humanity itself impressed the souls of the living. In prehistory and later, most cultural expressions of mankind centred on the thought of the ineluctable moment of death. The innate desire for happiness, never completely attained by the human soul, urged the individual to look at death as a threshold between life and the afterlife to minimize the fear and shock of the individual in the Last Hour.[4] In order to overcome this crucial moment tribes and populations performed special rites in an attempt to project life into another dimension of eternal time and place.[5] In calling the realm of death Afterlife[6] medieval Christian society intended the continuity of life after death referring to former existing ideas and images like those from the world of the dead of Egyptian and Etruscan culture and the Greek and Roman underworld.[7] However, late medieval Christians expressed very different ideas and created their own images which range in a great variety of compositions. The colourful frescoes with their schematic order painted on walls of medieval churches, can be regarded as a compendium reflecting the mentality of society and cultural issues. The daily life of medieval men and women was strongly linked to religious and popular beliefs. Just as the Italian-Byzantine mosaics of the early Middle Ages and the following period, frescoes of the Trecento helped the people to understand the evangelic message

and eschatology, providing them with examples to imitate, in order to insure of a good death and avoid the perils and temptations of sin. Life with its hopes and struggles represented the beginning of a long pilgrimage of the soul towards final judgement and its eternal happiness or condemnation. Before facing the Last Judgement, the individual had to go through death and afterlife.

After the eleventh century the flourishing cities of Italy, which based their economy on growing commerce with the East and the European North, witnessed upheavals in their social structure and this triggered new developments and necessities of life. The rich merchants, the clergy and the powerful fostered the desire to accumulate earthly goods, honour and glory. Thus, a new attitude towards death developed. The death of a single individual assumed importance and the powerful and wealthy gave artists commissions to erect tombs and memorials. The magnificent equestrian statue above the fourteenth-century tomb at Verona displaying Cangrande della Scala,[8] who died in 1329, expresses his sublimation and indicates the tomb as a sign of selfhood.[9] It reflects the earthly desires for glory and power and gives the illusion that Cangrande is still alive and in the middle of his subjects. Death assumed a mirror-like character. The thought of getting prepared for their own death reinforced the feelings of identity and self-assurance, which later was to become one of the main features of the humanistic era.[10] In the hour of death the dying called for the priest, confessed and repented. The rich left part of their possessions to the Church, donated works of art and financed the building of churches and chapels.[11] This endeavour of the people to provide for their own death expresses the wish to overcome death itself and originates in the great desire for survival. Works of art and monuments are the best evidence for this.

In the following pages I intend to summarize a few points of view of the most authoritative art historians and scholars relating to the Italian Triumph of Death.

Notes, Introduction

[1] Paolo Berruti, *La fontana della giovinezza. Un itinerario senza fine tra arte e psicologia* (Firenze: Polistampa, 1996).
'The fact is that man possesses an inextinguishable desire to survive. He cherishes the secret hope to be eternal; for this reason he refuses the idea of a total death.' (Emmanuel Anati)

[2] The examples of the various techniques representing the theme of death are in fresco (the Triumph of Death at Pisa, Florence-Santa Croce, Bozen, Subiaco, Lucignano), in panel (the Lorenzetti panel, the Allegory of Redemption in the Fine Art Gallery, Siena), in sculpture (the bas-relief, the Memoria of Franceschino Prignale at Naples, Museo di Capodimonte) or in illuminated manuscripts (Giovanni di Paolo's Death Assailing a Young Man antiphonary in the Civic Library, Siena). Among these techniques of the representations of the theme of death, the frescoes were most suitable as they were seen by a large number of people when passing or entering the churches. The Franciscan and Dominican orders used them as supplementary exempla to their sermons.

[3] In the visual arts of late Christian medieval society there are numerous entities to represent a wide range of forces intended as mysterious and unknown. These forces, the winged angel, death and the devil refer in their iconographic representation to the winged gods of the Greeks and to the Platonic concept of the soul. In turn the Greek concepts derive partly from Egyptian and Indo-European thoughts.

[4] The Dance of the Skeleton illustrated on the Greco-Roman silver cup of Boscoreale, from the first century BC in the Louvre at Paris invites the living to overcome the fear of death, which is the most devastating emotion of human nature. In the illustration, the skeletons of Epicure and Zeno dispute the goals of life. Close to Epicure's skull appears the saying: 'The first goal of man in life is pleasure'. Epicure holds that people should live their lives with pleasure tempered by morality, temperance, serenity, and cultural development. According to his opinion after death the body and soul dissolve and vanish forever.

[5] Ubaldo Nicola, *Atlante illustrato di filosofia* (Colognola ai Colli, Verona: Demetra, 1999), pp. 152, 153.
The cults dedicated to the gods of Dionysus, Orpheus, Demeter, Persephone and Adonis express the enigma of death and resurrection. The renewal of life as found in the Greek mysteries intensely influenced the thoughts of Western civilization. These thoughts penetrated the Roman world and in the third and fourth century AD some of these ideas and antique symbols were taken over by the Christians. The symbols appear in paintings and mosaics of the early Christian era decorating the catacombs, churches, mausoleums and cult objects. In particular the Orphic cult left significant traces in the understanding of Christian death, resurrection and immortality of the soul. Typical orphic images of the Roman world can be recognized in the wheel, winged skull and square. The idea of the renewal of life in antiquity was substituted by the Christian doctrine with resurrection, immortality of the soul and judgement. The images of Christ as a shepherd in archaic scenery or holding the holy book are very much indebted to orphic ideas. Just as the shepherd Orpheus conducts the mood of the animals with his magic lyre, Christ attracts people and convinces with his words. Very often with the representations of the cross appears the name of Orpheus suggesting the continuity of the orphic rituals in Christian salvation doctrine. In the Christian doctrine as in the myth of Orpheus, salvation of the soul and eternal life are reached through sacrifice and death.

[6] Ibid., pp. 34, 35.
A very fine example of medieval afterlife imagery, which summarizes Hell, Paradise and the Last Judgement, can be seen in the cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta on Torcello Island, near Venice. The Italian–Byzantine mosaic from the eleventh century displays in six different tiers the dead as damned and saved, devils and angels, the majesty of Christ, Christ triumphant, the Madonna and saints.

[7] The archangel Michael and the Egyptian god Anubis have very similar tasks like the weighing of virtues and vices (soul and heart) of the dead. Both of them protect the souls of the dead against the perils of the afterlife and world of the dead. Likewise, the judging Christ presides as Osiris in Judgement. In medieval

Christian imagery the soul is visually figured as a nude newborn child, whereas in Egyptian paintings the soul appears with a winged human head; the soul of the Greeks is figured as pneuma in form of a butterfly.

[8] In Roman antiquity equestrian monuments like that to Marc Aurelius were erected for emperors and commanders. They are the very expression of victory and power. In the late Middle Ages, they again became very popular in European art.

[9] Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca, New York , Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 92.

[10] Philippe Ariès, *Storia della morte in Occidente: Dal Medioevo ai giorni nostri (Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en occident du Moyen âge a nos jours)*. Trans. Simona Vigezzi (Milan: Rizzoli, 1997), pp. 48, 49.

[11] Enrico Scrovegni from the notorious Paduan family of usurers, whom Dante consigned to the seventh level of Hell, sponsored the Arena chapel with the intention to get absolution from his sins and prepare for his own individual death in order to be commemorated with the fresco cycle of an outstanding artist like Giotto.
The Peruzzi (1320) and Bardi (1370) chapels with the fresco cycles of the life of Saint John the Baptist, Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Francis painted by Giotto in Santa Croce were meant to glorify the names of illustrious Florentine families. They in turn were meant to glorify the church. Santa Croce is the very celebration of memorials and tombs of the leading merchant class, which had found intimate interrelation between the Church and the high and mighty of the town.

Chapter One

Art Historians and Historians on the Macabre Theme of Death: Reflections on Death and Death Representation

Beginning of Imagery and the Experience of Death

In his foreword *Zu einer Anthropologie des Bildes[1]* *(About an Anthropology of the Picture)* Hans Belting remarks that the beginnings of imagery are based on anthropological themes related to the experience of death. Furthermore, he says that images were created to fill up the emptiness of death and are a way of giving back to the dead a medium in which they can encounter the living.[2] From H. Belting's assertion I deduct that looking at images means that we animate and bring them to life in our experience and consciousness at the moment of viewing. Thus, we filter the image creating another or a similar image in our mind. Furthermore, he writes about the paradoxical nature of the image that expresses the absence of someone or something, which at the moment of viewing has the power to revive the missing person or object in the mind of the onlooker. By reasoning thus, the act of viewing creates a bridge between the picture and viewer. Hartmut Böhme's essay: *Der Wettstreit der Medien im Andenken der Toten (The Competition of the Media in the Commemoration of the Dead)* contained in the above-cited book of Hans Belting and Dietmar Kamper, suggests that the cult of images is a means to overcome death and the sadness of bereavement as well as the emptiness in the existence of the living. He writes:

„Immer geht es dabei um die Überwindung des Todes oder der Toten oder des Toten (der Dinge), die sich als Abwesende und als Leere markieren." / It is always about the effort to overcome the death or the dead or the dead things, which reaveal their absence and emptiness.

The Metaphysical Character of Death Imagery and its Meaning in Pre-Christian Cultures

By recalling the metaphysical nature of the texts H. Böhme points out that the texts have always been accompanied by the metaphysic of images.[3] His observation makes me recall the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. Scrolls, painted sarcophagi and mummies preserved in the Egyptian Museum Sabaudia, Turin and in the British Museum, London and other museums record the Egyptian cult of the dead, from which the pagan and Christianized Romans inherited part of their beliefs concerning the afterlife.[4] The texts for the dead written in hieroglyphics on papyrus are richly decorated with paintings of the gods of the afterlife.[5] Texts and images were thought to help the dead as a guide in the afterlife. The gods holding eternal life symbols suggest how strongly former civilizations like the Egyptians looked on the writings and images. The belief in the metaphysical nature of writings and images helped them at the moment of passover from earthly life to the world of the dead. Faith in the world of the dead brought them the hope of achieving eternal life and happiness. Like the Egyptians, other civilizations[6] left behind writings carved and painted on wood or stone, which record this deeply-felt certainty. The symbols expressed in images possessed above and beyond written texts, the power to impress the mind of the living. In fact, most writing techniques developed from the imagery-design and are expressed in pictographs. Concerned about the metaphysical character of the imagery of death cult, H. Böhme states that in the *pompa funebris* of the Romans the effigies expressing the presence of the dead are basic to the idea of development of Christian effigies. He affirms that the cult of Christian images originates in the Roman culture of death. *Imago, simulacrum, signum, statua* are words for designating cultic images, in which the identity of a god is expressed in an image. The *imago* is the very imprint of a god or a person, as it is represented in seals and masks. The effigies of the dead carried along in the *pompa funebris* are pictures of the most important personalities and emperors. They replace the gods and display the presence of the dead. These images and effigies are far from having the same symbolic meaning of present day death pageantry, but they magically reconstitute the presence of the absent.[7]

Purgatory and the Expression of Penitential Thoughts in Late Medieval Art

Anthropological studies and pre-Christian customs reveal that funeral rites, processions and dead representations had always been of great importance. Early Christian and medieval Europe carried on these customs and gradually developed their own eschatology.

Caroline Walker Bynum, Paul Freedmann, Colin Morris and Jaques Le Goff write about Augustinian eschatology and its shift, which occurred in the late Middle Ages. The authors define the meaning of afterlife before and after the doctrine of Purgatory. C. Walker Bynum and P. Freedman in *Last Things* (2000) refer to the teaching of predestination of man's fate by Saint Augustine, who emphasizes that no-one, not even the most devout can afford to be without fear when Judgement Day arrives. Augustine's interpretation of predestination leaves the faithful without the certainty of salvation.[8] In late Middle Ages the Augustinian eschatology underwent important changes. And the view of bodies expecting final judgement in the tombs changed to the idea of the dead waiting in purgatory for the Last Judgement. In C. Morris's *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1020* (1995) Henry de Lubac has expressed what was happening:

"The collective eschatology and the expectation of the final resurrection, whose outline was once so clear, are fading away. Within a framework which is still in general that of the Church, the attention of the faithful is fixed less on the destiny of the Church than on the destiny of each believer and …the whole strength of eschatology now became attached to the individual."[9]

The stagnation of the medieval eschatology became evident in the twelfth century with the ascetic, mystic views of Bernard of Clairvaux and Saint Peter Damian. The final modification of the relation between the living and the dead occurred with the introduction of Purgatory doctrine (1274). C. Walker Bynum in *The Resurrection of the Body, in Western Christianity 200-1336* (1995) argues J. Le Goff's *Birth of Purgatory* (1996) and writes:

"...Le Goff's analysis is subtle, perceptive and convincing, especially his demonstration that – between the later twelfth and fourteenth centuries – preaching as well as formal theology paid increasing attention to an 'in between' time and place for the separated soul."[10]

The consequences of the doctrine of Purgatory are aptly argued in J. Le Goff's publication *The Birth of Purgatory* (1984).[11] He discusses the early Christian eschatological views, which to some extent developed out of previous cultures,[12] the Augustinian view, Bede's medieval visionary, the commemoration of the dead in Cluny and finally stresses the effects of purgatory upon society in the thirteenth century and the following. He also deals with the possible geographic location of purgatory as Ireland and Sicily[13] and the conceptual meaning, which defines purgatory as a place between hell and paradise. In Christian eschatology purgatory is commonly known to be the place where the souls of the dead are cleansed by means of fire from their impurities caused by sinful behaviour during their lifetime.[14] Just as in hell, the fire of purgatory represents the symbolic element of punishment, but with the great difference that it stands for spiritual healing and cleansing the soul.[15] A place like this offered the sinful a second chance to get prepared for heaven and escape from hell and eternal condemnation. The length of suffering punishment in purgatory depended upon the gravity of the sins; the prayers and suffrages of the living could help the suffering dead to shorten their time of stay in purgatory and attain bliss and happiness. Paul Binski observes the following about the Purgatory doctrine:

"Nevertheless, the notion of suffrages and of the exact character of this interim state remained conceptually vague. Little or no hard evidence for it was preserved in the revealed texts of Christianity, and there was a conflict between it and conventional eschatology, because the idea of a redeemable state of progressive punishment and cleansing seemed to vitiate the idea of a single event of catharsis at the Last Judgement; it was not so much eschatology as escapology. Furthermore, it encouraged the idea that purgation was a matter for individual souls and categories of sin, rather than a single collective act."[16]

Further, in commenting on J. Le Goff's *The Birth of Purgatory* P. Binski in *Medieval Death* (1996) rightly observes that the dogma of Purgatory implies far more than a doctrinal innovation of the Church. It changed the tradition of medieval institutions and

art. As an instrumental doctrine it involved all strata of society, and its divulgation requested images in order to reach a large audience. Nevertheless, these newly created images weren't intended to represent purgatory itself as a final state like hell and heaven. Instead, they bear witness to the new doctrine with a variety of images containing compositions and themes which catch the viewer's attention and provoke his/her emotions and awareness of sin and guilt. Manuele Gragnolati defines this as 'the emphatic approach'.[17] The beholder experienced with heart and intellect the meaning of penitentiary thinking, and through confession and good deeds he could hope to attain salvation and eternal life.[18]

The theme of the Triumph of Death can be understood as one of the very new iconographies in visual art which defines thoughts of purgatory. The shocking effect, which the living experienced when viewing death personified with its macabre circumstances, induced them to meditate about their future destinies. Through the awareness of its inevitability and its punishing character death foreshadowed purgatory. Death became a very important entity strongly related to purgatory. The passage through death and purgatory meant to the faithful that they could hope to attain final salvation.[19] Purgatory as a process of healing and cleansing souls involved a certain length of time and this could hardly be expressed in one single iconographic image without falling into ambiguity. Didn't purgatory bear connotations of hell as well as of heaven? Therefore it was necessary to create a repertoire of images representing purgatory, that could fit best in the rigid binary system of medieval thought, solely based on extreme opposites such as heaven and hell, good and evil. It was the artist's task to find such powerful images which could induce the medieval onlooker having penitential thoughts. The personification of death is in this sense one of the overwhelming images that could hardly leave any doubt about its bearing message. It helped the clergy to persuade the lay-people to lead a good life, in order to experience a good death and fewer pains in the after-world. Most often the Triumph of Death appears painted close to images such as the Last Judgement, Paradise, Hell and sometimes close to the allegories of the Vices and Virtues. Death representations as expression of penitential thoughts became most common in churches and public places as cemeteries, where the faithful could easily see them when

passing by. The many painted figures helped them as references, exactly like the exempla and anecdotes elicited by the priest in sermons. One can assert that the Purgatory doctrine was divulged by implying a naturalistic representation. This caused significant changes in medieval imagery and enriched the repertoire with new symbols. Due to the Purgatory doctrine the individual became a protagonist and a participant in purgatory thoughts. Purgatory and its morals about afterlife as educational instruments enabled the Church to go on exerting power over all strata of society. P. Binski says:

"Purgatory was at one level nowhere, and yet, in the realm of medieval art, it was everywhere." [20]

Artistic Expression: the Macabre in Relation to Contemporary Thoughts and Modes of Life in Late Medieval Society

It is in this context that the abstract meaning of death was expressed as a personification, in order to assume a central role in visual representation. Thus, death was looked upon as a passage to the afterlife in which purgatory constituted an additional and temporary place to go through in order to reach eternal bliss. Philosophy, that shapes the events of history and opens up different views to the understanding of nature, influenced society and thoroughly changed the outlook towards death and the dead. In this sense scholasticism contributed greatly to the development of a scenario for death representation, as the studies of anatomy and medicine were becoming very popular through the discovery of Aristotelian knowledge and teaching. Erwin Panofsky's inquiry about Gothic architecture in relation to scholasticism has excellently shown how important it is to correlate art, in this case architectural history, to philosophical thought and cultural events. He analyses the fine, complex web between Gothic style and techniques with the thoughts of contemporary scholasticism and interprets Gothic architecture on the basis of contemporary philosophy.[21] Also Michael Camille in his *Master of Death: The Lifeless Art of Pierre Remiet, Illuminator* (1996)[22] and *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions* (1996)[23] considers the macabre in relation to contemporary thought in works of art.

Reminding one of the primary function of works of art, including those of the late medieval period, George Duby affirms in *Art and Society in the Middle Ages* (2000) that images were in the first place designed to praise God and to guide the devout in their meditation in order to lead their spirits heavenward. He points out the didactical intention of the Synod of Arras in 1025, where images had been authorized for the education of the illiterate. Pictures about death constantly remind people about it and induce them to better appreciate the joys of life as most precious moments.[24]

John Aberth's vivid description of the four apocalyptic scourges such as famine, war, plague and death in the Middle Ages in *From the Brink of the Apocalypse* (2001) points out the great effort of medieval people not to succumb to death. By citing a passage from *Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, he evinces the courage of medieval people in facing calamities and stresses their achievements and abilities to reorganize social life according to economic changes, which formed the bases of early modern Western culture. Further, he follows the opinion of new scholars of cultural history, who look at the late Middle Ages as a period of transition, and not of a waning or decline as Johan Huizinga does.[25]

P. Binski in *Medieval Death* points out the differences between J. Huizinga's view of death in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* [26] (1924), and Jacob Burckhardt's view in *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* [27] (*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 1860). The former sees late-medieval North-European culture as an expression of anxiety, whereas the latter has a far more positive life-affirmative approach. He writes:

"J. Huizinga's account provides a generalized cultural commentary on the split between the lust for life and death..."

He recalls Sigmund Freud's publication *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), emphasising the dualistic, instinctive drive of human nature as between life and death, Thanatos and Eros, where death becomes the fundamental aim of life.[28] Further, P. Binski, in distinguishing the northern European sense of the macabre and the Renaissance tradition, which persisted over centuries, writes:

"...the Gothic north developed a strikingly distinct vision of the body as a sign of this penitential thinking. Whereas the body of man in the Italian Renaissance was essentially an image of integration, of balance, whereby the best was selected from the diversity and accidental character of ordinary fallen humanity, so redeeming the body by art, in the north the most powerful and characteristic images are of disintegration, the exploration precisely of the accidents of death." [29]

P. Binski's acknowledgement of the differences between northern Gothic and the Italian Renaissance concerning death elicits that there are two different ways of expressing death imagery. To these different expressions of death imagery I would like to add that in the first period of the Italian Triumphs there is a prevalence close to the North-European macabre, whereas the second period reflects more humanistic spirits. The death-skeleton, armed with a scythe, riding on a meagre steed, impresses the onlooker with its violence and aggression. The death-skeleton standing on a cart pulled by oxen or bulls is less impressive and more rhetorical. The two different ways were meant to be of didactic use. Finally the classical Triumph known as the Triumph after Petrarch prevailed.

P. Binsky considers too simplistic Millard Meiss's study *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (1951), evaluating Tuscan art of the second half of the fourteenth century under the impact of plague and post plague. P. Binski, countering against M. Meiss's views points out that artistic style may have changed in the whole of Europe, in consequence of the pan-European scourge of the Black Death. Analysing M. Meiss's arguments and propositions - just like other art historians have done - he goes into the various causes that have made the painters of the period change their styles. He acknowledges the reasons for the changes being caused by social, religious, economic and political events.[30]

L. Bellosi in *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* (1974),[31] which is an elaboration of the text of a conference held in June 1971 at the Deutsches Institut für Kunstgeschichte in Florence, centres his thoughts regarding the Triumph of Death at Pisa on stylistic analyses and diagnoses. He attributes the famous triumph to Buonamico Buffalmacco and dates it around 1336. In doing this, he reviewed the two distinct theses of the art

historians: the first thesis attributes the fresco to Francesco Traini (1350), the second to a Bolognese artist (1360). The first thesis being more traditional was emphasized by M. Meiss's writings about Tuscan painting.[32] The second was formulated by Roberto Longhi and found great agreement among many Italian art historians. R. Longhi's view about the frescoes at Pisa is far less macabre than the tragic tone of M. Meiss.[33] L. Bellosi, by analysing all the different opinions and attributions of art historians and finding records and clues, finally confirmed that the Triumph at Pisa belongs to Buffalmacco's creations and style. These last developments in the studies of the Triumph at Pisa allow generally a different approach to the question of the macabre theme in the visual arts. Clearly it is proved over and over again that the macabre theme of death had already undergone a development occurring in the course of the thirteenth century. Thus, triumphal death should rather be viewed by considering preceding events and developments than under the effects of the plague (1348) or other calamities. In this regard I have to mention the more ancient theme The Encounter between the Three Living and the Three Dead, which persists with triumphal death representations until the sixteenth century. Up to the seventeenth century it is elaborated in less macabre hues, but still bears the identical message inviting the observer to meditation.[34]

C. Frugoni in: *Il tema dell' Incontro dei vivi e dei morti nella tradizione medievale italiana (The Theme of the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead in Italian Tradition)*, (1967)[35] and in *La protesta affidata (The Entrusted Protest)*, (1982)[36] observes that there are two basic traditions of the macabre developing in Europe between the thirteenth and the fourteenth century resulting in the French and Italian tradition. The French representation of the Encounter is preceded by written texts and its first visual representation appears later in a collection of poems for Maria Brabant.[37]

In France and in England the macabre visual imagery developed from literature and it is quite obvious that it appears at first in illuminated manuscripts as the *De Lisle Psalter* (1310) rather than in frescoes. The dialogue between the three living and the three dead results in an encounter in which the dead speak to the living. The *De Lisle Psalter*

illumination shows a diptych dividing the two spheres of the living and the dead that adapts to a textual arrangement and contains the speeches of the living and dead.[38]

The Italian theme of the Encounter does not have any preceding text except that published by Pietro Vigo.[39] The dialogue between the living and the dead is omitted, probably because the painted version of the legend is independent from the literary composition. Unlike the Nordic version the Italian legend avoids the clash effect and reinserts a mediating figure inducing the onlooker to meditate. This becomes evident with the hermit who fulfils the task of mediating between the three living and the three dead. Instead of the dialogues as in France, he explains the moral of death by carrying a scroll as depicted in the famous fresco at Pisa. The figure of the monk-hermit holding the scrolls with the moral admonishments provides the ancient legend with a sense of Christian-orthodox interpretation[40] and recalls Christian penitential thinking of the Cistercian Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), who made use of the theme 'What I am, they were, and what they are, I will be'. In the same strain of thoughts the Franciscan Jacopone da Todi, (1236-1306) has left a poem called '*On the contemplation of death and grave to counter pride*'.[41]

After having expounded on some opinions and ideas of art historians, it may be of interest reviewing the chronology of the first representations of skeletons in Italy and in Europe.

Church of Santa Margarita at Melfi (1225)[42]

Churchyard of San Paulo at Poggio Mirteto (c.1250)[43]

Cathedral of Atri (1260)[44]

Benedictine Cloister of Santa Maria at Vezzolano close to Castelnuovo d'Asti (1300-1320)[45]

San Flaviano at Montefiascone close to Orvieto (c.1302)[46]

Saint Francis of Assisi, Lower Basilica (1325)[47]

Lisle Psalter (c.1310)[48]

Finally, one can observe that these Italian representations in frescoes go chronologically hand-in-hand with historical, religious, and philosophical developments of the late Middle Ages. The highlight of scholastic thought corresponds to the first apparitions of the macabre in visual art displaying the various states of decaying corpses and the final skeleton bearing the message of death. Ever since in Salerno[49] and in the new up-coming universities of Bologna, Paris and Oxford schoolmasters of scholasticism imparted their teachings on anatomical knowledge, the skeleton kept appearing in visual art. The above-mentioned list of examples proves that chronologically the theme of death in Italy has had a far earlier development in the visual arts than in northern Europe. In *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions* (1996) M. Camille affirms that the human body was the last of God's creations to follow the trend of naturalistic representation, as the Church forbade the dissection of corpses. He says:

"Gothic sculptors were always struggling to bring to life the very flesh which, according to the theologians, was already consigned to death. Ironically, the first human form to be delineated with naturalistic detail was the corpse. Only when it had become food for worms, could the human body become a subject for art."
[50]

Notes, Chapter One

[1] Hans Belting, Dietmar Kemper, *Der zweite Blick. Bildgeschichte und Bildreflexion* (Munich: Fink, 2000), pp. 7-10.

[2] Ibid., pp. 8-10.
Belting writes: "Das Bild gab dem Toten ein Medium zurück, in dem er den Lebenden begegnete und von ihnen erinnert wurde. "

[3] Ibid., pp. 27, 29.

[4] Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*. Trans. Dora Nussey (Icon Editions, Westview Press, 1972), pp. 376-378.

[5] The papyrus 9901 in the British Museum, London, c.1300 BC illustrates Chapter 125 of the *Book of the Dead*. In there, the dead are presented: Ani, who is accompanied by Anubis; Thot, who takes account of the good and bad deeds; Horus, who takes Anis to the altar of sacrifices; Osiris, who is presiding the judgement.

[6] Ubaldo Nicola, *Atlante illustrato di filosofia. Dalla dea madre ai Presocratici, da Platone, Aristotele al Rinascimento, da Kant all'idealismo, dalla psicanalisi all'estetica* (Colognola ai Colli: Demetra, 1999).
In the ancient Iranian religion Ahura Mazda puts order between the good and the bad. The weighing of the heart is substituted by the crossing of the dead over the bridge Tschinvat. Only the just people reached the other side. In India the divinity of the dead was represented through Yama, who most often is represented as riding on a black bull.

[7] H. Belting, D. Kemper, *Der zweite Blick. Bildgeschichte und Bildreflexion*, p. 31.
H. Böhme writes: "*Effigies, imago, simulacrum, signum, statua* sind Wörter für Kultbilder, bei denen eine, Identität von Bild und Gottheit' vorausgesetzt ist. Der namentliche Gott ist sein Bild. Die Imago ist der Abdruck eines Gottes oder einer Person, so gültig, wie das Siegel oder die abgenommene Maske den Menschen repräsentiert. Im römischen Totenkult von hochgestellten Personen und Kaisern übernehmen die im *pompa funebris* mitgeführten *Effigies* des Toten die Funktion der Götterbilder, nämlich die Präsenz des Dargestellten anzuzeigen. Imagines und *Effigies* sind keine Bildzeichen im modernen Sinn der Semiotik; sie sind nicht arbiträr und konventionell, sondern stellen magisch die Gegenwart des Abwesenden her.''

[8] Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 140-155.

[9] Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 144-152.

[10] C. Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body, in Western Christianty, 200-1336* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1995), p. 280.

[11] Jaques Le Goff, *La nascita del purgatorio* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996).

[12] Ibid., pp. 3-60.
J. Le Goff refers to the Indian, Iranian, Egyptian, Sumerian, Jewish and Greek eschatology.

[13] Ibid., pp. 215-226.
The Irish discovery: the purgatory of Saint Patrick is expressed in the verses of Gossouin of Metz and diffused by others as Cesar von Heisterbach, Jacques De Vitry, Vincent of Beauvais, Jacopo da Varazze. G.

De Vezelay mentions Sicily as the location of purgatory and Gervasius of Tilbury describes the vulcan Etna close to Catania as a place of the afterlife and tells the legend of the apparition of King Arthur.

[14] In the German language purgatory is called 'Fegefeuer', which corresponds etymologically to the meaning 'cleansing by fire'. It expresses exactly, what medieval society imagined: a place where the souls are cleansed by means of fire.

[15] Jaques Le Goff, *La nascita del purgatorio*, p. 25.
The fire as a cleansing element is already recorded in pre-Christian cultures as in the Iranian Zoroastrian religion. The hell of Mazdaism can be compared to Christian purgatory, which is also temporary.

[16] Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 184.

[17] C. Walker Bynum and P. Freedman, *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, p. 84.

[18] P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, pp. 188-199.

[19] C. Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of The Body, in Western Christianty, 200-1336*, p. 280 – 281.
Bynum writes: "Purgation was consequent upon a prior decision that the soul was destined for heaven; it was unavailable to those destined for hell."

[20] Ibid., p. 199.

[21] Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: Penguin Group, 1985).

[22] Michael Camille, *Master of Death: The Lifeless Art of Pierre Remiet, Illuminator* (New Haven: London Press, 1996).

[23] M. Camille, *Gothic Art: Glorious Vision* (New York: H. N. Abrams, Inc., 1996).

[24] Georges Duby, *Art and Society in the Middle Ages*. Trans. J. Birell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

[25] John Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 262-263.

[26] J. Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, pp. 156-172.

[27] Jacob Burchhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1987).

[28] P. Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, p. 130.

[29] Ibid., p. 163.

[30] Ibid., pp. 126-134.

[31] Luciano Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1974).

[32] Ibid., p. 19.
Bellosi cites in his notes M. Meiss's publications: "The Problem of Francesco Traini", in *Art Bulletin* (1933): 97-173, and *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (Princeton, 1951), pp. 74, 101.

[33] Ibid., p. 9.

[34] Guercino's oil painting entitled 'Et in Arcadia Ego' (1618) recalls the Encounter and results in an elaboration of the earliest theme about death *The Encounter between the Three Living and the Three Dead.*

In the spirit of the Baroque the living are no longer hunters, but shepherds who discover a skull in the middle of the idyllic landscape of Arcadia, recalling the mythical times of ancient Greece. The skull replaces the three dead and induces the living to meditate on life, which ineluctably ends with death. Poussin took inspiration from Guercino's oil panel and in his painting 'Et in Arcadia Ego' in the Louvre he substituted the skull with a funeral stone-slab bearing the inscription: 'Et in Arcadia Ego' meaning that death exists also in the paradisiacal landscape of 'Arcadia' of the 'Golden Period'.

[35] Chiara Frugoni, "Il tema dell'incontro dei tre vivi e dei tre morti nella tradizione medievale Italiana," *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei. Memorie.* Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche: 366, 8, vol. 13 (1967): 145-251.

[36] C. Frugoni, "La protesta affidata," *Quaderni storici*, 50 / 17, no.2 (Agosto 1982), pp. 426-448.

[37] Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Il Medioevo fantastico. Antichità ed esotismi nell'arte gotica.* Original title originale : *Le Moyen Âge fantastique. Antiquités et exotismes dans l'art gothique.* Trans. Fulvio Zuliani and F. Bovoli (Milan: Adelphi, 1973), p. 252.
Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture italienne* (Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1950), pp. 38 – 39.
Henry Martin, *Histoire de la Miniature française du XIIIe au XV siècle.* Vol. 1, (Bruxelles: Van Oest, 1909).
Baudouin de Condé, minstrel at the court of Marguerite II countess of Flanders (1244-1280) recounts in a poem (1275) how the three living encountered the three dead. In France this poem as well as another one composed by Nicolas de Margival (c.1310) are considered to be the earliest.

[38] P. Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, p. 135.

[39] Pietro Vigo, *Le Danze Macabre in Italia* (Bergamo: Forni, 1901), p. 50.

[40] Guglielmo Invernizzi, Nicoletta Della Casa, *Immagini della danza macabra, nella cultura occidentale. Dal Medioevo al Novecento* (Como: Nodo-Libri, 1998), p. 23.

[41] P. Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, p. 132.

[42] Alberto Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento* (Turin: 1957), p. 430.
Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture italienne* (Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1950), p. 163.
The Legend of *The Three Living and the Three Dead* in the church of Saint Margherita at Melfi, close to Foggia is considered to be the earliest representation in Europe showing the dead.

[43] A. Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento*, p. 430.
L. Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture italienne*, p. 164.
At Poggio Mirteto there is a king on horseback with three skeletons lying in front of him, signifying what will become of him once he dies.

[44] A. Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento*, p. 430.
L. Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture italienne*, p. 430, p. 163.
In the cathedral of Atri the same theme is completed by the appearance of the hermit explaining the meaning of the encounter.

[45] A. Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento*, p. 430.
L. Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture italienne*, p. 166.
The fresco shows the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, but only three living have come down to us. The interpretation of the theme shows a French influence recalling the representations in the illuminated manuscripts.
[46] A. Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento*, p. 430.
L. Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture italienne*, p. 38-57.

[47] A. Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento*, p. 442.
L. Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture italienne*, pp. 43-45.
J. Baltrušaitis, *Il Medioevo fantastico. Antichità ed esotismi nell'arte gotica*, p. 259.
This fresco shows Saint Francis at the moment of pointing out the standing skeleton. Both figures are shown frontally; the skeleton bears a crowned skull. The content of the figurative composition can be interpreted as the story of a hermit recalling Saint Macarius. Reminding one of death he points to Christian morals.

[48] P. Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, p. 134-136.

[49] Although the Church prohibited the dissection of the human body, the first anatomical lectures on corpses were imparted at Salerno and later at Bologna.

[50] M. Camille, *Gothic Art, Glorious Vision*, p. 153.

Chapter Two

The Cultural Environment and the Development of the Theme of Death

The Triumph of Death - The Wild Rider

And I looked and beheld a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death (*Revelation* of Saint John)[1]

The wild rider as it can be seen in the Triumph of Death of the Saint John chapel, Dominican monastery, Bozen, fig.1 has been conceived with the above-written citation from the Old Testament.[2] Saint John the Evangelist has interpreted the apocalyptic vision and written down in his *Revelation*. Of all the four riders, the fourth one personifies the climax of the terrible force of nature annihilating mankind.

Where does this suddenly appearing imagery of Death and the Dead come from? It is followed by others in northern Europe with a similar macabre expression. All of them represent death and the dead. Can this swift riding skeleton in the fresco of Saint John's chapel (1330-1345) really be identified with the fourth apocalyptic rider appearing in Saint John's *Revelation*? The winged apocalyptic rider as shown in Saint John's chapel[3] is represented in another Triumph of Death of the South Tyrol, on the walls of the church Maria Trost in Meran, Untermais (1380), fig.2.[4] It also appears in the more southern regions of Italy, e.g. in the Benedictine monastery of Subiaco (1330-1368), fig.3 and in the church of San Francesco at Lucignano (1385), fig.4[5] a small village in the southern part of Tuscany. In the latter, the only new shape is that of a woman with flying hair and black clothes galloping on a horse! Again, some time later, the wild rider personifying death appears inside the Great Hospital in Palermo (1441-1446), fig.5[6] painted in encaustic on the walls. Have these death representations all derived from the biblical

source of the apocalyptic riders? Or can it be argued that the wild-winged rider personifying death appearing also in the antiphonary of the Civic Library in Siena (1443), fig.6 and on the cover of the *Sienese Biccherna book* (1437)[7] originates from the mythical Pegasus, which according to the Greeks used its wings to bring the souls of the dead up into the celestial sphere, where they would reside forever? Or does the fury-like, riding woman derive from the sirens, half women, half birds, which tempted the men of Odysseus with their beguiling voices, in order to distract them from sailing home and taking them to dangerous waters where they met death? The winged monster-like being armed with a scythe shows great similarities to the Greek god Chronos, the Father Time. Very often it has the same attributes as the scythe, hourglass and is winged as the god of time. Why have the artists of the Trecento made it similar to Chronos and not to Greek Thanatos, twin-brother of Hypnos?

Although this cannot be answered with certainty, one can observe that various and sometimes-unknown masters must surely have had a common original idea to create these paintings, which exhibit death as a wild, swift and sometimes winged figure riding on horseback! These artists must have felt a great desire to put in evidence the iconographic image of death as a real, visible figure. Why did the painters, sculptors and writers of the fourteenth century develop the idea of representing the fearful image of death as a riding skeleton, winged demon or furious woman, when other generations of artists before them never spent a single thought on creating such a menacing image of death? Death personified, as a wild, riding figure stands clearly alone as a creation in its shape, structure, colour and expression.

In the Triumph of Death representations of the first half of the fourteenth century, death possesses a fierce, wild character giving the impression and idea of a swift, galloping hunter. With hostility and aggression this fierce rider grips the living without mercy to extinguish their lives. The hostility is most noticeable by his sudden arrival; the thought of being unprepared in the hour of death greatly worried medieval people and made them suffer anxiety and terror. To prevent an unexpected death artists painted Saint Christopher in a gigantic size on the outside walls (often also on inside walls) of

churches. It was believed that a glimpse of this mighty imagery of Saint Christopher would save the living from dying unprepared, not having confessed and received the Last Rites. The image of this Saint can be seen throughout Italy. One of the most ancient images of the saint can be found as a fresco (1150-1180) on the outside wall of the annexed chapel to the Romanesque Castle of Hocheppan in the South Tyrol near Bozen. In this mountainous region Saint Christopher is painted on many walls of churches lying on main travel-routes. More than in other regions the medieval traveller feared encountering the perils of death when passing through the Alps. Saint Cristopher is included among the fourteen Holy Helpers because of his help to travellers and against fatal accidents.[8] The understanding of death as displayed in the imagery of the skeleton suggests that it was considered to be a great unknown, powerful entity of nature, mysterious and most destructive. Although death was implied in Last Judgement scenes like those at the church of Torcello near Venice, previously there had never been any explicit iconography of death with such a mighty effect to provoke the feelings of the onlooker.

The roots of this overwhelming imagery of death can be traced back to the twelfth century and it goes hand-in-hand with the thoughts of the Aristotelian philosophers of scholasticism, the ensuing crises in the Church relating to heresies (Albigensian, Waldensian, and others), the foundation of the Franciscan and Dominican orders and socio-political, economic changes. In Italy the first skeletons with the meaning of the death and the dead appear in the fresco of the encounter painted on the wall of Santa Margherita at Melfi. In the following text of this chapter I point out meaningful events which might have contributed to the appearance of death imagery.

Preceding Historical Thoughts and Artistic Expression in Novellas and Frescoes

...Late Gothic art broke up into a variety of styles reflecting these regional and ideological differences. But this variety, too, is unified by a subjectivism which, in the visual sphere, corresponds to what can be observed in intellectual life. The most characteristic expression of this subjectivism is the emergence of a perspective interpretation of space which, originating with Giotto and Duccio, began to be accepted everywhere from 1330-1340. (Panofsky)[9]

The discovery of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, known in Europe mainly through commentaries on his work by the Arabic philosophers Avicenna and Averroes (1126-1193), and the works of other classical philosophers have shaped scholastic thought and aroused great interest in the study of nature, within the relationship of nature and God.[10] Inspired by the Arabic and Jewish philosophers the seekers of truth when struggling between reason and faith, deepened their knowledge of God's universe and his creation. Given this circumstance of acquisition and appropriation of Aristotelian concepts in the early thirteenth century, the study of nature and of human nature had to be reconsidered.[11] With the initiator of the scholastic era, Saint Anselm[12] (1034-1109) and his followers Albert Magnus[13] (c.1206-1280) and Thomas Aquinas[14] (1225-1274), views about nature and all material things changed. Many things in nature, which at first were not represented, gained shape and were described in their details. Also death and the dying were now perceived in a new outlook intended as part of God's creation and will. In scholastic thought the existence of God was believed to be demonstrable by His creation. The existence of death, as intended in Christian vision, marked the passage from the earthly life to the afterlife. The transitional state of all existing things in nature representing God reaffirms scholastic thought, in which the multiple descends from God, who is unique, and returns to Him.[15] This reasoning profoundly influenced the visual arts of the fourteenth century. E. Panofsky expresses this in *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism:*

"...in the period 1130-40 and about 1270, we can observe, ...a connection between Gothic art and Scholasticism which is more concrete than a mere 'parallelism' and yet more general than those individual (and very important) 'influences' which are inevitably exerted on painters, sculptors, or architects by erudite advisers."[16]

The seekers after religious truth began to develop a mentality which according to E. Panofsky

"deemed it necessary to make faith clearer by an appeal to reason and to make reason clearer by an appeal to imagination, also felt bound to make imagination 'clearer' by an appeal to the senses."[17]

E. Panofsky holds that this directly affected all the arts.[18] A marvellous wealth of images, forms and colours in the décor of European cities can now be observed. Artists were creating a world of imagination to marvel at and these images were thought to bring Christian and moral messages to the people. The composition of images reveals a new structure and way of interpreting the contents of religious events and thoughts. The medieval master-builder, sculptor, painter and artisan began to take a closer look at nature and to study its features and phenomena. The human figure in painting and sculpture assumed an animated expression and became more lifelike betraying human characteristics and feelings. In ecclesiastical and secular buildings, animated expression can now be observed in the context of Gothic structures and decoration, including naturalistic elements, i.e. flora and fauna. In the visual arts of Italy, Giotto's painting expresses this new interest in naturalistic representation interpreting all the social phenomena of Italian cities. Giotto's narrative way of painting goes hand-in-hand with the literature of story-telling like the *Novellino*. In the *Novellino*[19] written at the end of thirteenth century this new way of poetic expression is expressed in the novellas, which differ from the Latin tradition of the exempla and provide the first signs of a prosaic language style in volgare (vernacular)[20] suited not only to the nobles and clergy, but as well to the merchants and artisans.[21] The themes were about the saints, courtly life and knightly heroes, but contained as well personalities and subjects taken from classical literature like Cicero and Sallust, and the everyday life of the city dwellers in the Communes. Rather than for ethic-religious purposes, they were composed with the intention of imparting general instruction and giving entertainment to the laypeople. The democratic ideas of the Communes demanded an improvement in rhetorical art that could help in the affairs of everyday life. In discourses and colloquiums the speakers

appreciated having a leitmotif. The highlight of expression of the novellas can be found in the *Decameron* (1352).

Giotto's naturalism and three-dimensional concept of space relate strongly to this new phenomenon in the everyday language and art of writing. The painter conceived scenes to paint in a way similar to that of the writer narrating a story. As the writer described the life in the Communes, the artist painted the story with the eye of the contemporary city-dweller. The various scenes in the fresco-cycles with the description of the life of saints, the Virgin or Christ, display the stories in architectural settings and the naturalistic landscape of contemporary Italian cities. The artists divided the story to be painted into consecutive scenes to put across the divine message. The story progresses within framed fields and represents the most significant moments. The key-figures relating to others of less figurative importance are painted in the foreground of the framed frescoes and are in harmony with the architectural and natural environment. Giotto's cycles of The Lives of the Virgin and Jesus (1305-1306) in the Arena-chapel at Padua and The Life of Saint Francis in Santa Croce at Florence in the Bardi-chapel (c.1320) are great examples of such systematic order and progressive story telling. Unlike the richly decorated, static and motionless appearance of the Byzantine-Italic imagery, the figures of Giotto and of his followers appear vividly composed moving within the naturalistic land- and cityscape. In assuming gestures and behaviour the saintly figures interpret the profane role of common people. This profane expression in the new artistic narrative language of the painters has an effect of great immediacy and by this means the heavenly message is transmitted. One could say that the divine is expressed and described through the manifoldness of the profane language of everyday life of late medieval society. The various features of human nature evoke the viewer's feelings. A great ranging scale of social values can be found within this grandiose human comedy.

Thus, the theme of the Triumph of Death as shown in frescoes, is likewise structured in a systematic sequence of figural compositions to involve the onlooker and make the message immediately clear. The triumphal death and the dead appear centrally. On the left side the poor beggars and on the right the rich gentlemen are painted on their way to

the hunt or entertaining themselves in a paradisiacal garden. Sideward on the lower and higher sections of the frescoes paradise and hell are depicted. The painter follows a ternary structure with the typical stereotypes of figures and alternates the context according to the dimension and importance of the fresco. The new personification of death is represented in a way that issues a warning and reminds the faithful of the unpredictability of its coming. Beginning with the thirteenth century up to the sixteenth century, the representation of death and the dead were one of the very popular themes in the life of laypeople.

Thus, the naturalistic vision of the skeleton, as it appears in the legend of the Encounter of the Three Dead and the Three Living and in the Triumph of Death of the late Middle Ages can now be placed in this context of narrative art in which three-dimensional representation had been rediscovered and became one of the great novelties in visual art.

Naturalistic Expression and the Shift from Two-Dimensional to Three-Dimensional Imagery

For without doubt the whole truth of things in the world lies in the literal sense, and especially of things relating to geometry, because we can understand nothing fully unless it is presented before our eyes in figures, and therefore in the Scripture of God the whole knowledge of things to be made certain by geometric figuring is contained and far better than mere philosophy could express it. (Bacon)[22]

E. Panofsky and others have reconstructed and examined the shift in methods of scientific inquiry after the year 1100 and observed that this phenomenon is closely related to artistic changes in painting, where three-dimensional representation becomes one of the main issues in the visual arts. According to S. Edgerton's the *Heritage of Giotto's Geometry*, Roger Bacon (c.1200-1292) is said to be the theoretical discoverer of perspectiva. In his work *Opus majus*[23] he undermines Aristotelianism and opens the way for wholly new conceptions in geometry and three-dimensional space.[24] His visual theory was expressed in the Duecento/Trecento frescoes by Roman artists and in the Franciscan Basilica of Assisi. In spite of this fact, up to now there is no evidence that Italian artistic development directly relates to Bacon's theory. Purkhurst, as mentioned by Edgerton,

insists on Bacon's influence in Italy being retraceable on the fact that at the time of the execution of the Arena chapel (1306) by Giotto, Bacon's work *De sensu* was already known and studied at Padua University. Although Bacon knew nothing about Italian artistic development in the Franciscan order at Assisi and at Padua, he was well aware of the power of visual communication. He was convinced that well-composed images based on Euclidian geometry could help infuse the Christian doctrine in people's mind.[25]

The new way of seeing and experiencing nature[26] triggered off development in the research of visual perception. Landscape became more important. In pictorial description, the typical abstract gold background of Byzantine painting changed to a more realistic landscape. Space was no longer a flat, abstract surface, added to the represented events or figures, but integrated with the latter forming an appropriate environment and context revealing depth of vision, e.g. perspective. Giovanni Cimabue (c.1240-1302) and Giotto di Bondone (c.1267-1337) were among the painters to give their interpretation of this new concept of space.[27] Giotto transformed schematic religious symbols into living figures and real landscape that transcended religion and showed the way, making religion real. The virtues and vices as personified in the Arena chapel have a bodily reality that had not been known in Western painting for centuries. Only in literature, personifications such as these had been portrayed before Giotto's allegories as in *the Romance of the Rose*.[28] Just like Giotto's figures of virtues and vices with their medieval emblems these allegories are described as archetypes of human characters.

For this new way of interpreting the stories of Christ and the saints realistically and naturally, Giotto was highly admired and praised by the leading literates like Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, who often mentioned him in their writings. They themselves felt that their art of writing strongly related to Giotto's art. Petrarch became deeply involved in Giotto's images and probably took inspiration when writing his *Secretum meum*[29] and other works. Boccaccio was inspired by the work of painters; according to the latest research of art historians it is Boccaccio, who took inspiration from Buffalmacco's masterpiece the Triumph of Death. For this reason it can be of interest to examine how these famous writers perceive and describe space in their writings.

View of Space in Literature: Dante's Vision of Afterlife, Boccaccio's Vision of Life, Petrarch's Perception of the Physical World and Religious Introspection

Look at me. I am Beatrice. / How dared you make your way to this high mountain? / Did you know that here man lives in bliss? (Dante, Purgatory, Canto XXX)[30]

In the writings of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1373) and Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) the new view of space is expressed in the description of places related to time. The various events can take place in a fictive space and imagined dimension of time as in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, or in real place and time experienced by the individual as in Boccaccio's human comedy *Decameron*. A third way of perception is offered by Petrach's report of *The Ascent of Mount Ventoux*, where Petrarch keeps switching from the real physical landscape and perception of his eyes to his inner experience of the soul. Just as Dante becomes aware of his lost soul in the first verses of Hell in his *Divine Comedy*, Petrarch's ascent of Mount Ventoux becomes an allegory reflecting the tension between the physical and psychic experience of the world making him feel the ardent yearning of his soul which is prevented from ascending directly to heaven. Both poets, Dante and Petrarch, derive their writings from Plato's concept of the soul which feels the body as a prison and the terrestrial life as confinement. In *Landscape and Memory* Simon Schama epitomizes this dilemma of Dante's and Petrarch's problematic relationship between empirical knowledge and devout introspection most typical at the beginning of humanism.[31] Dante's topographical description of the afterlife in the *Divine Comedy*[32] gives a very clear image of paradise, hell and purgatory. No wonder that his detailed description was like a geographical map from which the painters drew inspiration. Dante begins with hell, and tells us what he has seen and experienced in Virgil's company, who guides him through the after-world so unknown to the living. He perceives the various moments with his inner emotions and becomes aware that his human soul almost got lost in the middle of the unknown dark world. Dante's visionary experience results in more than a theological survey. It is a story of the journey of a man confronted with the afterlife in which human destinies are vivified by well-known characters such as Virgil and Paolo and Francesca in hell. Dante abruptly begins the tale

of his journey into the afterlife with the familiar verses in the first Canto of Hell expressing transcendental images in real pictures of human experience.

Nel mezzo del camin di nostra vita	In the Midway of this our mortal life,
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,	I found me in a gloomy wood, astray
che la diritta via era smarrita.	Gone from the path direct: and e'en to tell
Ah quanto a dire qual'era è cosa dura	It were no easy task, how savage wild
esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte	That forest, how robust and rough its growth,
che nel pensier rinova la paura!	Which to remember only, my dismay
Tant'è amara che poco è più morte,	Renews, in bitterness not far from death.
ma per trattar del ben ch'io vi trovai,	Yet to discourse of what there good befel,
dirò dell'altre cose ch'i v'ho scorte.	All else will I relate discover'd there.
Io non so ben ridir com'io v'entrai,	How first I enter'd it I scarce can say,
tant'era pien di sonno a quel punto	Such sleepy dulness in that instant weigh'd
che la verace via abbandonai....[33]	My senses down, when the true path I left,... [34]

Dante, who finds himself lost in a dark wood and laments his state, symbolizes being imprisoned by worldly things. One can observe that his language is highly metaphoric when he evokes images like the forest and describes how he tries to find the way out of the wilderness and escape the perils. Dante associates the forest with the sinner's state of confusion. In the Middle Ages the woods were considered to be places which were inhabited by malefic spirits. When passing through the woods the medieval traveller felt insecure and overcome by the fear of becoming lost. Forests were uncontrolled territories and most unpleasant to pass through, as travellers ran the risk of being robbed or murdered. Dante by using the forest for depicting the deplorable shape he was in communicates the intense conflict he feels. In the middle of his life, he feels led astray and close to death fearing the loss of his eternal soul. Worldly issues unexpectedly make him lose sight and subsequently the right direction. His view is obstructed and he is assailed by fear and anguish. In his verses all this is expressed with the aid of images. By setting up a strong hierarchical order to his visionary experience and placing well-known personages of earthly existence in various places of his imagination he provides a very rich repertoire for painters such as Andrea Orcagna, Nardo di Cione, Taddeo di Bartolo, Giovanni da Modena and others who translated Dante's vision of the afterlife into pictorial language.

Unlike the *Divine Comedy*, which is ranged in orderly levels of hell, purgatory and paradise, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, (1348-1353) realistically narrates the earthly and daily affairs of the common people. From his hundred stories, we get a complete panorama of what life was like in late medieval Italian cities. A realist as he was, he begins right away by reporting what happened during the deadly pestilence of 1348 in Florence and apologizes for the unpleasant things his readers were to know about. After he goes on narrating the other stories which are not only about people's afflictions, but designed to entertain and teach the reader about life. The stories give many examples and describe the countless nuances of men and women's lives. They tell how people defeat ill fortune and exploit good fortune while satisfying their desires of the senses. This masterwork seems to be a good lecture about the 'art of living well'. His very popular characters such as the amusing Cepperello perform their roles so vividly that even the twenty-first century reader becomes deeply involved and can take a good lecture on how to manage life with all its struggles.[35] The novellas flaunt many colourful and picturesque characters representing the typical people of the Italian Communes moving within the environmental space most significant to the period. Stylistically speaking Boccaccio's art comes up as well-composed writing bearing features quite close to pictorial imagery. For this and other reasons, scholars of art history and literature relate his masterwork to painting.[36] One of these scholars, the philosopher R. Kuhns in *The Writer as Painter* speculates on Boccaccio's text in the *Decameron* seeing it as a reflection of existing paintings. He points to the possibility that the text may rely upon the works of contemporary painters mentioned in the novellas of the *Decameron*.[37] Other scholars confirm this fact. One of those painters, the burlesque character of Buonamico Buffalmacco and his masterwork at Pisa inspired Boccaccio's human comedy during the terrible plague and post-plague years. Boccaccio receives inspiration from a painter,[38] whereas Dante inspires the painter.

The poet Petrarch went further and experienced space through his ability to distinguish the immediate, real image from the image in his mind. While ascending Mount Ventoux, and reporting to Dionisio Da Borgo San Sepolcro of what he had seen and perceived of

the world, he alluded to Saint Augustine (354-430). The letter begins with the following sentences:

"Altissimum regionis huius montem, quem non immerito Ventosum vocant, hodierno die, sola videnti insignum loci altitudinem cupiditate ductus, ascend." [39]
"Today I climbed the highest mountain in this region, which is not improperly called Ventosum (Windy). The only motive for my ascent was the wish to see what so great a height had to offer." [40]

During the ascent to the peak Petrarch became aware that he had been constantly looking for an easy path, which prevented him from reaching the summit of the mountain just as early as his brother, whom he had invited for this enterprise. His pace was slow and not directed straight up to the peak. He had changed direction several times. By going on like this he became aware of his own difficulties in climbing the mountain and said to himself:

"Quod totiens hodie in ascensu montis huius expertus es, id scito et tibi accidere et multis, accedentibus ad beatam vita." [41]
"What you have experienced so often today in the ascent of this mountain, certainly happens to you as it does to many others in their journey toward the blessed life." [42]

In this mood he turned his thoughts to his inner feelings and torments recalling all the changes he had gone through in his life. He went on meditating about his inconstancy and wicked desires which kept him further away from gaining the state of happiness and loving God. Once he had reached the summit he interrupted his thoughts and enjoyed the wide expanse of view spreading out before him. He admired the snow-capped Alps that far away rose toward the sky. Again his thoughts turned inward reminding him that behind those mountain ridges his beloved Italy stretched out. He sighed and became aware that he beheld more with his thoughts than with his eyes; he felt a deep longing to see his former friend. This and more troubled his soul all over again. Down in the valley the shadows became longer and the sun slowly sank behind the horizon-line. These moments suddenly made him return from his wandering thoughts and brought his attention back to the region extending below him at the foot of the mountain. There far away he discovered the river Rhône flowing. But his attention was not held for long by

the surprising beauty of the landscape and he went back to his thoughts. In this to and fro between his eyes looking out to the landscape and turning his glances inward into the depths of his soul he opened the book of Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, which he had brought with him. By pure chance his glance fell upon the following expression:

"*Et eunt homines admirari alta montium et ingentes fluctus maris et latissimos lapsus fluminum et occeani ambitum et giros siderum, et relinquunt se ipsos.*" [43]

"And men go about admiring the high mountains and the mighty waves of the sea and the wide sweep of rivers and the sound of the ocean and the movement of the stars, but they themselves they abandon."[44]

He felt profoundly struck by his shame reproaching himself for repeatedly getting lost in worldly issues and neglecting his soul which eagerly yearned to be raised to heaven. At this instant, Petrarch was reminded of the few like his brother who were not diverted from taking the direct path to achieve the blessed state and remembered the poet's words:

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
Subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari! [45]

Blessed the man who is skilled to understand / The hidden cause of things; who beneath his feet / all fear casts, and death's relentless doom, / and the howlings of greedy Acheron.[46]

What one can notice in Petrarch's *Ascent to Mount Ventoux* is that he tried willingly to follow Augustine's thoughts, but found himself at odds with the Augustinian concept of vision. Unlike Augustine, who considers vision through the human intellect to ascend to God's invisible qualities, Petrarch considers his physical perception of vision independently from the intellectual vision of his mind. His mind is stimulated by the physical sensations of the world and recreates another image which is most personal.[47] S. Edgerton in the *Heritage of Giotto's Geometry* points to Cranz's definition of the differences between the way of intellectual seeing by Saint Augustine of Hippos and Petrarch's way of seeing discerning the intellectual way of seeing from the physical perception of his senses.[48] Petrarch in his *Secretum meum* [49] (c.1342-1343) expresses his way of seeing death with the following words:

"It is not enough to hear the name of death casually nor to briefly remember a death. One must linger longer and with fierce meditation consider separately each of the members of a dying person, the cold extremities, the breast in the sweat of fever, the side throbbing with pain in the nearness of death, the eyes sunken and weeping, every look filled with tears, the forehead pale and drawn, the cheeks hanging and hollow, the teeth staring and discoloured, the nostrils sunk and sharpened, the lips foaming, the tongues foul and motionless, the palate parched and dry, the languid head and panting breast, the hoarse murmur and sorrowful sigh, the evil smell of the whole body, and above all the horror of the totally estranged face." [50]

Anatomical Representation in Medical Science: the Skeleton

Very marvellous and horrific example / Moult merveilleuse et horrible exemplaire [51]

From the beginning of the eleventh century the various disciplines like physics, optics and medicine including surgery and anatomy made great progress due to the rise of Aristotelian Knowledge. The changes in medicine occurred in southern Italy around 1050 in the region of Salerno. A medical community connected to the Greek and Arab world and to the most renowned abbey of Europe, Monte Cassino, organized anatomical lessons to practise dissection on the pig as a way of illustrating the internal anatomy of humans which it resembled. At the new and upcoming universities of Bologna and Padua, where the philosophy of Avicenna and Averroes and medical knowledge were taught, anatomy lessons became a necessary part of the growing interest in surgery. Despite the Church's prohibition the dissection of human bodies was practised on dead criminals shortly before 1300.

In 1316 Mondino dei Luzzi, professor at Bologna, produced an *Anatomy* intended as a handbook to accompany such dissections, but without illustrations. One can suppose that anatomical illustrators of bodies were also very much concerned with the skeleton and influenced the trend towards naturalistic representation of the skeleton in visual arts. The representation of the skeleton in painting and treatises of physicians from the beginning of the twelfth century linked to the scholastic vision of the world, shows clearly the outcome of a culture which became more interested in observing and analysing nature and the human body. As the landscape and all other things were perceived in the new

perception of space becoming animated and lifelike, the human body was also perceived in a three-dimensional view and with living expression. To the artist and to the physician not only the surface of the body mattered, but also the inside and its structure, the skeleton. The interest in anatomy, especially that of the skeletal structure of the human figure, began to grow and studies of surgery were introduced around 1300 at the university of Paris by Lanfranco, a political exile from his native city of Milan. Guido da Vigevano,[52] physician to the Queen of France, opens the corpse like a book and explains the anatomy in his treatise (1345), fig.7 with the following sentence:

Because it is forbidden by the church to perform an anatomy on the human body...I will show you the anatomy of the human body plainly, by correctly painted figures, just as they are in the human body, so that which is beneath will appear manifestly in the picture and better than it can be seen in the human body, because when we perform an anatomy of a man, we have to hurry on account of decomposition. The image is not only clearer than the messy reality, it is also less smelly. [53]

He added his sketches of human dissected bodies to the explanation. Interestingly, his illustrations of dissected bodies are viewed from above as if lying on a table and seem already half-skeletal, but to the viewer they appear as if standing and resemble a corpse in which life continues.

Religious Events: Commemoration Masses for the Dead and Funeral Chapels

"Finally my very dear son, have Masses sung for my soul and prayers said for me throughout your kingdom; and give me a full and special share in all the good you do. My own child, I give you all the blessings a good father can give his son. May the blessed Trinity and all the saints keep and defend you from all evils; and may God grant you grace to do His will always...Amen."[54]

The Christian liturgy and the cult of the commemoration of the dead is closely connected to the up-coming images of death appearing in *memento mori* monuments and frescoes. From the Carolingian period until the beginning of the thirteenth century many monasteries throughout Europe assumed the responsibility for holding memorial and other votive mass services for the dead. They kept the register of the most significant names of the dead in their liturgical calendar for the commemoration of their anniversary.

In important monasteries like Cluny the commemoration mass services increased to thousands annually. All Souls Day in November, originating in the eleventh century, was a first endeavour to commemorate the dead generally rather than holding individual masses.[55] The prayers in the mass service commemorating the dead refer to the Christian vision of the afterlife, Resurrection and the Last Judgement, but are also linked to the popular and legendary belief in communication between the living and the dead. The communicative structure bases itself on the concept of the prayer received by the dead which show their gratitude to the living and according to popular imagination rise up from their tombs to help the living in moments of danger.[56]

When in 1274 the doctrine of Purgatory found its acceptance, the privatization of ritual mass services for the commemoration[57] of the dead became increasingly requested. The growing urban elite in Florence and in other cities of Italy and Europe demanded private commemoration spaces in which a private mass could take place. These spaces found their expression in the many chapels of the most important families such as the Bardi and Peruzzi in Santa Croce, Florence or as in Saint John's chapel in the Dominican church, Bozen for the Florentine Bambarossi family, generally known as the Botsch. The privatization of death commemoration is related to the influence of the rising merchant class in the small Communes ruled by more important families, which used the space of the church to glorify their power and importance.

The Importance of Memory in the Christian Doctrine of Death

There are four things that help a man have a good memory. The first is to arrange the things to be remembered in a specific order. The second is to pay careful attention to them. / The third is to relate them to unusual symbols. / The fourth is frequently to repeat them while thinking about them. (Giovanni da Gimignano, *Summa de exemplis ac similitudinibus rerum*)[58]

Inspired by the Augustinian idea of memory,[59] the scholastic system developed an art of memory employing the method of ordering and grouping all visible elements in the world.[60] In the newly created universities, the teaching of the art of memory was of great importance.[61] It was part of the rhetorical art, called *rhetorica novissima*. Albert the Great

and Thomas Aquinas relied strongly on the imagery of memory. Albert in his *De bono, de anima* and in *De memoria et reminiscentia* (commentaries on Aristotle) along with Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa theologiae* and *De memoria et reminiscentia* deal with memory.[62]

Figural stories depicted on the walls of medieval buildings, as the sacred and the secular, were thought to impress on the memory of faithful Christians and to reinforce their resolution to lead their lives according to Christian doctrine. Along with the preacher's sermons, wall paintings carried the message of Christian ideology with narrative representations of the Old and New Testament or of the life of the saints as contained in the *Golden Legend* of Jacopo da Voragine (1230–1298).[63] The fresco cycles of the life and death of Christ, Mary or the saints instructed the medieval onlooker and gave him or her examples of Good Life and Good Death.[64] The most significant moments of a narrative cycle were expressed with all the characteristic signs and symbols in frescoes decorating the walls of churches and public buildings. A pictorial language of its own has developed out of these emblematic signs which were partly taken from mythology and partly developed out of Christian culture. Events of Christian salvation theory and history needed to be represented in a way that illiterate people understood immediately. The theme of death belonging to the four 'Last Things' was one of the most important topics that had been impressed on the memory of the people by means of frescoes.[65]

Apocalyptic Prophecy: Gioacchino da Fiore and Arnau de Vilanova

"Arnau distinguishes carefully between 'vision' and 'understanding'…
God, who is the author of all visions, grants the proper understanding of them…whenever He wishes and to whatever extent He wishes." (Caroline Walker Bynum)[66]

The apocalyptic fourth rider as it appears in the Triumph of Death frescoes at Bozen, Meran, Subiaco, Lucignano and Palermo, fig.1, fig.2, fig.3, fig.4, fig.5 reveals itself to be a theme much disputed in the high and late Middle Ages. Apocalyptic times were periodically prophesied when major changes occurred in history. The apocalyptic prophecy of Saint John found numerous interpretations in medieval times. When the

above-mentioned frescoes were created, the fear of the Last Judgement was a question which made the faithful tremble. The preludes of artistic interpretation of death, the apocalyptic rider, can already be found in the twelfth century writings of the Cistercian visionary Gioacchino da Fiore (1130-1202), who divided history in three episodes, as the Age of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit according to a triangular figuration, the Trinity. With the beginning of the age of the Holy Spirit around the year 1260, he had prophesied the coming of the Antichrist, who would bring disorder. But he also foretold that at that time, peace and justice would be re-established. Throughout Gioacchino's apocalyptic writings the contrasting values of good and evil, of optimism and pessimism are emphasized. They were most influential all over Europe. His theological speculations on the coming of the Antichrist relate to the time of the crusaders, especially to the third crusade, when the English King Richard the Lionhearted landed in Messina and had an audience with the mystical abbot Joachim of Fiore. Richard's greatest enemy was Saladin, sultan of Egypt and Syria. He represented the evil that had to be conquered by the Christian knights, who followed the example of the mythical King Arthur.[67]

Shortly before the fourth apocalyptic rider in the Italian Triumph of Death appeared, another visionary, the Catalan physician Arnau de Vilanova (1240 –1310) presented his work *De tempore adventus* of the Antichrist to the Dominican scholars at the university of Paris in 1299. The Dominicans were not at all pleased with Vilanova's attempts to shed light on the mysterious *Revelation* of Saint John the Evangelist. Paris theologians condemned his book. Later, in a series of writings he attacked the intelligence and legitimacy of the 'pseudo-religious and pseudo-theologian' Dominican order and a spectacular trial took place in Perugia (1301). But Vilanova had allied with the radical branch of the Franciscan Spirituals, who were deeply devoted to evangelical poverty and requested a reformation of the Church. They started pursuing this reformation on Vilanova's ideas and also came out with his announcement of 'the coming of the Antichrist' and of the apocalyptic end that according to Vilanova's previews would occur between 1366 and 1376.[68]

These previews of the apocalyptic end as seen by Arnau de Vilanova, Gioacchino da Fiore and others might have been an additional reason to represent the personification of death in the shape of the apocalyptic rider which roots in the *Revelation*, 8, 7-13 of Saint John. The terrible plague decimating one third of Italy's society in 1347-1348 may have been regarded as one of the disasters in the visionary view of the apocalyptic end.

Classification of the Social Classes in Urban Society and their Appearance in the Macabre Representation in the Late Middle Ages

No country can govern itself by itself alone, / that is why merchants go to work and fatigue themselves / What is lacking to their country, to bring it to all kingdoms, / thus one must never misuse them without reason. / Because merchants go hither and thither on the sea / To provide for the countries, that makes them beloved. (Jaques le Goff)[69]

Between the fifth and the eleventh century Italian social structure consisting of the clergy, à laity and feudal lords was ruled by Byzantines, Lombards, Arabs, Normans and Swabs. From 1000 onwards, medieval society underwent transformations involving all the different aspects of life. Economic development through exploitation of the wealth of the Middle East and the banking system caused the patrician class to gain power. There was a shift of power from the existing three-party system of feudal society to the new patricians. The latter, consisting mainly of merchants and bourgeoisie, formed the fourth party of late medieval society.[70] Regarding the laity of urban society, it can be observed that the latter were well-represented in a certain number of social and professional categories in which one can trace the remnants of the Roman system of classification.[71] In *Medieval Civilisation* J. Le Goff gives the definition of Rather, bishop of Verona, who in the tenth century, listed nineteen categories as follows:

civilians, soldiers, craftsmen, physicians, merchants, advocates, judges, witnesses, procurators, employers, mercenaries, councillors, lords, slaves, masters, pupils, the rich, the middling, and beggars.[72]

Among these categories the merchants, who had gained economic and political power in the trading cities of Florence, Palermo, Genoa, Venice, Verona and other Italian cities, became the most representative segment of all the categories of urban society. In

Medieval Callings, J. Le Goff writes about a voyager who passed through Venice shortly before the great plague of 1348 and held the impression that 'all the people are merchants'.[73] In the thirteenth and succeeding centuries, many merchants undertook long and perilous voyages like the well-known traveller Marco Polo[74] (1254-1324). The classification of the clergy and laity into categories[75] is represented in the most notorious frescoes of the Triumph Death as in Pisa, in the Museum of Santa Croce, Florence, in the Benedictine monastery of Subiaco, in the Saint John's chapel of the Dominican church, Bozen and on the outside wall of Maria Trost, Meran, fig.8, in the South Tyrol. They also recur later in the Dance of Death or Dance Macabre especially in northern Italy and northern Europe (France, Switzerland, Germany and England). All the existing Triumph of Death frescoes are centred on the iconographic image of death mowing down the lives of people belonging to the categories of clergy and laity. The categories of the dead are heaped up, under the scythe of the fast-and wildly-galloping or flying personification of death. The way in which triumphal death takes away the lives of humans expresses the dramatic reality of death to the medieval viewer. J. Le Goff applies the term 'estates'[76] which means to him the socio-professional condition of society. In society, the categories of laity and clergy were still divided in a hierarchical order. Faced with death, all of them line up horizontally, which makes it clear that all individuals become equal when overcome by death. In admitting the estates and assigning specific sins to them, the Church used the latter as distinctive labels in order to inculcate a professional morality to each estate.[77] This labelling by the Church can be seen in many scenes of Trecento frescoes as in that of Orcagna. A woman, a crusader, a bishop and a nun are clearly evidenced. The tortures of hell are depicted in the fragmented frescoes of Santa Croce, fig.9 and in the fresco of San Fermo Verona, fig.10. As in all Trecento representations of hell, the various compartments of the rocky caverns are dividing the groups of sinners suffering different pains.

For J. Le Goff the medieval world of Christian society was an arena of struggle between Unity (God), the good, and diversity, which is evil (categories).[78] The well-known Triumph of Death at Pisa represents the declining feudal society of the aristocrats and the upcoming bourgeois, the new patrician class and the other categories of society. In the

iconography of the Encounter of the Three Living and Three Dead the living are aristocrats or gentry and are depicted when faced with the three dead. In the Triumph of Death at Pisa the aristocrats are still shown in the Encounter as hunters, fig.11, whereas the figures in the garden could belong to the new patrician class as described by the ten figures of Boccaccio. Finally in the central part of the fresco there are all the categories of society, notably the poor. This masterwork evinces the shift from the old to a new structure of society.

Notes, Chapter Two

[1] *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford: University Press, 1980), p. 81.

[2] Sonderausstellung in Schloß Tirol, *St. Prokulus in Naturns, ergrabene Geschichte: Von den Menschen des Frühmittelalters und der Pestzeit* (Bozen: Südtiroler Landesmuseum für Archäologie – Schloss Tirol, 1991), pp. 105-108.

[3] Ibid., pp. 105-108.
Leo Andergassen dates the triumph in the years 1340-1342.

[4] Ibid., pp. 114-115.
The central part of the Triumph of Death representation on the walls of Maria Trost, Meran, is badly damaged but still recognizable are: the woman on the window, who falls a victim of the deadly weapon of death, an old woman who offers her money to death, young people, a flying devil who grasps a human soul, and the houses and towers of the city. Above the Triumph of Death the Archangel Michael who watches over souls is represented.

[5] VI Convegno di Studi su *La Danza Macabra e il Trionfo della Morte* (Clusone, 19-21 Agosto).
According to the unpublished essay of Luciano Pantani the fresco dates approximately to the year 1380.

[6] Today the painting is preserved in the Museum of the Galleria della Regione, Palazzo Abatellis.

[7] Giovanni di Paolo created the illustrations of the antiphonary and the cover of the *Biccherna Book* showing the demon like winged death galloping on a horse.

[8] Horst Fuhrmann, *Überall ist Mittelalter: Von der Gegenwart einer vergangenen Zeit* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1998), p. 205.
Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art, p.114: Prints, pictures, and sculptors of him as the Christ-bearer (i.e. Christophorus) were extremely common from 13th to the 16th centuries because it was believed that if one looked on a representation of him one would not die a suddden death on that day. Consequently, travellers saw an image-often very large-on many church walls. The idea has persisted into the 20th century, with medallions in cars and lorries. Because of his help to travellers and against fatal accidents he is included among the fourteen Holy Helpers (Vierzehnheiligen). The evidently fabulous nature of his legend led Erasmus to attack it, and in this he was followed by the Reformers and also the Council of Trent, so that representations are rare after the 17th century.
Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*. Trans. By Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 197, 198.

[9] Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism: An Inquiry into the Analogy of the Arts, Philosophy and Religion in the Middel Ages* (New York: Penguin Group, 1985), p. 16.

[10] Radical Academy, *Medieval Philosophy: The period of Scholastic Philosophy I* (database online, accessed on July 2000); available from http://radicalacademy.com/adiphiloscholastic.htm

[11] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia Press, 1995), p. 231.

[12] George Duby, *Art and Society in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Jean Birell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 72. "Saint Anselm proclaimed, 'fides querens intellectum', that faith ought also to be intelligence."

[13] http: // radicalacademy.com/ adiphiloscholastic. htm
On the experimental science Albert the Great declares: "The aim of natural science is not simply to accept the statements (narrato) of others, but to investigate the causes that are at work in nature." He would prefer

Aristotle to Saint Augustine, but he does not hesitate to criticize the Greek philosopher. His appreciation of Aristotle was critical.

[14] G. Duby, *Art and Society in the Middle Ages*, p. 53.
"Divine nature, taught Thomas Aquinas, arranges all things appropriately, without confusion, in such a way that all are co-ordinated within a concrete and coherent system."

[15] In the neo-platonic work *De divisione naturae* of Erigena John Scotus (c.815-877) the unity of God descends into multiplicity and in a return to unity.

[16] E. Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism: An Inquiry into the Analogy of the Arts, Philosophy and Religion in the Middel Ages*, p. 20.

[17] Ibid., p. 38.

[18] Ibid., p. 39.
"The visual arts become articulated through an exact and systematic division of space, resulting in a 'clarification for clarification's sake' of narrative contexts in the representational arts and of functional contexts in architecture."

[19] *Novellino* is the modern name given to a collection of hundred novellas (originally 123) of anonymous provenience written at the end of the Duecento. The narrative style and content derived from various sources (from French, Provencal, Latin, Italian and orally recounted stories).

[20] The Italian vernacular of the Duecento/Trecento, called 'volgare', which breaks the tradition of Latin writing.

[21] Dante in his *Convivio* written in Italian and in his *De vulgari eloquentia*, written in Latin intended to elevate the vernacular as a suitable language for poetry. The *Divine Comedy* written in Italian is par excellence the first great achievement in artistic literal expression.

[22] Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 87.

[23] Roger Bacon, *Opus Majus,* (Oxford: J. H. Bridges, 1897).

[24] S. Y. Edgerton, *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution*, pp. 44-87.

[25] Ibid., pp. 47-48.

[26] I refer to Aristotelian concepts of nature and the rediscovery of Aristotle's thoughts through the scholastic movement.

[27] Perspective or three-dimensional representation reappeared in the late Middle Ages. Already in the Greek-Roman period three-dimensional representation was most common in mural painting. In E. Panofsky's *Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form'* the meaning of perspective and its concepts and development is thoroughly studied and elaborated.

[28] Guillame De Lorris and Jean De Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*. Trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[29] S. Edgerton, *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution*, pp. 81-82.

[30] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Creators. A History of Heroes of the Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 261.

[31] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 421.

[32] Hans Belting und Dieter Blume, *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit. Die Argumentation der Bilder.* (München: Hirmer, 1989), pp. 50, 51.
Belting in his writings says that the *Divine Comedy* is the most impressive allegory, but its systematic order of thoughts demands the representation of the physical order of the world. The acquirement of knowledge is pre-designed through the sequence of space of creation. He states that the literal model can be applied to wall panting and gives the example of the Spanish chapel in Santa Maria Novella.

[33] N. Sapegno, *Dante Alighieri, La Divina Commedia, vol. I, Inferno* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1976).

[34] Dante Aligieri, *The Divine Comedy. The Vision of Dante. Hell, Canto I.* Trans. Henry Cary (London: Everyman, 2000), p. 3.

[35] Boccaccio's way of narrating stories is so immediate that it goes deep into the reader's intellect. The reader can easily imagine and appreciate the various characters bearing all the traits of the human race to which he himself belongs. Pier Paolo Pasolini found it most suitable for expressing his own understanding of human existence and struggle of life that he interpreted some of Boccaccio's novellas in his movie the *Decameron.*

[36] In their writings L. Battaglia Ricci, L. Bellosi, H. Belting and others analyze the fine-woven web between Trecento painting and literary artworks which prove to have strong links.

[37] H. Belting und Dieter Blume, *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit*, p. 65.
R. Kuhns writes: "In the brief and introductory observations to follow I shall point out one instance in which I believe the organization, content, and interpretative strategies of a text were influenced by contemporary painting and painters. The text is the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, and the painters are those who appear as characters in the stories: Giotto, Buffalmacco, Bruno, Calandrino, and perhaps others, though identities are not always obvious. The painting I shall point to is that of Giotto and Buffalmacco."

[38] Ibid., pp. 65-69.

[39] Pietro Ghibellini, Gianni Oliva, Giovanni Tesio, *Lo Spazio Letterario: Antologia della letteratura Italiana dalle origini all'Umanesimo* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1990), p. 349.

[40] Mark Susa, *Petrarch: Selections from the Canzoniere and other Works* (New York, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1999), p. 11.

[41] P. Gibellini, G. Oliva, G. Tesio, *Lo Spazio Letterario: Antologia della letteratura Italiana dalle origini all'Umanesimo*, p. 351.

[42] M. Susa, *Petrarch: Selections from the Canzoniere and other Works*, p. 14.

[43] P. Gibellini, G., Oliva, G. Tesio, *Lo Spazio Letterario: Antologia della letteratura Italiana dalle origini all'Umanesimo*, p. 353.

[44] M. Susa, *Petrarch: Selections from the Canzoniere and other Works*, p. 17.

[45] P. Gibellini, G. Oliva, G. Tesio, *Lo Spazio Letterario: Antologia della letteratura Italiana dalle origini all'Umanesimo*, p. 354.

[46] M. Susa, *Petrarch: Selections from the Canzoniere and other Works*, p. 81-82.

[47] S. Y. Edgerton, *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution*, p. 38.

[48] Ibid., pp. 38-40.
"F. Edward Cranz, a scholar of Aristotelianism in medieval Europe, has tried to define the moment of this shift." Edgerton intended the shift from bi-dimensional to three-dimensional representation. Edgerton continues: "Without any reference to art or science, he offers a compelling theory based solely on philosophical and theological evidence, especially the writings of Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) and Peter Abelard (1079-1142)."
p. 39. "The soul, said Saint Augustine further, 'sees' God in the same way and likewise unites with him. Further, in his *Confessiones* (X, 10, 17) he wrote: 'The things themselves (res ipsae) of the (liberal arts)...I never reached by any sense of the body, nor did I ever see them outside my mind. In my memory I put away not images of them but the things themselves (res ipsae)." Edgerton goes on: "Cranz calls this unfamiliar mode of sensing, imaging, and intellecting 'conjunctive', and finds it commonplace in the verbal discourse of antiquity and continuing into the early Middle Ages.... In any event, around 1100, just before the time when art historians detect a turn away from the utter flatness of early Christian painting, Cranz discovers this old 'conjunctive' reasoning becoming 'disjunctive.' He reads this change in the passage below from Anselm's Proslogian, in which Anselm describes his personal struggle to possess God in his mind: 'Have you found, oh my soul, what you sought?... For if you have found your God, how can he be that which you have understood him to be with such certain truth and such true certainty? If you have found him, why is it that you do not feel or experience (sentis) what you have found? Why, Lord God, does my soul not feel or experience you, if it has found you'"?

[49] Francesco Petrarca, Secretum. Italian & Latin (Rome: Archivio Guido Izzi, 1993).

[50] S. Y. Edgerton, *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry: Art and Science on the Eve of the Scientific Revolution*, pp. 81-82.

[51] Michael Camille, *Gothic Art, Glorious Visions* (New York: Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1996), p. 154.

[52] Michael Camille, *Gothic Art, Glorious Visions*, p. 154.

[53] Ibid., p. 153.

[54] Paul Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1996), p. 36.

[55] Ibid., p. 116.

[56] Zentralinstitut und Museum für Sepulkralkultur, *Tanz der Toten: Der monumentale Totentanz im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Dettelbach: Röll, 1998), pp. 23 –24.
Differently from the helping dead rising from their tombs there also exists the belief of the rising dead to revenge their disturbed peace by the living.

[57] P. Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*.

[58] Jaques Le Goff, *History and Memory*. Trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Calman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 79. In this page J. Le Goff interprets part of Giovanni da Gimignano's *Summa de exemplis ac similitudinibus rerum* published in Venetiis: per Johannes et Gregorium de Gregoriis, 1499.

[59] Ibid., p. 71.
"...Augustine seeks God in the depths of memory: '...into the fields and caverns, into the incalculable caverns of my memory' (Confessions, X, 17). With Augustine, memory sinks into the interior man, into his heart. From this derives the examination of conscience, introspection."

[60] Ibid., p. 76.
Glossaries, lexicons, lists of cities, mountains, rivers, oceans proliferate and became most popular.

[61] Ibid., pp. 68-80.

[62] Ibid., pp. 67, 68.
De memoria et reminiscentia of Aristotle seemed to the great scholastic philosophers to be an 'art of memory' comparable to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* once attributed to Cicero. The three texts of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (86-82 BC), *De oratore* (55 BC) and *Institutio oratoria* (100 AD), which dominate the art of rhetoric in antique Rome, were to be reborn in the Middle Ages from the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries.

[63] In 1298 Jacopo da Voragine, bishop of Genoa, composed a number of sermons and the well-known *Legenda aurea*. His legends about the saints are based on preceding authors as Cassiodorus (c.490-583), Jerome (c.340-420), Augustine (354-430), Bede (673-735) and on the popular belief in legends of the saintly martyrs which had become heroes for medieval Christian society.

[64] P. Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, pp. 33- 50.

[65] Ibid., pp. 199 - 203.

[66] C. Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 147, 148.

[67] Ibid., pp.124-139.

[68] Ibid., pp. 140-155.
The visionary Arnau de Vilanova was well-known to his contemporaries. He healed aristocrats of the French and Italian courts.

[69] J. Le Goff, *Medieval Civilisation, 400-1500*. Trans. J. Barrow (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), p. 253.

[70] Ibid., p. 252.
Those who seem to have profited the most from the development of the monetary economy were the merchants.

[71] Ibid., p. 257.

[72] Ibid., p. 257.

[73] Jaques Le Goff, *Medieval Callings*. Trans. L. G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 263.

[74] Arnaldo Mondadori, *Dizionario di Storiografia*, 1996, pp. 804-805.
Marco Polo, from a well-off merchant family is believed to have travelled to the Far East and to have reached China in 1275. In 1271, the family Polo had left Venice and travelled on land to Iran, to Afghanistan, to the highlands of Badakhsan and Chinese Turkestan and finally arrived at Khanbalik (Bejing) in 1275. In the year 1295, the Polo returned to Europe by sea. Polo's adventure during the voyage and stay in China are described in the book *Livre des Merveilles du Monde* (1298-1299), which had been dictated to Rustichello da Pisa, who was Marco Polo's fellow in the prison of Genoa. Numerous editions and prints after the one of Nuremberg (1477) leave no doubt of its large diffusion. Lately, scholars like Frances Wood with his book *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* (1995) have become doubtful of Marco Polo's travel to China and say that he had never reached China and that he had travelled only as far as Iran. This assertion was made on the basis of the missing information about grandiose architectural monuments like the Great Wall and Chinese calligraphy, which are never mentioned in Marco Polo's book. Possibly, Marco

Polo has observed all new things he had seen during his journey and stay in China with the eyes of a medieval merchant who was very much impressed by other people's living style and religion.

Very lately, John Larner has published his book *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* (2001) in which he pushes back the doubtful view of historians like F. Wood. He re-establishes the importance of the medieval book which according to him contains a great deal of information about the medieval perception of an unknown continent like Asia.

[75] J. Le Goff, *Medieval Civilisation, 400-1500*, p. 261.

[76] J. Le Goff, *Medieval Civilisation, 400-1500*, p. 261.

[77] Ibid., p. 263.

[78] Ibid., p. 264.
In the representation of hell sometimes is also shown the political conflict between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines.
Iris Grötecke, *Das Bild des Jüngsten Gerichts. Die ikonografischen Konventionen in Italien und ihre politische Aktualisierung in Florenz* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997), p. 183.

Chapter Three

Four Themes about Death

The Encounter

Friends, look what I see: / Unless I have gone quite mad / My heart shakes with great fear: / See there three shades together, How ugly and strange they are / Rotten and worm-eaten. (From the Encounter between the Three Living and Three Dead)[1]

The Encounter between the Three Living and the Three Dead is the earliest theme about death and the dead in the visual arts. It appears in Italy at Melfi (c.1225)[2] before the French version of *Le dit des trois morts et des trois vifs* [3] and became very popular in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth century.

As early as the ninth century the expression of the dead *'Sum quod eris, quod es, ipse fui'* can be found in inscriptions on tombstones.[4] The legendary Encounter and its morals are meant for the living to ponder about the transience of their lives and prepare for the afterlife. However, the legend finds its roots in an Arabic version of the Encounter and in the novel of *Barlaam and Josaphat*, (730) most popular during the European Middle Ages. The novel is a Christian version of Buddha's life and ascribed to John of Damaskus, a Syrian theologian.[5] Most probably it was taken to southern Italy through the Byzantines who influenced cultural events and life-style. Throughout the Middle Ages the novel was widely read and inspired writers and artists to represent the content in shape of their own imagination.

A Latin 'vado mori' poem from the twelfth century gives one of these interpretations of the legendary novel. The entire poem has been printed by Pietro Vigo. He and others thought this poem to be one of the first interpretations of the legend. In the 'vado-mori' poem there is only one dead corpse lying in a coffin and the three living are gazing at him.[6] This might well be the earliest version of the legend in Italian literature. It is most interesting to note that differently to the literary version in the frescoes neither the living

nor the dead are saying a word. This is confirmed by C. Frugoni's article *Il tema dell'incontro dei tre vivi e dei tre morti nella tradizione Italiana (The Theme of the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead in Italian Tradition)* and in her essay *La protesta affidata (The Entrusted Protest)* arguing the difference between the French and the Italian version.[7] The three living of P. Vigo's poem from the twelfth century view a single figure. The poem opens with the following strophe:

Cum apertam sepulturam / Viri tres aspicerent, / Ac orribilem figuram / Intus esse cernerent,

Quendam scilicet jacentem / Nec recenter positum; / Imo totum putrescentem / Squalidum et fetidum

Ossa inter et aliorum / Jam nudata totaliter. / Prius illo sepolturam / Dixit unus taliter. [8]

When three men observed the open sepulchre, they saw a horrific apparition,

That is one who has been dead for long time, has not been buried recently; all putrescent, squalid and foul-smelling

With completely bare bones he lies among others. Before this moment one of the buried spoke this...

From this terrible and shocking place each of the living draws his lesson from the Encounter. The first laments the passing of earthly glory and the world and reminds that all humans end up as the corpse in front of him. The second is horrified by the putrefaction of the corpse and regrets the loss of all material beauty and earthly pleasure through death. Finally, the third who lingered his gaze on the bare bones comes to the conclusion that human pride and desires should be turned down, as they are of no value when death arrives. His moralistic expression stays with the spirit and ascetic view of the contemporary monks like the Cistercian Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) and later Jacopone da Todi. The poem of *De Contemptu mundi (Contempt of the World)* attributed to Saint Bernard follows the thoughts of the hermit monk Saint Macarius from the fifth century who admonishes as follows:

Vidi quid eris, quomodo gaudia quaeris / Per nullam sortem poteris evadere mortem / Nec modo laeteris, quia forsan cras morieris[9]

I looked into your future, seeing you seeking for pleasures / but in no way you will escape death, don't dabble / as tomorrow you may die.

This early poem just like others that follow in the French tradition reflect a situation in which human life is confronted with death. The Encounter with its shocking effect helped the late medieval people get used to the idea of a sudden death surprising them in the midst of their daily affairs. Later on, in Petrarch's *I Trionfi* the shoking effect of death, which is so characteristic of the Encounter was sustituted by a black-clothed woman. Petrach's iconography of death represents a simple means to humanize death and to ponder life in the sight of death. Christianized medieval Europe took this lesson from the Greek-Byzantine novel elaborating and developing this theme in its own view. The message of death does not change from the original. In fact Italy had always entertained regular contacts with the Middle East and had been part of the Byzantine Empire. For this reason it adopted the legend of the Encounter earlier than other countries in Europe expressing it in visual language.

In the Encounter at Melfi (1225) the three living are shown as a family encountering two skeletons. From the same century there are examples at Poggio Mirteto, in the Cathedral of Atri (1260) and in the church of Santa Maria in Vezzolano at Castelnuovo near Asti in Piedmont.

Unlike the version found in French and English illuminated manuscripts, such as the Lisle Psalter (1300), the Italian frescoes show the hermit. But the frescoes at Subiaco, fig.12 as well as San Flaviano at Montefiascone (Orvieto), and the Triumph at Pisa, just as San Lucca at Cremona and San Fermo at Verona, fig.13 from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries bear witness to the spreading of this iconography all over Italy.[10]

The essential idea in this legend is contained in the warning phrase that the dead repeat: 'What you are, we were! What we are, you will be'! They are simply giving kindly advice – though nothing will happen as the living will go on living.

The Italian Triumph

Brandishing a scythe, the figure of death rushes like a whirlwind toward the delectable orchard where, amid the sweet joys of courtly life, a society of lords and ladies singing of love and earthly delights. (George Duby)[11]

The Triumph of Death proves to be completely different from the Encounter. In fact, death appears in a real personification, i.e. of a skeleton or monster-like being to take away the lives of the living.

In my inquiry about its origins in chapter two I was mentioning several sources and lingering on the fourth rider of the *Revelation* of Saint John as well as the classical figures of Greek mythology and the religious thoughts within the context of the Purgatory doctrine. I hold the opinion that the image of the riding death bears different symbolical connotations from more than one origin. The triumph is mainly characterized by a complex combination of allegoric symbols which correspond to the late medieval world filled with references to past and contemporary events. Symbols could assume more than one meaning according to the visual context. In the narrative paintings such as the Triumph of Death, a combination of symbols articulate the idea of the ascetic view of life, the fleeting world and the transition from the universal judgement to the individual judgement at the end of times.[12] In the figurative language, the stereotype figure of the riding death shaping the new visual expression is evidenced by speed, suddenness and destructive force. Its wings, galloping horse, flying bunch of hair and weapons are all typical symbols providing hostility to its appearance. Some attributes of death are the same as that of time, love and fortune. Medieval Christian Europe inherited the symbolical language of allegories from the classical Greek and Roman world and transformed the images according to the contents of the Christian salvation doctrine adapting it to the socio-cultural attitudes of late medieval society. This way the original allegorical figures assumed new shape and meaning.[13]

The theme of the Triumph of Death has developed in Italy and the masterworks of Buffalmacco, Orcagna and Lorenzetti and of other unknown artists vouch for the

popularity of this theme. The iconographic image is structured in the following way: centrally, there appears the apocalyptic rider, a skeleton. In some frescoes this personification of death appears in the shape of a riding or flying woman or a monster-like being. Death holds its deadly weapon, most often a great scythe or a sickle to mow down human lives.[14] Below there is a heap of dead corpses belonging to the different classes of laity and clergy. At either side there are the groups of the poor old beggars, the outcasts of the Middle Ages imploring death to take their lives and the rich aristocrats or bourgeois enjoying themselves in a garden or on their way to hunting. The scenery is full of dramatic action: people who plead for the coming of death and flee in front of the wild rider Death. The theme belongs to the painterly narrative most often including representations of Paradise, Hell and the Last Judgement. Sometimes they are represented on different wall surfaces as in the Great Hospital of Palermo (1444-1446) or even on the same wall as in Santa Croce were they are part of a whole cycle.

At the end of the fourteenth century this apocalyptic scenery lost its popularity but still appears in the following centuries, as in the painting of the Great Hospital at Palermo, (1441-1446), fig.5 or in other iconographic expressions like in *the Triumph of Clusone* near Bergamo, fig.14 and in the second part of the French Hour Book of *Les Très riches Heures* commissioned by Duke Charles of Savoy I and illuminated by Jean Colombe (1485-1489).[15] In the fifteenth century a second version of the triumph, known as the Triumph of Death after Petrarch, becomes very popular. This iconographic image of death has lost its shocking appearance. It bears the influence of Petrarch's poem the *Trionfi* and classical Roman and medieval pageantry.

The Triumph of Death after the Iconography of Petrarch

una donna involta in veste negra / a woman shrouded in black / (*I Trionfi*, Petrarch)

Petrarch more than others in his time gave great importance to the classical heritage and rediscovered themes which in his poetry put new light on the symbolic value of time, death and glory along with other entities and qualities of human conduct. With his poem *I Trionfi* and others he influenced the figurative visual art just like Dante. The Triumph of

Death after Petrarch is reproduced in a great variety of techniques such as in illuminated manuscripts, on bridal chests, in oil paintings on canvas or panels, woven carpets, prints or in sculpture in precious materials, such as ivory.

This iconographic image known as the Triumph of Death after Petrarch refers mainly to the famous poem *I Trionfi*, which Petrarch wrote between 1352 and 1374. His poem is a vision of six processions leading him (Petrarch) from the temporal to the eternal, from the mortal to the immortal sphere. The progression is quite evident: the Triumphus Amoris is overcome by the Triumphus Pudicitiae, which in turn is superseded by the Triumph Mortis. Death is then overcome by the Triumphus Famae which is superseded by the Triumphus Temporis[16] which in turn is overcome by the Triumphus Eternitatis. Petrarch describes the first five triumphs in the past tense and the sixth in the future tense.[17] The vision is cast in a processional train with the poet seeing the processions he describes within the figurative structure of universal history.[18]

The Triumph of Death forming the third of the poem *I Trionfi* contains the new concept of the interpretation of death. Instead of the wild rider and hunter in the shape of a fury-like woman or a skeleton Petrarch describes death as 'una donna involta in veste negra', a woman shrouded in black walking close to Laura and her companions. She (death) undertakes a philosophical conversation with Laura, telling her that her beauty can be saved from disfiguration by illness, old age and the struggle of life; she observes that wealth and honour cannot help against death to whom all the living creatures are subjected. Finally, she approaches Laura and takes away a strain of Laura's golden hair and with that her life. In the poem Petrarch expresses Laura's death with his great artistic style: "Morte bella parea nel suo bel viso." In these sublime words Petrarch thus wants to make clear that even death proves to be unable to disfigure the beauty of his great love. Death appeared to be gentle in her beautiful face.[19]

Unlike the hunting skeleton or fury that overcomes the living with surprise, the black shrouded woman of Petrarch approaches her victim Laura gently, offering her service in regard to her beauty and exemplary womanly behaviour. Death has become humanized.

Comparing it to the former apparition of death, now she seems, in her black shroud and human aspect, to be closer to humankind and without any hostile thoughts or actions. The universal power of death 'from which nobody can escape' has now lost all its shocking appearance. No churchman of the late Middle Ages had the idea of employing the image of death in such a humanized way. The clergy used the apocalyptic or monster-like image of death to the purpose of educating people to become good Christians. The riding skeleton recalling the *Revelation* of Saint John surely appeared a bit more frightening and surrealistic than Petrarch's 'donna involta in veste negra'. Before this, Dante with his *Divine Comedy* has given to Christianity great iconographic images which could be represented easily by artists, as his poems gave a complete description of the dead and afterlife. Not only he created scenes of crucial pains in hell, but also used the idea of the Triumph as an allegory. In the terrestrial paradise of Purgatory, canto 29 a train follows the chariot of Beatrice. The chariot is drawn by four winged creatures representing the apocalyptic symbols of the evangelists which stand for the symbol of the Church. Sandro Botticelli illustrated Dante's allegory of the Triumph in one of his drawings. However, Dante's worldview and vision of afterlife is distinctly scholastic, whereas Petrarch's personification of death is free of stress and shock. Death in Laura's face appears as a natural event. The inevitable death, as viewed by Petrarch, records the summary of his classical knowledge and his interest in carrying on the tradition and culture of the Middle Ages, which still preserved the ideas of the Roman world. Processions and triumphal entries, so popular in Roman times and basic to the development of monumental Roman art were performed throughout the Middle Ages. Petrarch's personification of death gave a new iconography, in which Western society could now face death with a degree of serenity. The menacing, apocalyptic rider had finally been tamed by the humanistic, Christian view of the poet.[20] Praising Laura,[21] his beloved woman, Petrarch with his classical spirits influenced the arts for the following centuries. He also gave a new shine to the classical heroes and praised their valiant spirit and behaviour in *De viribus illustris*. Artists would use the processional representations as described in Petrarch's *Trionfi* with the difference that the black shrouded woman is replaced by a shrouded skeleton on a festive, adorned funeral cart recalling Roman antiquity. In Renaissance and Baroque times, the processional representations had become one of the vehicles to express

political power and fame. Artists of the early Renaissance such as Andrea Mantegna in his Triumph of Caesar (1480-1495) and Andrea del Castagno with the representation of Famous Men and Women (1450) in the Villa Carducci at Florence have given shape to Petrarch's heroes in their paintings.[22] As triumph implies victory and fame Petrarch's iconography suggests an unmistakable link of death with victory and fame.

In visual representations Petrarch's death, a woman, is replaced by the death in shape of a skeleton on a triumphal cart. The cart and the oxen or bulls by which it is drawn can be associated with triumphal carts in processions in honour of gods, heroes and important events. In Greek mythology and in the Etruscan/Roman period the cart symbolizes victory. The cart also appears in Assyrian, Sumerian and Egyptian processions. The oxen or the bulls are a very significant sign of ancient Indo-European culture and appear in myths and the religion of Minoan, Sumerian, Egyptian and Indian culture. The bulls, associated with agriculture, fertility and rebirth were of great importance to early human settlements. The sacrifice of bulls as a ritual offered to the gods by Minoans shows the great importance of this animal. Adad, the Sumerian God of weather is also represented riding a symbolic bull, which he directs on a string, fixed to a ring in the animal's nostrils. In antiquity, it was a common custom in Italy to ride bulls while directing them with a string attached to the animal's nostrils.[23] The bulls in Agnolo Gaddi's Triumph of Death, Santa Croce, (1362) and the bulls of the Bentivoglio chapel, Bologna, (1480-1490), fig.15 painted by Lorenzo Costa wear rings in their nostrils. Here, the original significance of the rings has become lost. They are merely decorative ornaments. The bulls, however, surviving from the ancient iconography of Mediterranean and Sumerian culture with its emphasis on fertility and rebirth, were now reconstituted in paintings of triumphal death. In Christian ideology oxen or bulls can be interpreted as symbols of resurrection. Fertility and rebirth are closely connected to each other, expressing the concept of continuity and eternity.

The Dance of Death

Today's king is tomorrow's corpse. (Ecclesiasticus 10, Binsky) [24]

The Dance of Death can be found in Italy more in the northern than in the southern area. It is strongly influenced by the French and German tradition, but also by the earlier theme of the Triumph of Death. Some examples can be seen in a good number of frescoes which are still preserved such as that of San Vigilio, Pinzolo in Val Rendena, Trento, fig.16, fig.17 or those of Clusone, Bergamo, fig.18. In the Dance the living line up horizontally and each of them is in the company of a skeleton. As in the Triumph the Dance is accompanied by a text with morals and admonishments which ironically explain to each living soul of the various social classes that no-one can escape death. Most often the Dance is painted on the outside walls of the church or on cemetery walls. In Italy the theme is not so popular as in the northern countries of Europe where there is a great variety of versions among which one can find the most original ones such as those of Holbein.

Notes, Chapter Three

[1] Paul Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 136.

[2] Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture Italienne* (Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1950), p. 40.

[3] M. Stephan Glixelli, *Les Cinq Poèmes des Trois Morts et des Trois Vifs.* Thèse pour le doctorat. 1vol., (Paris: Champion, 1914).
Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture Italienne* (Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1950), pp. 40, 41.
Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture Italienne* (Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1950), pp. 38, 39. Baudouin de Condé (1240-1280), a minstrel at the court of Margaret II, countess of Flanders deals with the theme in a poem by giving speech to the living and to the dead. The poem has been illustrated in some illuminated manuscripts as in the Lisle Psalter, 1310 and in the Psalter of Hours of Bonne of Luxembourg, before 1349 by Jean Le Noir.

[4] Pietro Vigo, *Le Danze Macabre in Italia* (Bergamo: Forni, 1901), p. 82.

[5] John Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 197.
The *Romance of Barlaam and Josaphat* is thought to have come to Europe in a Byzantine-Greek manuscript from Constantinople during the eleventh century.

[6] 'Vado mori' means 'I go to die'. As all individuals are subjected to this saying it became a universal motto which could be applied to all strata of society, gender, professions and ages. Each individual dying tells how he/she dies. The knight, who conquered in life, is conquered by death; the physician who cured the sick with his medicine, can not find any cure for himself. Like in the Dance of the dead the living parade in a variety of roles. The difference is that the dying speak and death is not represented and absent. Later in the Dance it is the counterpart of a skeleton which speaks to the living and invites them to step in the dance in the moment and way it thinks best.

[7] Chiara Frugoni, "Il tema dell'incontro dei tre morti nella tradizione medievale Italiana." *Atti dell'Accademia nazionale dei Lincei. Memorie. Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 371/8, vol. 13, (1967): 179.

[8] P. Vigo, *Le Danze Macabre in Italia* (Bergamo: Forni, 1901), p. 57.

[9] Ibid., p. 54.

[10] P. Binsky holds the opinion that in Italy only the theme of the Encounter has got a significant development. He writes about the triumph at Pisa and comments on M. Meiss's writings. When considering the many examples of frescoes displaying the Triumph of Death, one can say that it had an interesting and rather significant development.

[11] George Duby, *The Age of the Cathedrals, Art and Society, 980-1420.* Trans. Eleanor Levieux and Barbara Thompson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 241.

[12] The transition from the Augustinian view to the doctrine of Purgatory takes place between the eleventh and thirteenth century.

[13] Erwin Panofsky, *Studi di iconologia. I temi umanistici nell'arte del Rinascimento.* (Studies in Iconology) Trans. Renato Pedio (Turin: Einaudi, 1975).

[14] The iconographic image of the winged death holding a scythe is closely related to the image of Chronos, the god of time. Dürer's personifications of time and death bear an hourglass.

[15] Charles Samaran, Jean Longnon and Raymond Cazelles, *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (Chantilly: Musée Condé, 1969).

[16] Since long the passing world with its unrepeatable moments had impressed the memory of the humans. From the very beginning of human experience death and time were closely related. The annual seasons, the night following the twilight of the day, the rising and sinking sun on the horizon gave to humans the impression of the movement of time. Time as death does not give any warranty for everlasting life of the physical world and its values. In the view of the late medieval society, time annihilates the material sensible world just as death, but differently from death it applies its forces with a varying notion of measure. It can be slow or fast or an eroding force.

[17] Religion triumphs over all other entities. To emphasize this idea Petrarch put the event in the future tense.

[18] Konrad Eisenbichler and A. Iannucci Amilcare, *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Italian Studies, 1990), p. 52.

[19] Maria Batani, *La lirica di Francesco Petrarca* (Rocca San Casciano: Cappelli, 1959).

[20] Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la Peinture italienne* (Paris : Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1950), p. 78.

[21] The Italian name Laura is referring to the laurel-bush. In Greek and Roman antiquity the laurel-twigs were used for the coronation of the winning heroes. Apollo, the God of the Arts is wearing the laurel crown. In the Greek – Roman tradition the laurel crown signified glory.

[22] Claudia Berra, *I Triumphi di Francesco Petrarca: Gargnano del Garda (1-3 ottobre 1998),* (Bologna: Cisalpino, 1999).

[23] L. Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la Peinture italienne*, pp. 77-105.

[24] P. Binsky, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, p. 132.

Chapter Four

Description of the Art Works Representing the Triumph of Death in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century

Buonamico Buffalmacco and the Triumph of Death, Camposanto, Pisa

The Triumph of Death, fig.19 at the Camposanto in Pisa, has been puzzling generations of art historians. From G. Vasari to the twentieth century, the attribution and the date of this grandiose masterwork was very much a matter for debate.[1] In *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* L. Bellosi attributed the famous fresco beyond doubt to Buonamico Buffalmacco. He dates the artwork to about 1336. L. Battaglia Ricci in *Ragionare nel Giardino*[2] studied the theme in correlation to Boccaccio's *Decameron*, pointing to the ten personages, seven women and three men, appearing in the gardens of the famous works of both Buffalmacco and Boccaccio.

Thus, art historians have changed their view and approach in the understanding of this famous masterpiece appearing in the first half of the fourteenth century in Italy. Many scholars have been tempted to relate the famous Triumph of Death and paintings displaying the Dead and the Death to the Black Death in 1348, which devastated social life in Tuscany and other regions of Europe. When looking at these frescoes representing the Triumph of Death there is no doubt that medieval people felt death to be a drama. The plague may have given reason to personify death in its most dramatic nature, but this was not the case for having personified death in the shape of a woman armed with scythe and in the most vivid expression.

As the standard of living in late medieval society had increased and people became more attached to the pleasures of life, death assumed a new meaning and importance in their daily lives. In spite of a booming economy in the cities of medieval Italy, social disparity increased and found vent in frequent social unrest, brawls and revolts. The poor got

poorer when the wealthy accumulated their earthly goods.[3] These great social contrasts and the instability of the Church made people lose spiritual balance and change their views about death. People who enjoyed life, no longer feared God, Last Judgement, afterlife and hell, but they really feared death. Death ended all their earthly pleasures. Unlike the wealthy the very poor desired arduously to die as they did not cherish any hope of recovery from their wretched state. They did not plead to God for help when hunger, sickness and old age made them suffer beyond human endurance, but implored death to relieve them of their afflictions and suffering.

The Church had not much to offer either before or after the Great Schism (1378-1417) and people's trust in religion faded. In this material, profane world where spiritual values underwent deep crises the individuals turned to worldly things. The Church, well aware of its position of power, had to find the clue to win back the faithful. By allowing the Dominicans and Franciscans to preach in public squares and churches again the clergy found a way and means to attract the masses. Grandiose monumental art works sponsored by wealthy lay-people like the merchants helped the churchmen to convince people by making them protagonists inducing them to accept the lessons they had to teach.

The monks clung to the ascetic vision of the hermitic existence to exorcise the pleasures of life and intensify the awareness of people's guilt in order to remind them of their individual deaths. Death itself became a state of penance to go through to reach the afterlife and salvation by further purgation of their sins. This way the world of the dead had been closely related to the world of the living, as it had never been before. Thus, cemeteries and tombs were located not outside the city, but in the churchyards.

The legend of the Encounter between the Three Living and the Three Dead as shown in the Triumph of Pisa, with the figures of the hermits and the admonishing monk makes clear which role the ascetics played in the busy Italian cities. They held a counter-position against the material values of the world. In this fresco the monk acts as a mediator between the Three Living and Three Dead. He came down from the mountain to show a scroll with the following verse: 'What we are you will become'. That is his

admonishment to the noble hunters, who have caught sight of the three lying corpses in putrefaction. In their faces there is the terrible fear that the people of the fourteenth century must have felt when faced with death. Artists, writers and churchman painted, composed and preached stories about the dead and death, in order to put across the message to the onlooker and the reader. All these messages differ in expression and show a variety of solutions.

R. Kuhns inquires about the relationship between the texts of writers and the images of painters can be read in his essay *The Writer as Painter* which is part of H. Belting's and D. Blume's *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit*. He writes:

"Trecento studies of texts and images have examined the ways in which texts underly and give structure to images...Far less attention has been given to the ways in which texts relied upon, and followed the structures of paintings...I believe the organization, content, and interpretative strategies of a text were influenced by contemporary painting and painters."

As an example he draws our attention to the *Decameron*, in which the characters are the painters Giotto, Buffalmacco,[4] Bruno, Calandrino and others who cannot be identified. He points out Boccaccio's painterly characters and the impressions that are thought to be represented as 'Gesamtkunstwerk' where totality is achieved by calling upon language, scene, music, dance. Each of Boccaccio's ten days is seen as one act in a larger unfolding drama.[5]

R. Kuhns mentions the opinion of H. Belting, who accepts the attribution to Buffalmacco on the bases that in the *Decameron*, this painter brings into sharp focus the setting of the tales and one of their painterly sources. He also accepts the current dating, c.1336 which places the Triumph before the tremendous plague in 1348 and before the writing of the *Decameron*. H. Belting states: "The subject (The Triumph of Death at the Camposanto) can be described as the power of death to dash all earthly hopes."

In reply R. Kuhns writes: "I would say, the subject of the *Decameron* can be described as the power of art to overcome death, for the book itself exhibits that thesis over and over

again...." And he adds: "I draw attention to but one theme in the fresco, which, as I will argue, contains a vision of felicity in the midst of death's ravages."

He points out the two ways of interpreting the Triumph of Death: firstly, as Belting does, and secondly, as derived from the *Decameron*. So he ends the paragraph by saying: "I am suggesting that fresco and book interinanimate one another."

R. Kuhns's way in exposing the derivation of Boccaccio's text from Buffalmacco's painting is further analyzed step-by-step, giving different elements such as the ten figures appearing in both artworks.

P. Binski questions M. Meiss's view in *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (1951), by pointing out that the Black Death occurred almost everywhere in Europe and that the macabre existed before this catastrophic social disaster. He sees M. Meiss's view as derived from the Holocaust which ravished the life of the Jews as the Black Death did in Tuscany, as suggested by H. van Os.[6]

L. Bellosi's *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* changed not only the approach to Buffalmacco's masterwork, but the points of view in understanding the art of the Trecento. L. Bellosi dedicated his critical essay to R. Longhi, for whom he has great consideration as other art historians do. R. Longhi, whose great ability was in being able to immediately identify the character and the implications of different natures in artwork, took a different view in the approach of the Triumph of Death. L. Bellosi points out, R. Longhi was the first to express the opinion that this masterwork should be attributed to a Bolognese master, Vitale da Bologna,[7] who in Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptures and Architects* was only mentioned by chance in other descriptions of artist's lives and was for this reason not widely known.[8]

Lately, Bellosi's studies and those of other art historians were dealt by Maria Laura Testi Cristiani, who published essays in *Critica D'Arte* (1988, 1991, 1995).[9] She summarises the two main questions. The first being: Is Buffalmacco the painter of the grandiose

fresco of the triumph or only partly? The second: Was the work accomplished before or after the *Decameron*? Questions concerning the dispute on this grandiose artwork, need still to be answered. The art work being part of an extensive pictorial program, resulting in a series of frescoes, raises further questions. The enterprise, to carry out the artistic program on such a large scale in a short term period, might have requested more than one artist at work. M. L. T. Cristiani holds the opinion that the dating of the artwork has to be reconsidered on the bases of Buffalmacco's uncertain date of death between 1341-1348 and the records of the commissioning party, probably Simone Saltarelli (1262-1342) who held the archbishopric between 1329 and 1340.[10] According to her the artwork may have been executed by at least two masters and workshops. This is retraceable in the sketches of the sinopias and the different modes of execution visible in the colours of the remaining frescoes.[11]

After having given a short overview of opinions concerning the masterwork at Pisa I would like to describe the famous triumph, in order to understand the complexity of ideas underlying the structure and artistic expression. I'll proceed on the guideline of M. L. T. Cristiani's essay *Percorsi e Tempi della Visione nel 'Trionfo della Morte'* (Itineraries and Time of Vision in the 'Triumph of Death').[12] The visitor approaching the artwork (14, 97 m x 5, 65 m), fig.20 will soon realize that the extension of the pictorial surface does not permit him/her to grasp the represented scenes in one single glance. Buffalmacco, the artist, who drew the main outlines of the composition, was well aware that a fresco of such a great dimension can not be fully seen from one single point of view, as this exceeds the human capacity of sight. For this reason he did not think about a single viewpoint from where to look at the whole fresco, but imagined the visitor moving alongside the wall in order to contemplate the narrative painting from a certain distance. In fact, the Triumph in the Camposanto is not the only painting of great dimension. In the same place, on the other remaining wall surfaces frescoes with the following themes are shown: on the southern wall the Last Judgement (8,60 m x 6 m) with Hell (7 m x 6 m), the Legends of the Anchorites (15,65 m x 6,10 m) fig.21, on the eastern wall the Resurrection (3,14 m x 2,50 m), the Ascension (5,40 m x 3,90 m) and the Incredulity of Saint Thomas (2 m x 1,27 m). The entire paintings on the walls at the Camposanto can be

regarded as a vast pictorial program in which the themes are coming from the same basic idea. The proposed themes follow the cyclical order of Christian doctrine. Pictures relate to each other and follow a chronological order. Depicting the frailty of life, triumphal death, the meditation of the hermits, the torments of Hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the apparition of Jesus after death to Saint Thomas corresponds to the exempla of the mendicant orders. The entire sequence of events can be considered equivalent to sermons. These themes express the Church's intent finalized to the basic idea of saving humanity from eternal death. The artistic program at Pisa summarizes people's lives in face of death according to the political situation the Church was in.[13] By employing the universal theme of death and stressing the frailty of human life the archbishop of Pisa and his advisors wanted to influence the burgers of Pisa inducing them to have penitential thoughts and make them renounce the chivalrous ideals of court life they clung to more than to religion and morals. It stood in the artist's task to propose a solution for the divergence between lay ideals and clerical opinions. To solve this problem the artist found a variety of iconographic figures and created a pictorial language that could be understood by the illiterate and please the educated. He made use of the conceptual idea of the contrast which is commonly retraceable in many cultures and basic for the christianization of Europe during the Middle Ages. The fundamental contrast in the evaluation of good and evil is a useful means to involve the onlooker emotionally and lead him through the various stages of the Christian salvation doctrine. The contrast becomes the leitmotif structuring a series of events. Scenes change vividly and systematically. The dead are in contrast with the living, the high dignitaries of the Church and the nobles stay in contrast with the poor beggars, the devils with the angels and so forth. In these suddenly changing scenes, certain figures perform the role of guiding the eyes to the next event. Just as actors have their role in the dramatic representation, the figures of Buffalmacco move vividly within space and time. M. L. T. Cristiani has envisaged the representation as unfolding acts which are opened by a couple of figures.[14] The layout of the varying scenes is organized by means of geometric proportions. There is an evident division consisting of two squares forming a rectangle, a smaller rectangle having been added to the latter one. The two rectangles relate to each other with the proportions of the Euclidian formula. The two squares resulting from the central axis of

the big rectangle narrate the Encounter and the Triumph. The small rectangle shows the Garden of Delight. On the top of the mountain there is the entrance to hell. On the left, i.e. on the right of the conic mountain, two black-coloured devils throw the damned souls upside down into the flames of the crater pit. This scene recalls Dante's Hell in the *Divine Comedy*.[15] On the right side of the central axis the terrible event of the Triumph of Death takes place. The scene opens with a couple of Genii holding a scroll with the inscription:[16]

Ischermo di savere e di ricchezza,

Di nobilitate ancora e di prodezza,

Vale niente a i colpi di costei....[17]

Knowledge and wealth

Nobility and valour

Means nothing to the ravages of death...

Below, a most terrifying scene can be observed. A heap of dead bodies lies on the ground. Among them high dignitaries of the Church, men of worldly power, but also people coming from the lower strata of society can be identified. A noblewoman, a nun, a monk, a physician are evidenced by their attires or attributes. Black-winged devils and a few angels grasp the souls, fig.22 coming out from their mouths. Above them a most sinister appearance in shape of a woman armed with scythe hovers in the air. She is only in part humanlike. She has claws-like feet and wings on her shoulder like a vampire. A group of beggars can be seen invoking and imploring the all destructive being. The five, fig.23 call death with their outstretched arms and one holds a scroll bearing their ardent plea:

Dacche prosperitade ci ha lasciati, / O morte, medicina d'ogni pena, / Deh vieni a darne omai l'ultima cena!
Since prosperity has left us, / Oh death, balm to all pains / Come to give us the last supper!

But the flying monster-like woman takes no notice of the wretched group and is already heading to a wonderful orange grove, where a group of nobles are enjoying themselves, fig.24. This recalls Boccaccio's brigade in the Villa at Fiesole which took refuge from the outburst of the plague in Florence. The group of three men and seven women are enjoying themselves with music and conversation. Truly, they spend their time in a most pleasant manner and are unaware of the impending destiny which is announced by the two Genii hovering over them. They hold their arms down in sign of a bad omen and with this gesture they recall the death messengers of antiquity.[18] It's left to the onlooker's imagination to ascertain what will become of this group taking great delight in this heavenly garden. Above this marvellous spot up in the air a war-like bustle between angels and devils is going on. Angels are on the way to save souls, whereas devils grasp their victims and carry them to the crater-pit.

But there is no end to the wonderful things to see in this grandiose fresco!

When returning to the initial point of description at the foot of the mountain one can see ten nobles on their way to hunt, fig.25. Suddenly the well-bred horses rear back. What a horrific scene! Three corpses in putrefaction lie in coffins and make the hunters shudder with shock and fear. One hunter points to the gruesome site, another holds his nose to avoid the nauseating stench coming from the coffins, a lady sitting on her white horse becomes thoughtful and aware of what she will be in future. To save the elegantly-clad hunters and the onlooker from further discomfort, a monk from the mountain intercedes with his admonishment written on a scroll.[19] Above this scenario filled with dismay the peaceful life of the hermits and animals goes on. One is milking a doe, another reading a book and still another is meditating under a tree. In their vicinity a rabbit, a deer and a falcon inhabit the mountainous region. Sparse vegetation on this rocky landscape suggest a feeling of peacefulness and seclusion. There is nothing of the precarious and anxious atmosphere displayed at the foot of the mountain.

When looking at these congenial and well-composed fresco one can only think of an artist who was most proficient in painting themes and combining various symbolic

meanings in one single representation. Buonamico Buffalmacco, the artist to whom the masterpiece is attributed, has been described as being a colourful character.[20] It might be for this reason that he was so proficient in interpreting the facetted life of people's existence in comedy-like scenes. The main scene, the Triumph of Death evolves in the central section in the foreground. The other two scenarios of the Encounter and the Garden of Delight take place in recessed spaces. According to the artistic developments in representing space, three-dimensionality is evidenced by the coffins containing the rotting corpses, the path descending from the mountain, the volumetric involucres of the hermitage, the steeply falling cliffs of the mountain in combination with the alternating light of the sky, filled with flying beings and the earthly place of the hunters, beggars, dead, gentlemen and ladies. The Triumph of Death in the central section is emphasized by the recessed lateral scenarios of the Encounter and the Delighted Garden. Flowers and plants can be seen under the hooves of the hunter's horses. A meadow just like a finely-woven tapestry with flowers and plants extends in front of the gaily brigade.

Research into the Triumph of Death at Pisa has evinced new points for interpreting and understanding the other Triumph of Death frescoes. The fresco in the Benedictine monastery at Subiaco (1330-1368), just like the fresco in the Dominican church at Bozen (c.1330-45), in the church of San Francesco at Lucignano (c.1380) and in Santa Croce (c.1344-1345) show similarities of structure and meaning. They closely resemble Buffalmacco's iconographic expression but they differ in scale and artistic expression. All these frescoes have a ternary division of the various scenes displayed in an episodic way, as at Pisa and in Lorenzetti's panel of the Christian Allegory of Redemption (c.1330-1335) at Siena. In these representations, death occurs as usual in the central section of the painting and is personified in shape of a skeleton or a black-shrouded fury galloping on a horse, just like a demoniac being. On both sides of the central theme contrasting examples such as the poor and the rich, the evil and the good, paradise and hell can be found.

Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Christian Allegory of Humankind, Museum of Fine Art, Siena

According to Christian doctrine, Christ accepted the sacrifice on the cross to fulfil His mission of saving humanity from eternal death. Ambrogio Lorenzetti,[21] the artist of the Christian Allegory of Humankind (1330-1335), fig.26 combined this event with the triumphal death. Unlike the triumphs in frescoes this episode is painted on a small wooden panel measuring 57,5 x 118,5 cm. Considering the panel's rectangular form and dimension one can presume that it belonged to an altarpiece or a cassone (chest). Chiara Frugoni assumes that the panel comes from a cassone commonly used in the Italian households of the signori.[22] Generally the cassoni were decorated with motifs taken from classical, romance, or biblical tales - but rarely the content of the painting was purely religious or highly dramatic like the one in question. For this reason it is improbable that Lorenzetti's panel stems from a cassone. But was it than a predella of an altarpiece? Renate Colella,[23] who studied the panel thoroughly, also excluded this hypothesis, as she retains the pictorial program too ambitious for such a purpose.[24] Like in the triumph at Pisa there are scrolls, but they are empty. Have they vanished because of bad care? R. Colella suggests that the scrolls had never contained any inscriptions. And this is indeed puzzling! Why should an artist like A. Lorenzetti decide to paint scrolls without inscriptions? Are these empty scrolls symbolic forms depicted on purpose of reminding the onlooker of morals to follow?[25]

Indeed, for such a small-sized panel the pictorial program is far too complex!

By considering all open questions it might rather be an initial sketch of an extensive fresco. A. Lorenzetti most renowned for the frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico, the *Allegory of the Good and the Bad Government*, fig.27 (1338-1339)[26] probably had been commissioned by one of Siena's ecclesiastical institutions to paint frescoes which interpreted the theme of death in the vision of the Christian doctrine. For one reason or another this pictorial program had disappeared or had never been realized. In his *Commentaries* Lorenzo Ghiberti praises A. Lorenzetti as a great master, most of all because of the cycles he painted in the Sienese monasteries of Saint Francis, Saint

Augustine and on the façade of the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. The latter is partly preserved. Strangely enough L. Ghiberti hardly mentions the well-known *Allegory of the Good and Bad Government*, and only in a few words. However, he appreciates Lorenzetti's intellectual approach to painting most evident in the novelty of perspective and classical perception. In the *Allegory of the Good and Bad Government* the townscape is placed against a panoramic landscape populated with credible personages representing three-dimensionality of a real world, just as it is described in the novellas of Francesco Sacchetti.[27] Likewise in the panel of the Christian Allegory of Humankind the events take place in a well-represented landscape which is that of Siena's surroundings.[28] In 1902, A. Pératé describing the painting retained that it represented a shortened version of the triumph at Pisa. But this is not the case when examining the panel. Though being the leitmotif in the painting, the apparition of death is subordinated to the Christian doctrine. The story of death begins after the fall of the first humans in paradise and persists until the Resurrection of all souls at the Last Judgement. With the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, death and earthly afflictions came into the human lives. To save humanity from despair and eternal death, God took on human shape and was subjected himself to the most humiliating kind of death. The latter event is the main idea which is expressed in the small panel. The evolving history of all humans is dramatically over-shadowed by the condition of death, but focuses on the redemption of humankind through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.[29] The panel gives an explanation for the reason of death in each individual life and emphasizes the event as a necessary phenomenon to turn down human pride. And there is an analogy of this to be found in St. Francis 'Laudate'.

Laudato si', mi Signore, per sora nostra Morte corporale
da la quale nullo omo vivente po' scampare.
Guai a quelli che morrano ne le peccata mortali!
Beati quelli che troverà ne le tue santissime voluntati,
ca la morte seconda no li farà male.
Laudate e benedicite mi Signore e rengraziate,
e servitelo cun grande umilitate.[30]

Praise my Lord for our sister Death
from which no living man can escape.

Doomed are those who die with mortal sins!
Blessed are those who obeyed God's holy will,
death will not harm when reaching them.
Praise and laud my Lord and thank
and serve him with great humility.

In this vision death takes an important role in God's design of the world and creation of nature. Being dominant in the scenario, it appears in the panel in a monster-like, diabolic shape resembling to a flying beast.[31] Black-coloured and bat-like it hovers above the crucified Christ, raises its threatening scythe and leaves no doubts about its surprising actions. Unfortunately the deteriorated state of the painting does not allow for identification of all painted details of this very early personification. But the whole impression is that of a supernatural being. In the Greek-classical and Christian world divine, supernatural beings and spirits have wings as attributes.[32] The black-flying being which is painted against the blue sky belongs to the divine sphere and its power to put an end to human life is most visible on earth. In the painting Lorenzetti clearly defines the two spheres of the earthly and the divine by the magnificent horizon running up and down the Sienese clay-hills. The blue sky contrasting with the hilly region and its settlements is a well-depicted, realistic landscape in which the events of the Christian salvation doctrine take place.

On the left, above up in the sky God forbids Adam and Eve to eat from the 'Tree of Knowledge.' The following scenes represent their sinful behaviour, their shame and the final expulsion from paradise. A red-coloured angel chases them out. Once on earth, Adam and Eve experience daily hardship and death. The latter hovers menacingly in the air with its deadly weapon, the scythe signifying that all descendants of the first humans are subject to death. God's immediate punishment can be seen in the foreground where Cain has murdered Abel. In the following scene, just right in the centre there is the apex of Lorenzetti's dramatic narrative. Here, death is depicted as a real entity which does not hesitate to menace the life of Jesus and that of the living at any time. The following verses apply to this new image of death:

Io paio secca scorza,	I appear in dry shape
corpo squallido e macro	with squalid and thin body
Horrendo e simulacro	Horrific and vague
Spaventoso	Frightening
Ma pur giammai riposo,	I never rest
Scorrendo il stato umano	Passing over the humans
Con questa falce in mano	With this scythe in my hand
Aspra e adonca	Blunt and brusque
Da me ciascun si tronca,	In front of me everyone gets shocked
Principi e gran signori	Princes and great lords
monarchi e imperatori	Monarchs and emperors
Ogni persona.[33]	Any person.

The dramatic event of death is emphasised by the heap of corpses of many men and women lying on the ground at the foot of the cross symbolizing the triumph of death over all human beings and recalling the divine punishment of the first human couple Adam and Eve according to the Christian view of death. Death is seen as penance for breaking the divine law. It is the very expression of the period conceptually defining the idea of purgatory. Three figures, a hermit on the left of the cross and two others in the foreground are holding scrolls. Another scroll is being held by a dead person lying under the cross. The hermit standing under the cross clearly points his forefinger to a certain spot on the scroll. He probably is the hermit who appears in the Encounter. From his gesture one can deduct that he admonishes the living to get prepared for the hour of death. His scroll is bigger than the others in this painting. Probably it was supposed to contain the most significant message of the panel.[34] However, also the other scrolls are meant to contain inscriptions in moralistic verse. On the right side of the cross are the living: two aged people[35] looking with great hope to the crucified Christ, three ladies staring at the corpses on the ground with a horrified look and two lords in conversation, one holding his hawk. The latter two seem to be terribly shaken by the vision of so many corpses.[36] The intended contrast between the poor and the rich is emphasized in the panel by another hermit and a worldly-clad man in the foreground holding scrolls and facing each other. These two figures can be interpreted as virtue and vice. The worldly-clad man

presses his money purse close to his body and reminds one of Giotto's allegories, in the Arena chapel[37] and in lower Basilica of Assisi. Behind the central dramatic scenario a monumental palace with two impressive towers bearing crenels, a loggia and gothic Sienese windows overlooks the vineyard from the hill it is built on. The palace as well as the well-clad nobles in the foreground symbolize earthly wealth and power. Whereas the scene in the right shows the Last Judgement. The resurrected Christ clad in a red tunica is set within the mandorla surrounded by six angels. Two of them sound the horns to announce the end of times. Below this there are two angels holding the empty cross, i.e the symbol of Christ's resurrection and salvation of humankind. Mary and John, the apostle, are kneeling and praying on each side with their eyes directed to God. In the Christian faith they are considered intercessors between the humans and God. In their holy state their prayers help humanity in facing God's judgement. Below this heavenly scene there are the blessed clad in white and looking up to heaven. An angel guides them to paradise. Most interesting proves to be the fact that in this Last Judgement scene hell is dealt with in a definitely marginal way and relegated in the outmost corner of the picture, thus evincing the spiritual rescue from sin and death through the atonement of Jesus.

Lorenzetti's panel in Siena can be seen as the first representation of death in which death is integrated into the Christian salvation doctrine.

The Triumph of Death in Saint John Chapel, Dominican Church, Bozen

The Triumph of Death fresco (5 m x 2,20 m) in the Saint John chapel, annexed to the Dominican church, Bozen displays an interesting iconography, fig.1. The triumph is depicted below the cycle of Saint John the Evangelist and occupies the central bay on the eastern wall of the chapel. Compared to other representations it is twice the size of the others and independent from the fresco cycle of Saint John the Evangelist just above. In spite of this, the riding death with the beggars is related to the upper scenes recalling the *Revelation* of Saint John.[38] Before giving a detailed description of this fresco, I would like to briefly describe the location of the other cycles represented in the chapel in order to understand its artistic context.

The following bay contains the cycle of Saint Nicolas. The saint's death is shown in the same tier of the triumph. On the opposite western wall the frescoes display another cycle, the Life and Death of Saint John the Baptist. Next, in the central bay and in the following the Life of the Virgin Mary is narrated. This cycle, just like the others of the saints, ends with the representation of the Death of the Virgin. It is the most extensive cycle in the chapel and progresses in the upper part on the smaller portion of the northern wall. On the northern wall, just below the frescoes of the Virgin is a single representation of the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew. In the opposite direction on the southern wall a central Gothic lancet-window casts light into the longitudinal room of the chapel. In the remaining surface of the wall, there are the frescoes of Saint Catharine and another unidentifiable saint on both window-sides. Below the window, just above the location of the altar, there are the Ecce Homo, the mother Mary, Saint John and kneeling donors.[39] The ceiling and the walls are divided by bays forming a cross-vaulting. All twelve fields of the cross-vault display decorations in roundels on a star-covered ground. The vaulting over the main altar shows the four symbols of the Evangelists, the lion for Saint Mark, the bull for Saint Luke, the eagle for Saint John and the winged angel for Saint Matthew. The roundels of the central vault section bear the busts of the Fathers of the Church Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint Jeremiah and Saint Gregory the Great. In the remaining roundels of the most northern section of the vault the four Jewish prophets Ezekiel, Jerome, Daniel and Isaiah can be seen, who can be distinguished by means of scrolls they hold.[40]

A painted curtain running above the paving around all four walls borders these pictorial cycles. It serves as the basic decoration for the cycles and fulfils the same function as the grisaille-frescoes in the Arena chapel. The curtain together with the painted framework dividing the various scenes increases the impression of stylistic unity. All the events of the various stories evolve in the manner of the narrative painting set in single framed fields, most characteristic of Giotto and his followers. The frames consist of fictive marble stripes enclosing other framings in varying colours. When looking at the stage-like scenes displaying places and events such as the Flight to Egypt, the Annunciation

and the Presentation of Mary in the Temple one can only think about Giotto's frescoes in the Arena chapel. Because of this and other reasons art historians think the whole decoration of the chapel is the work of masters following Giotto's artistic concept and innovations. These masters of the Saint John chapel are still unknown and called after the cycles or single representations they have painted. N. Rasmo identifies the work as Giottesque in structure and narrative content.[41] In the artistic quality of the various frescoes he identifies different masters and calls them the Master of the Triumph of Death, the Master of the Legend of Saint Nicolas, the Master of Saint John the Baptist and the Master of the Life of the Virgin Mary. The scenes of the various cycles can be read horizontally and proceeding downwards along the three tiers. Not all events are ordered chronologically. Generally speaking, the cycles end with the representation of the death of the single saints and the Virgin. That life ends with death is further emphasized by the representation of the Triumph of Death, which is twice the size of the other scenes. Intuitively, when entering the narrow high-walled chapel, one obtains the impression of a secluded and austere room, which is most suitable for a funeral chapel. From the records of the Dominican Order one comes to know that the sponsoring party were a family of Florentine bankers named Bambarossi, who gained great fortunes and special titles (1342) through services they provided for the County of the Tyrol. The name of the chapel and the cycles are dedicated to Giovannino (John) and Nicolò (Nicola) de Bambarossi. After Giovannino's death in 1324, Nicolò, the son of Giovannino, took over the banking business. It is most likely that Nicolò decided to change the decoration in the chapel and commissioned a workshop outside the province. The Florentines chose to employ Italian masters rather than give the commission to local masters, who clung to the Linear Gothic-Romanesque style.[42] They were more familiar with the Giottesque style, as this was the new artistic mode of Italian painting. Nicolò also changed the Florentine name to the German name Botsch[43] after having received the aristocratic title and the position as tax collector from the County of the Tyrol.[44]

Roberto Salvini[45] and Nicolò Rasmo,[46] who published monographic works about the chapel noticed the high expressive quality of the Triumph of Death. Both R. Salvini in analysing the style and subsequently also N. Rasmo after studying the historical

background agreed that the author of these frescoes must be coming from the workshop of Vitale da Bologna,[47] to whom R. Longhi once had assigned the Triumph of Death at Pisa. Additionally N. Rasmo translated the numerous Latin inscriptions appearing on banderols. He dated the paintings in the first part of the fourteenth century, between 1330-1340, shortly before the earthquake and the plagues of 1342 and of 1348. This dating of the Triumph of Death at Bozen just like for that at Pisa (1336) by Luciano Bellosi and of the Lorenzetti's panel by Chiara Frugoni (1330-1336) confirms once more that the iconographic representation of the death does not directly depend on calamities, as many historians thought.

In the fresco, death appears in an emaciated dried-up body. More than a skeleton, it looks like a winged mummy just returned to life galloping on a meagre horse with its hair torn by the wind. For its hunt it uses bow and arrow; a scythe hangs from its waist. In front of death, a group of desperate knights flees toward a burning castle. Their flight seems to be in vain. The horses are terribly shocked by the ghostlike hunter and throw their heads into the air. Two of the young riders lie dead, facedown on the backs of their horses, the other three are terrified, fig.28. They turn their heads towards the advancing apocalyptic apparition lifting their arms against death. The horse's and the rider's eyes express shock and fear. They are aware that death will not spare their lives. Under the hooves of the fleeing horses a banderol with an inscription comments the scene. Below, in a badly damaged part of the fresco there is a group of escaping people. In the middle section, under the scythe hanging from death's waistline lies a heap of corpses belonging to all strata of society. High dignitaries of the Church like a bishop can be distinguished. Behind death, two infirm, old people a woman with a hooked nose and a man in dark-red attire call on the frightful figure, begging her to take their lives and freeing them from a wretched life with all its pain. But in vain! Death does not care about them and hunts the noble young knights. In the left corner, over the beggers a celestial scene takes place. Saint Peter stands in the doorway of paradise which is enclosed behind a crenellated wall. He gently receives the souls of the saved, fig.29. Beside the saint, angels appear carrying and weighing human souls and pondering their good and evil deeds. One little angel picks up a kneeling and praying soul from the scale pan, another is holding the balance

on which a devil sits trying to influence the trial, a third one is giving instructions and introduces them to paradise. A fourth angel takes a soul to Saint Peter. Banderols with Latin inscriptions flutter from one scale of the balance and out of the doorway. Below this lively, bustling and paradisiacal scenario two devils carry damned souls on their back to hell. These, pitch-black coloured figures have bird-claws like harpies and horned heads.

The above-described iconographic scenery in triumphal death is most interesting because of the many Latin inscriptions, which comment the various events. Artistically they complete the artwork by creating visual links among the scenes. From the right to the left, the inscription on the banderol, which accompanies the scene of the riders, reads as follows:

(F)orma genus mores sapiencia res honores (ce)rte ruine (sub)ita. Ola mane(b)u(n)t quia dicit in proverbiis non aquieset cuiusqua precibus nec susipiet pro redēpcioē (b)ona (pl)urima.[48]

The first part of the Latin inscription signifies that beauty of the body, noble birth, virtue, wisdom, wealth and honours will not save humans from death and recalls Solomom's proverb, VI, verse 35:

Nec acquiescet cuiusquam precibus ne suscipiet pro redemptione bona plurima / Death will not accept a prize to spare life, even you offer a great deal!

The scroll over the mass of dead people is no longer legible. However, a floating scroll, hanging on the arm of death, contains the following message:

Ro carnis dilliciis mūdique diviciis sic vos premiabo scorpiones ac serpents vermes quoque (mor)dētes post hanc vita vobis dabo (qv)ia dicit(t in ec)clesiastico u morit hō heredi(tabi)t serpentes bestias et vermes / For earthly pleasures and wealth, I will reward you after your earthly life by throwing you in front of scorpions, snakes and biting worms.

These inscriptions recalling the Judaeo-Christian tradition follows the idea that today's king is tomorrow's corpse. (Jesus Sirach *Ecclesiasticus*, chapter 10, verse 11):

("Ut moritur homo) cum enim morietur homo, hereditabit serpentes, et bestias, et vermes" / "For when a man dies he shall inherit creeping things, beasts and worms"

The scroll rising from the entrance of paradise contains this inscription:

Olve iubente deo terra(r) pe. ...cit.. as. (Vi) facis ut pateant celestia boene beatis qvia (a)it iohes in apocalipsi (non) intrabit in illam aliquit coinquinatum et faciens abominacionem et medacium.

The beginning of the first part of the inscription, which is no longer legible, seems to refer to the entrance of the good souls into paradise. Next to it, there is a quotation from a passage of the 27th verse of Chapter 21 of the Apocalypse:

Non intrabit in eam aliquod coinquinatum aut abominationem faciens, et mendacium / Nothing impure will enter the same, neither him who practises horror and lies.

On the scales of a balance appear two scrolls. The one on the left reads as follows:

O raptor dives nō ōī tenpore vives fac bene dū vi(vis) post mortem vivere si vis, completed and omitted of errors it means: O raptor dives / non omni tempore vives / facbene dum vivis / post mortem vivere si vis.

The right scroll states the following:

Quia dicit in Daniele ascensus es in statera et inventus es minus habens.

It refers to the passage in the Book of Daniel, Chapter 5, verses 26, 27, where Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall for the King Belshazar informing the king that he will be murdered on the following night. Written on the wall by an invisible hand the text states:

Appensus es in statera et inventus es minus habens. / You have been weighed in the scales and have been found wanting.[49]

In the ternary composition, the fluttering banners are most evident. Unlike the scrolls with Tuscan inscriptions at Pisa and Santa Croce these banners contain Latin inscriptions. Some figures, such as the poor, show similarity to Orcagna's figures, fig.33. So does also the scene with the burning, falling walls of a castle which is very similar to one of

Orcagna's scenes in the framework of his huge Santa Croce cycle. The Triumph of Death in the chapel of Saint John, Dominican church, at Bozen inspired other artists from the Tyrol. There are three other triumphs bearing very similar iconography. The one on the outside walls of the church Maria Trost, Meran bears Giottesque character just like that at Bozen. The other two, which belong to the decorations of chapels in castles, were painted by an artist adherent to the regional Linear Gothic style. One is in the chapel of Castle Karneid (c.1380), Bozen, fig.30 the other in the former chapel of Castle Aufenstein, Matrei at Brenner, fig.31. In the latter one the artist took over the iconographic program of Saint John's chapel in a reduced form and changed some figures. Instead of the flying angels there are flying devils. All figures look burlesque and ironic in expression and betray the Nordic macabre spirit. Because of the early date of its origin (c.1330)[50] and being done half fresco and half secco this painting proves to be of very particular interest for the research in other Italian triumphs.[51]

Orcagna's Triumph of Death, Santa Croce, Florence

The restoration program completed in 1911 at Santa Croce revealed a highly interesting discovery for the history of painting in Tuscany. Fragments of Orcagna's Triumph of Death were found behind the fifth altar. Later, in 1942 the Last Judgement and Hell were found behind the fourth altar. Giorgio Vasari's description of Orcagna's work in *The Lives of the most Excellent Painters, Sculptures and Architects* in Santa Croce corresponded to these frescoes:

...se ne tornò Andrea a Fiorenza, dove nel mezzo della chiesa di Santa Croce a man destra, in una grandissima facciata, dipinse a fresco le medesime cose che dipinse nel Camposanto di Pisa in tre quadri simili, eccetto però la storia dove San Macario mostra a' tre la miseria umana e la vita de'romiti che servono a Dio in su quel monte.[52]

...and he returned to Florence, where, in the middle of the church of Santa Croce, on a very great wall on the right, he painted in fresco the same subjects that he painted in the Campo Santo of Pisa, in three similar pictures, excepting, however, the scene where Saint Macarius is showing to three Kings the misery of man, and the life of the hermits who are serving God on that mountain.[53]

In spite of the differing artistic expressions of the two artworks at Pisa and Santa Croce, Vasari ascribes both of them to Orcagna. They bear high artistic expression and the same iconography, except for some little variation regarding the scene of the Encounter and the Legends of the Anchorites. Giovanni Battista Gelli, a contemporary of Vasari, writes in *Vite d'artisti* (1549/55) that Orcagna painted at Santa Croce and also at Pisa in San Paulo a Ripa d'Arno and in the Camposanto. He specifies what Orcagna painted at Santa Croce, but not at Pisa.[54] Meanwhile art historians have progressed in the knowledge and circumstances of Orcagna's fragmented frescoes at Santa Croce, Buffalmacco's frescoes at Pisa and Vasari's description of the *Lives of the Artists*.[55] These studies inform about various interesting facts, but do not converge in the attribution of both artworks to the same artist. It may be helpful reconstructing the history of Orcagna's masterpiece starting from Vasari's commission at Santa Croce.

In 1575 the Franciscan monks of Santa Croce decided to reorganize the inside of the church and called G. Vasari to undertake its renovation. This was the crucial moment for Orcagna's frescoes. The newly erected altars and other decorations corresponding to the aesthetic taste of the late Renaissance covered Orcagna's masterpiece up to the twentieth century. The layer with Orcagna's frescoes reappeared by pure chance in 1911. In 1958 Dino Dini took care of the remaining parts. He documented the site, took down the fragments and restored them. D. Dini's careful work gives information about the dimensions of Orcagna's frescoes and they are not less impressing than those at Pisa in the Camposanto. The monumental artwork in the lateral nave of Santa Croce composed by three themes, the Triumph of Death, the Last Judgement and Hell was one of Orcagna's early works.[56] A reconstruction by Umberto Baldini, fig.32 shows the organization of Orcagna's artwork measuring 18 m x 7,2 m including the framework, which is of great size and artistic expression. The vertical and horizontal frames measure respectively 0,9 m and 1,0 m in width.[57]

The various themes were divided by two mighty twisted columns rising from the lower to the upper part of the frames, giving to the artist the opportunity to integrate the narrative paintings in one basic compositional structure and artistic concept. The middle section

was twice the size of the side sections and displayed the Last Judgement, whereas the side sections showed the Triumph of Death and Hell. Orcagna imagined the framework and the spiral-columns as illusionary architectural elements introducing to the afterlife scenario. In the same place they possess a great ornamental effect giving importance to the represented events within the frame. The visitor to Santa Croce might have felt invited to look at the narrative paintings extending behind the painted columns telling about death and the afterlife. The helicoidally wound-up columns set on a base, ornamented by acanthus capitals and surmounted by impost-blocks show great plasticity and betray Orcagna's multiple artistic talent as painter, sculptor and architect. With the changing light/shadow effects the columns look real and appear as if carrying the long-extending upper frame, which reminds of an entablature of a temple.

The design of the frame is composed by an ornamental frieze-like band bearing vegetal, geometric motifs and single scenes relating to the various themes. Originally there were about eighteen of them. A dental-motif runs on the upper part of the frame. Just like a moulding of a frieze it has shadow effects; it is repeated on the lower part of the frame with an arch-motif. Some of the eighteen representations in star-shaped fields are painted over the impost-blocks of the columns creating a decorative linkage between the twisted columns and the frieze-like framework.

All this is of great artistic expression!

The two columns must have looked like a gateway to the afterlife, where the dimension of space and time depends from the good and bad deeds of the blessed and the sinners. The events in star-shaped fields predict the apocalyptic representations in the triptych-like artwork. Today only three of those representations can be seen: a solar eclipse, an earthquake[58] and the emptying of the cup referring to the *Revelation*.[59] The paintings showing the solar eclipse and the earthquake belong to the left part of the triumph. The earthquake is shown in the central section of the vertical framework and is taken in a bird's-eye view displaying the collapsing walls of a city during an earthquake. The walls of an octagonal baptistery, a campanile behind and a nave of a church lose their balance

and break down. A man escapes out of the baptistery's doorway; another lies smashed on the earth. The surrounding city-wall is shown with many cracks and the crenels falling down. Just in front of this disastrous event, a man in gigantic size, clad in a yellow tunica raises his arms in dismay inside the walls. The dark sky contrasts with the white collapsing walls and increases the dramatic effect. By seeing all this, one can only think that Orcagna himself had experienced a real earthquake. The other scene with the solar eclipse is shown far up in the corner and displays two men in a yellow and red tunica observing the darkening of the sun. The landscape has already vanished in a brown-coloured and desolate sky. The sun has lost its mighty light and dramatically changes the sky into the dark of the night. The men with the red tunica raises his arm to the eyes as a sign of observation and protection.

For the contemporary onlooker such scenes as the earthquake and the solar eclipse represent natural events, which occur from time to time in a certain geographic area. This was not the case in late medieval Christian society. Medieval people took it for a bad omen and imagined that earthquakes announced the coming of the Antichrist, which was supposed to bring disasters such as famine, war, death and the end of times. In the Holy Scripture earthquakes are reported before a major religious event took place. For instance, in Isaiah God's promise to free Jerusalem from its enemies is accompanied by thunder, earthquake, storm and outbreak of fire. Christ's death on the cross occurred when the sun darkened and an earthquake made the mountain of Golgotha tremble.[60] The Evangelists Matthew, Luke, Mark and John wrote about earthquakes and eclipses in their gospels. From the many biblical accounts the largest number of earthquakes are recorded in the *Book of Revelation.* All these natural phenomena were taken as warning key signs and portents of the closeness of the apocalypse, the end of times. In the late Middle Ages scholastic philosophers influenced by the Aristotelian natural philosophy, tried to find explanations for the many mirabilia of nature. Albertus Magnus, who was educated at the university of Padua, discussed earthquakes in *Book Three* of his *De meteoris* and noted:

… Vapours that were emitted from the earth during an earthquake were frequently laden with dust, causing the sun, moon and stars to appear bloody or blackened.[61]

Although this attempt of scientific investigation on purpose of knowing God's creation, everything in nature was subordinated to religion and many inexplicable phenomena in nature such as solar eclipses and earthquakes were taken for supernatural events over which only God had control. The Nominalists of the late scholastic period emphasized the idea of the omnipotent power of God with the imagination that there could be no fixed natural order, as the great Dominican Thomas Aquinas had argued. God was free to change what he wanted and when he wanted it. The Nominalist argument was most suitable for the unpredictable events of nature and religious disorders occurring in Italy throughout the fourteenth century. Florentines suffered many struggles and Tuscany, as other territories of the Italian peninsula, was one single battlefield between two factions, the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. In these difficult moments solar eclipses and earthquakes were seen as God's wrath spilling over humanity to remind people that their destiny lies in God's hand. Orcagna being part of this troubled society painted the earthquake and the solar eclipse in the spirit of the commissioning party, the Franciscan monks of Santa Croce. Most probably Orcagna had a chance to observe a solar eclipse and possibly experienced the earthquakes in 1333, 1339 and the outbreak of the plague in 1342. This was shortly before he painted the apocalyptic scenario of the Judgement on the inside walls of the lateral nave at Santa Croce in 1344-1345.[62]

What is left today of it are fragments, about one fifth of the original. In the lower corner of the Triumph the scene with the dead, the four beggars, and a small detail of claws belonging to the apocalyptic apparition of death can be seen. Over it there are a broken rectangular slab with a fragmentary inscription[63] and details of a flying being. In the far corner at the top, one can see a detail showing a part of a soul's body which is probably carried away by another flying being.

At Santa Croce the dead were well visible as they were represented only 3 m over the paving. These victims of death stir up the onlooker's deep emotion. The peaceful faces seem to direct prayers to God. Among the many, a young nun in her white robe, a cardinal with a red hat and a young woman with red hair and clothes can be identified. As at Pisa all social classes are represented. For this monumental fresco at Santa Croce,

Orcagna took Buffalmacco's Triumph for a reference.[64] In this case also death in shape of a supernatural being chooses to take the life of the young and rich rather than that of the aged and poor. Orcagna's beggars, four aged people, two blind men, a woman and a man on their crutches look up to the apocalyptic apparition of death with an endless yearning desire to be taken away. Unfortunately death is not anymore visible, fig.33. One of the blind desperately stretches his arm toward death. All of them collect their feeble energies in hope to receive the harvester's attention and implore with the following verses:[65]

Dacché prosperitade ci ha lasciati,
O morte, medicina d'ogni pena,
Deh vienci a dare ormai l'ultima cena.[66]

Since prosperity has left us
Oh death, balm of all pains
Come, to give us the last supper.[67]

Like the deadly apparition at Pisa, the death of Santa Croce ignores the wretched group applying its destructive forces elsewhere. The people's affliction means nothing to the arbitrary action of the ghostlike being. The Franciscan monks might have been pleased by Orcagna's beggars, showing deep intensity in the effort and struggle for being taken away by death. These poor are strained by spiritual grief and physical suffering! When medieval people looked at these poor they might have felt stimulated in making charitable acts. Jesus of Nazareth and his follower Saint Francis of Assisi had given good examples in assisting the sick and the poor in their many needs. Jesus healed the lame, the blind, the lepers and many others and Saint Francis moved among the poor and the lepers whom he assisted with great enthusiasm.[68] For Jesus just like for Saint Francis charitable deeds were a way to serve God. Saint Francis expressed this with the following words:

While I was in sin it seemed to me too bitter to look at lepers. But the Lord himself led me among them and I showed pity to them. And when I left them that which had seemed so bitter to me was turned into happiness of the body and soul.

As for his compassionate feeling for the lepers, Saint Francis provides the idea that only the sinner cannot bear the sight of the lepers. Orcagna's outcasts remind the people of the world's ephemeral character where good luck can change suddenly into sorrow and suffering. N. Rasmo, who analyzed the Triumph of Death at Bozen, saw the beggars as representative of a biblical prophecy written in the *Revelation* of Saint John: 'And in those days people will seek for death and will not find; they'll want to die but death will turn away.' This prophecy took shape in the figurative language of the Trecento paintings. The beggars with their desperate invocation and expressive gestures are not only embodying poverty and bad luck, but also represent the unfaithful whom God had punished. The sick, especially lepers were suspected to descend from unlawful and incestuous unions. A link between leprosy and sin is found in words of Richard of the Abbey of Saint Victor. According to this monk:

Fornicators, concubines, the incestuous, adulterers, the avaricious, usurers, false witnesses, perjurers, those likewise who...look upon a woman concupiscently...all, are judged to be leprous by the priests (who know and protect the law of God) and are separated from the company of the faithful, if not physically, nevertheless spiritually.[69]

Orcagna's beggars and dead show well-modelled bodies and faces. According to G. Kreytenberg the heads and the postures of the figures display very similar characteristics to those of Maso di Banco in the Bardi di Mangona chapel. By comparing the dreaming Constantine, fig.34 with Orcagna's dead he observed that they possess the same sculpture-like expression in postures and faces. The difference between Maso di Banco's figures and Orcagna's is revealed by the latter's variety of design. He designs his figures with varying postures, mimics and gestures expressing typical characters. The figures appear invigorated under the contrasting light effects modelling the bodies and compensating their heaviness. The light cast on the framework, columns and groups of figures articulating their movements greatly contributes to vividness of expression, just as in a dramatic play.[70] Twisted columns and framework deriving from the Classical/Romanesque tradition[71] are elaborated with a great sense of ornamental

design.[72] In Santa Croce Orcagna had found many inspiring models for his architectural illusionism, which is basic in his creation of the frescoes. When narrating the Life of Saint Francis in the Bardi chapel (1317/1320) and that of Saint John in the Peruzzi chapel (1310/1316)[73] Giotto used frames and columns for the setting of the various places and events. Like him Maso di Banco displayed the story of Saint Silvester (1340) in the chapel of the Bardi di Vernio within frames. And Bernardo Daddi similarly used a framework in the decoration of the Pulci chapel with the stories of Saint Laurence and Saint Stephen (1330). But it was Taddeo Gaddi, who inspired Orcagna more than others in the creation of the framework, twisted columns and representation of human figures.[74] Orcagna applied Gaddi's architectural illusionism and emphasized with the light/shadow effects the dramatic side of the event. More than others, Gaddi progressed in the study of the light/shadow effects on figures, landscape and architectural elements as the twisted columns which make his paintings appear vivid. Like Gaddi, Orcagna used the light/shadow effect to interpret the natural and the supernatural events and created a continuity between the real and the visionary world.[75]

The left section with the beggars and dead belonging to the Triumph of Death can be seen as an introduction to the central theme of the Last Judgement in the middle section, which is twice the size of the Triumph of Death and Hell. Today only a few fragments of the Last Judgement are left and none of them give information about the figures within this scene. However, the scenario of Hell which is the best preserved part of the whole monumental fresco, offers more things to look at. Just like Dante Orcagna puts all his enemies and people he hated in hell. The devils attacking the lost souls in Orcagna's hell appear aggressive and vengeful. They lacerate the faces and the bodies of their victims. According to Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects* many characters are identifiable.

This great masterwork served as an example for the Franciscan preachers to refer to in their sermons. Artistically speaking Orcagna's framework and twisted columns assume a primary function in the interpretation and ternary organization of the themes clearly showing what physical death and eternal death of the soul in hell are like. The illusionist-

architectural structure and framework which Orcagna created for his narrative figures at Santa Croce already announce his great artwork of the tabernacle in Orsanmichele.

Triumph of Death, Benedictine Monastery, Sacro Speco, Subiaco

'Illud immane sed devotum specus quod qui viderunt, vidisse quodammodo paradisi limen credunt.'[76]
'Those who saw the impressing but holy caves believe to have seen the threshold to paradise.'

With these words of admiration and astonishment Francesco Petrarch expressed the beauty of the antique Benedictine monastery in the middle of the rocky landscape dominated by the Simbruini Mountains. He probably visited the monastery in the first half of the fourteenth century, the years when his spirits became directed to a pure ascetic view of life.[77] Impressed and enthusiastic about the holy place, that once had been the hermitage of Saint Benedict of Nursia (c.480-547), he felt the profound mystical atmosphere emanating from this monastery. In search of remote Christianity and antiquity[78] the monastery offered much inspiration for his poetry describing the contrast between the fleeting world and his aspiration for eternal peace. A hundred year later, pope Pius II, like Petrarch enjoyed the beauty of the secluded monastery and compared the monastery to a nest of swallows in the middle of the cliffy landscape.[79]

'Sicut in altis scopulis nidos videmus arundinum in crepidine lapidum, ita est hoc monasterium cernere affixum sublimi saxo'.[80]

Still today, the visitor to the monastery of the Sacro Speco in the region of Latium can experience the mystical atmosphere and beauty of this early hermitage of monastic ideals. Unlike some monumental monasteries, Sacro Speco with its modest rooms, grottoes, irregular and rocky walls, vaulted stairways adapts to the natural environment of the landscape. Despite the simple lifestyle of the Benedictine monks, the inside of this cave-like monastery is richly adorned with wall paintings from the most remote centuries.[81] The paintings, realized in fresco, don't only decorate the chapels, the upper and lower church, but also the grottoes and stairways. Among them, when descending the vaulted stairway of the Scala Santa,[82] fig.35 there are two scenes of macabre contents. The

stairway connects the lower church to the chapel of the Madonna, the Grotto of the Shepherds, the Rose-Garden of St. Francis and the cemetery. The latter explains why these macabre representations are painted on this stairway.[83] The Scala Santa is the original stairway by which Saint Benedict used to leave his hermitage to organize the oratories. The frescoes of the Encounter between the Three Living and the Three Dead as well as the Triumph of Death relate to his ascetic view of monastic life. They show the typical composition as in other macabre representations appearing during the reformation of the monasteries and clerical institutions. F. Hermanin,[84] S. Cosacchi[85] as well as L. Guerry[86] and P. Toesca attribute the representations to a Sienese Master who had been called to the Sacro Speco by the abbot Bartolomeo II (1318-1343) or Bartolomeo III (1363-1368). When in the papal court at Avignon, Bartolomeo II had lead a dissolute life, but once in the monastery of Sacro Speco he changed lifestyle and became a devote monk. Bartolomeo III was a Sienese and particularly engaged in the reformation of the Benedictine monasteries.[87] Both abbots were interested in the decoration of the monasteries of Santa Scolastica and Sacro Speco. Bartolomeo III commissioned the reconstruction and restoration of the church of Santa Scolastica that had been destroyed during the earthquakes of 1348 and 1349.[88] The new decoration in the church of Santa Scolastica and in the upper church of the Sacro Speco show the same Sienese style.[89] So do the chapel of the Madonna and the Scala Santa.[90] On the walls of the Scala Santa the Murder of the Innocents, the Flight to Egypt, the Baptism of Jesus and the two macabre themes -the Encounter, fig.12 and the Triumph of Death, fig.3- are depicted. The two latter ones are represented on different walls. However, they are thematically linked to each other and tell the story of death. Just like at Pisa, the two themes can be read in an episodic sequence and the Encounter with its admonishing character can be viewed as an introduction to the Triumph of Death, which is displayed visa-vis.

In the Encounter one third of the scene is represented on the leaning wall of a protruding column of the Gothic staircase. The remaining part of the scene continues just around the corner on the other wall-surface. In the upper part the represented event is set into an arch of the vaulted staircase. It displays three well-clad gentlemen respectively in a black, white and red robe. They are standing in front of three open coffins containing corpses,

each of them in a different state of corruption. A white-bearded monk is joining the people at this terribly shocking site. In gestures he explains the meaning of the macabre vision and exhorts the noblemen to give up their life of vice.[91] But only the red-clad one seems to be realizing that his pleasant, glorious life means nothing in face of death. Thus he converts to a modest life and prepares for his own death. But not so his companions. They turn away from the repulsing site and keep conversing about daily affairs. Both hold hunting hawks and seem to be unconcerned about their future destiny. Probably the terrible vision of the open coffins with the corpses disturb them that much, that they decide to ignore the terrific death and the idea of abandoning their pleasant life they are so attached to. All this is painted in the foreground. Behind there are a green meadow and a dark forest with a churchlike building, perhaps the hermitage of the monk. The master of the fresco did not worry about showing details of the natural environment to embellish the scene, but keeps to the essential things defining the content of the story. The three sarcophaguses with corpses in corruption are neatly lined up in row. One corpse is already a skeleton and the pale colour of the bones shines out a bright light in an almost surrealistic fashion. The white robed, fair-haired and fair-skinned gentleman adds more contrasts to the figures and landscape emphasized by the difference in light. Compared to the well-known Sienese frescoes, this fresco displays less artistic quality, but is of highly provocative effect. Although the contours of the faces are designed roughly and the figures lack volume, they prove to be most impressive. The artist involves the onlooker's emotion and makes him participant of the event just like in the Triumph of Death which is painted on the other side of the staircase representing a continuation of the macabre story of death.[92] The latter one also bears two young noblemen in hunting attire, who are occupied with their daily affairs. Hideously, the apocalyptic rider, galloping on an emaciated horse, similar to a demoniac skeleton arrives with fluttering hair caused by the speed of the horse. In both hands he holds deadly weapons, a scythe and a long sword. With the latter he thrusts into the body of one of the two young noblemen. The wretch is shown with closed eyes and pale face contorted in agony. His companion, aware of the nobleman's dire state shows solicitude to his fainting friend and poses the following question: (This speech and the followings are written close to the mouth of the speaking protagonists)

Chiangiato Se (Nel Viso) Tanto Sco(lorito)
Vorrei sapere Chi Ta Cosi Ferito[93]

You are changed and your face looks pale
I would like to know who is giving you so much pain

The dying man makes a last effort to murmur the following lament:

Cho Gran Dolore E Con Forti Sospiri
Sentia La Mo(rte Che) Feri Al Core
Che Subito (Ne Tolse) Omne Valore.[94]

I feel great pain and difficult breathing
I feel that death has wounded my heart
And soon it will take away all my strength.

In the ongoing dialogue death interferes and gives them a prompt answer:

Io So Colei C'occido Omne Persona
Giovene E Vecchie (Ne) Verun Ne (La)sso
De Grande Altura Subito.[95]

I am the one who kills all people
Young and old and leaves nobody untouched
The highest personality has to obey my power.

As in other Triumph of Death representations, a heap of dead lie under the stamping hooves of the apocalyptic rider's horse. All categories of society, including two young women, are among them. Behind death, poor beggars look on. With yearning expressions the cripple, the old woman and two destitute figures, no longer recognizable, lament:

Tu Lasce Noi Che Sempre (Te Chiameno)
Desiderando Che Ne Dea La M(orte)[96]

You turn away from us who always call you
Desiring that you give us the last hour

Just like in the other cases the Triumph of Death is organized the usual way: death and the heap of lifeless figures are placed centrally, whereas on the left and the right the worldly noblemen and the poor are represented. Differently from the other triumphs at Pisa, Siena and Bozen death holds a sword. The inscriptions are not on scrolls, but are written close to the protagonists pronouncing the words. Today the Triumph and the Encounter are still to be dated and the attribution to Meo di Guido da Siena and his pupils to be proved. If he is the author, these frescoes are of an earlier date of execution than those at Pisa (1336). That means that this Triumph must be one of the earliest versions.

Memorial of Franceschino da Prignale, Museum of Capodimonte, Naples

At Naples Franceschino da Prignale, most likely a merchant, dedicated a marble slab, fig.36 in the church of Saint Peter to the Holy Trinity in 1361.[97] The memorial is intended as a rewarding and thanksgiving act for being saved by the heavenly intercession of God the Father and the Holy Trinity. Today, the votive slab is preserved in the Museum of Capodimonte, Naples. It shows death, life-size, wearing two crowns on its head and in the act of hunting. Death holds an hourglass in its right hand and a falcon in its left. Dead people from all social categories lie on the ground. To the right, a man stands in the dress of a merchant, who is emptying his pocket of money on an altar. His intention is to offer all his wealth to death in order to be saved; but death cannot accept. According to the artistic use of the time, two banderols contain the speeches of dialogue between the merchant and death. The speech of the merchant reads as follows:

Tuto te volio dare se me lasi scampare.
I wish to give you everything, if only you will let me escape.

Death answers:

Se tu me potessi dare quando se pote domandare
No te scampera la morte se te vene la sorte.[98]

Even if you gave me all I could ask for,
You would not escape your death when your turn comes.

On the altar where the merchant has emptied his pouch can be read the following verses:

Eo so la morte chi chacio

sopra voi (j)ente mondana

la malata e la sana

di e notte la percacio

no fugia nessuno in tana

per scampare da lo mio laczio

che tucto lo mundo abraczio

et tucta la gente umana

perché nessuno se conforta

ma prenda spovento

ch'e'ò per comandamento

de prendere a chi ven la sorte.

Siane castigamento

Questa figura de morte

E pensavi de fare torto

In via del salvamento.[99]

I'm death, who stands

over you mundane people-

the sick and the healthy-

I persecute you day and night.

No one take refuge in his den

to escape from my noose

that embraces the whole world

and all mankind

that no one may take comfort

but be frightened

by my decision

to reap who is destined.

This very image of death

stays for penance

beware of doing wrong

on the way of salvation.

On the margins one reads:

Mille lauda faczio a dio patre e alla Sancta Trinitade che due volte m'anno scampato tutti gli altri foro anegate. Franceschino fui de Prignale feci fare questa memoria a le MCCCLXI de mese di augusto XIII indictionis. (A thousand thanks to God the Father and to the Holy Trinity who twice saved me when all others had drowned. Franceschino da Prignale commanded this memorial in MCCCLXI of the month August XIII).

Franceschino da Prignale had escaped death twice and because of this, he decided to dedicate a memorial slab to death, who appears triumphant, standing above all earthly values of humankind. A glance to this meorial slab reminds everyone that his/her body is defenceless in front of the perils of life.[100]

Francheschino da Prignale's slab teaches the moral that our body corrupts and dissolves the same way as the merchant earns and loses his money. Money and earthly values lose their effects just as the body loses its strength when aging. Death bears two crowns on its

skull. This peculiarity might be because Franceschino Prignale was saved twice from a bad death. His thankgiving to the Holy Trinity reminds of Joachim da Fiore's concept of the Holy Trinity and his apocalyptic vision.

Agnolo Gaddi, Triumph of Death in Santa Croce, Florence

The restoration of the high altar panels in Santa Croce reveals in the predella, an interesting panel representing a Triumph of Death. Unfortunatley there is no photo of this particular Triumph. For this reason I will only describe the most significant figures.

The skeleton is shrouded in a long tunic and rides a black bull, which with slow paces crushes many bodies beneath. In the same picture poor beggars are on their way to implore death to end their lives. But death turns away the destitute and is pursuing a young gentleman riding a white horse. With a gesture of defiance the rider turns round and offers the frightening figure a twig and blossom of an orange tree. The most evident symbol in this representation is that death is riding a bull instead of a horse. This is one of the first example where the horse of death is substituted by a bull. Later, in the Petrarchian Triumph the bull becomes usual for the death rider. The bull goes back to the very early times of oriental and Mediterranean civilization. As mentioned in chapter one, the bull doesn't only bear the meaning of death but is related to rebirth and fertility of the changing seasons. Thus, it also became a paragon for the changing state of the human race, from life to death.

This representation of triumphal death bears witness to the fact that long forgotten antique symbols reappear in much later imagery.

The Triumph of Death in San Francesco, Lucignano[101]

The inside walls of San Francesco at Lucignano are almost fully covered with paintings dating from the 14th century. At the entrance of the nave, on the right wall there is the triumphal scene of victorious death, fig.4 (c.1380). The painting is located quite high

above the paving and cannot be admired to its fullest extent. The upper part of a Baroque altar obstructs the view of the scene, partly hiding the dead figures trampled under the horse of death. The representation set in a rectangle frame, as are the other painting, shows the nude landscape of the clay-hills around Siena. Only a few plants and trees revive the scenery with their fresh green leaves. A cleft in the lower part of the fresco restricts the dramatic scenery. In the middle section, death accomplishes its task by putting an end to the life of humans.

As in earlier frescoes dedicated to triumphal death (Pisa, Florence, Bozen, Subiaco) the theme is structured into three main parts: the destitute, the triumphal death passing over a mass of dead and the thoughtless young knights.

The destitute form a group of four people, probably two men and two women. Only one of the four, a woman, is entirely preserved. The other figures are fragmented because of plaster detachment. The woman is shown in a suppliant gesture, calling on and stretching out her hand towards death. The gesture of the woman, so typical of the poor and unthinkable for the rich expresses the hardship of life and the hope that death will soon end her miserable existence. Her face, framed by a white veil, appears full of dignity. Her suffering is expressed spiritually rather than physically. The painter did not try to deform her physical appearance and has omitted the effects of pain on her face. This is unlike the beggars of Orcagna, who express their misery by their physical features.

Behind the death-imploring woman, the profile of an old, bald-headed and bearded man stretching his arms forward can be distinguished. His appearance is far from being represented with grotesque and deformed accents as in Northern European medieval art. A crippled man rests the weight of his aged body on a pair of crutches. His movements on crutches are effortful. The fourth figure is another veiled woman. Most noticeable is the fact that the invocation spoken by the poor is identical to that of the old beggars in the Triumph of Death by Andrea Orcagna in Santa Croce. In Lucignano the text reads:

Poi che Prosperità / Ci à lasciati o morte / medicina a ogni pena vieni / a dare omai l'ultima cena.[102]

Since prosperity has left us / Oh death, balm of all pains / Come to give us the last supper.

The representation of the triumphal death is shown centrally in the fresco. Death, a woman riding a black horse, shoots an arrow in the direction of two young men, who are absorbed in conversation and are oblivious to her presence. This is a contrast to the poor and aged protagonists who implore death to relieve their suffering. The image of speed is expressed with great efficacy by the rapidly galloping horse. The whole body of the animal is stretched forward, with its legs trampling the mass of corpses. The horse's head is the very image of dynamism; with an open mouth, hanging tongue, blown-up nostrils and black-coloured mane flying backwards. These are the visible signs of effort and energy. All this is in contrast to the white-haired rider.

The black colour of the horse mingles with the black attire of death. Death wears a tunic, open at the chest and is girdled at the waist by a white cummerbund. Her appearance is not that of a skeleton or a corpse as found in earlier Triumph of Death representations, at Bozen and Subiaco, but in this case she is represented as a witch, i.e. as a symbol with occult demoniac powers. This witch-like apparition is unlike that seen at Pisa, and the one at Siena with the monster-like apparition, painted by Giovanni di Paolo in an antiphonary, fig.6. The malignant feminine appearance in the church of Saint Francis at Lucignano reminds one of the Greek furies: she arouses fear in the hearts of humans and with wide-opened mouth she screams the following diatribe:

Io non bramo se non di spegner vita / e chi mi chiama le piu volte schivo / Giungendo spesso a chi mi torce il grifo.

I am longing for nothing else but to extinguish life / and who calls me often I do not consider / more often I will arrive to whoever fears me.

With her long, compact, banner-like hair blown backwards and the nails of her hands and feet like the claws of mythological monsters she animates the minds of the Middle Ages spreading terror in souls. A scythe hangs from her girdled waist. In the popular mind the scythe is the instrument death uses to reap her victims. This can be seen in the fresco. The victims of the powerful, riding image of death lie under the hooves of the horse. All are

arranged in perfect order with eyes closed and faces turned towards the horrific rider. Each of them can be easily distinguished; a young woman with uncovered head and long hair, a woman with a veiled head, a middle-aged man, a monk with tonsured head, a prelate and others – two men, one of whom has his hand placed on his chest. They stand for the different categories of medieval society. The pope, the king and the bishop represented in other frescoes are missing. Probably the artist[103] preferred to represent the common people such as the friar, the merchant and the young woman, because the inhabitants of this small community could better personally relate to this imagery. In this way, the citizens could identify with the great mass of humanity and reflect on their way to final destination.

The macabre rider moves toward two young men in rich attire, on their way to the hunt. The first figure holding a bow in his right hand turns to his companion with the following words:

Quant'è dolcie mondo chi s'apagasse / Very sweet is the world for those enjoying life.

The other gentleman with a falcon sitting on his fingers answers:

Tu dici ben vero se prosperità durasse / You speak well, if prosperity lasted forever.

The friendly gestures of the young man holding the bow toward his companion seem to be meant to soothe him. The latter, when answering, points to his melancholic state, not only in words, but also with glances of the eyes and reclining head. He seems depressed and probably feels that death is approaching. Close to the young man stands an oak tree, its trunk pierced by an axe. An empty scroll hangs from a high branch. At the base of the oak tree two black birds can be seen. Without doubt, the image of the tree and the axe gives evidence to the message of the fresco and can be seen as a reference to Luke 3, 9. (The axe is ready to cut down the tree at the roots. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into fire). These figures are to be interpreted as symbols in the context of the Last Judgement. At first glance death seems to be the judge of final human destiny. But its real task is to put an end to human life. Death does not discern

between good or evil, the just and unjust. To reinforce this meaning, the painter represents the figure of Christ hovering above a hilly landscape. Christ says:

Ocise me che so signor di lei. / Death has killed me even I am its Lord.

This fresco and others dealing with the theme of death is an outcry against unavoidable death and consequently is an invitation to do penance which is also a preparation for the Last Judgement. In the symbolic context of the fresco, the white scroll nailed on the tree could signify that the sentence has not been pronounced yet and that death is the threshold to the Last Judgement. The Triumph does not express a condemnation of the wealthy neither does it show any gesture of benevolence to the poor. Death is the unavoidable event giving access to divine judgement.

The Triumph of Death in Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria Regionale, Palermo

One outstanding Triumph of Death (5,9 m x 6,4 m), fig.5 has survived destruction by the many architectural transformations in the course of the time in New Hospital at Palermo.[104] The old ruined Sclafani Palace had been rebuilt in part and transformed into a hospital under Alfonso of Aragon.[105] The painting originally located in the entrance-hall on the southern wall of the hospital founded in the first part of the 15th century (1432) expresses the multicultural flavour of art in the Neapolitan-Sicilian Kingdom. Later, when the hospital became a military barracks the painting suffered damage. The Sicilian artwork, today preserved in Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria della Regione[106] is related to the former historical urban context of Palermo with the many foreign influences of its rulers. Palermo, once the city of the Arabs, of the Normans and of the Swabs was one of Europe's main harbours. Due to its central position in the Mediterranean Sea and the closeness to North African countries it was an ideal place for the exchange of goods. And, from the crusade's times onwards, it had become one of the wealthy cities on the Mediterranean coasts. The merchandise of the hree continents Asia, Africa and Europe were handled and sent all over the Mediterranean Sea to other European countries. The construction of the New Hospital as a socio-religious and sanitary institution

corresponded to the spirits of the Italian cities. Containing all the visual signs related to medication like the herbarium, it offered not only the possibility of healing people, but also of spiritual-religious assistance and as such it had become a place of learning. In the eyes of the cultured society of Palermo the Great Hospital had the same importance as the cathedral representing an important landmark within the city. In medieval times, the medical science of healing had been strongly connected to the care of souls. People received advice for their daily problems. When they visited the hospital, they could see the Triumph of Death already in the entrance-hall.

Painted by an unknown artist, the Triumph was meant to admonish and instruct people. The thematic content bears a similar message to the triumphs of Franciscan and Dominican churches. But this painting was not the only representation in the hospital. The remaining walls of the entrance-hall were also covered with paintings displaying iconographic themes with moralistic-religious content. Two of them had been completely destroyed during the construction of an internal staircase and by the enlargement of the kitchens. One of them represented the Last Judgement, another from the 16th century, painted by the artist Novelli, showed Paradise.[107] The fragments of Paradise suggest that the earlier painted Triumph of Death probably represents the first painting of a whole pictorial cycle that was to be completed only two centuries later. This could partly explain the fact that the artist of this Triumph is unknown. In the course of the time different painters worked on the cycle and when the hospital underwent renovation only the Triumph had been preserved.[108] The unknown artist of this well-known Triumph shows great talent in the composition of the theme. It might be Pisanello who in 1444[109] was invited by Alfonso to stay at his court in Naples. He had reached the Aragonese court in 1448 and received commissions from King Alfonso. For his patron in Naples Pisanello designed medals and fabric for clothes (1449), which today can be admired at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.[110] On this occurrence, he could have given a contribution to the design of Alfonso's triumphal arch.[111] Pisanello like other artists of his time was well-versed in the design of *insignia*. And he might also have designed the Palermo Triumph of Death. This suggestion, though, is to be considered only hypothetical because of a lack of records. When observing the painting more accurately,

one can notice that the artist has portrayed himself together with his assistant in the upper-left side of the painting. There are in fact two figures, one holding a brush and a scraper in his hands, another holding a cup used to mix colours.

Most noteworthy in the painting is that it is not executed in the usual medium of fresco, but in an unknown technique similar to encaustic.[112] This fact suggests that only a talented artist like Pisanello could think of experimenting in a new technique. The composition of space is displayed in a most refined manner bearing the characteristics and concepts of the International Gothic style. There is a novelty in volumetric representation indicating the great step forward in the representation of perspective of the Trecento and Quattrocento. The design of the fountain seems to be taken from a cartoon, (the original full-scale design on paper for a painting or tapestry). Its volume harmonizes with the other figures. The images of the young gentlemen and ladies, the musician playing the harp, the blind nobleman with his dogs and the decorative elements of the natural setting strongly remind one of the courtly taste of European rulers. Italian artists were well acquainted with the French style of courtly-artistic representation and especially in Italy it had found its highlight in the art of Pisanello, Stefano da Zevio, Giovannino de Grassi, Gentile da Fabriano, Simone Martini, the Zavatteri brothers and many other artists. The artistic style of the Palermo Triumph also recalls the art of illuminated manuscripts like the one by the brothers De Limbourg. For this reason some scholars attributed the Triumph to the Sicilian artist Gaspare Pesaro (1400-1461), who was commissioned to illuminate books by King Alfonso in 1438.[113]

On the other hand one can also observe a resemblance to the Burgundian art of wall-carpet-making which bears the most elegant designs of courtly style. A vegetal pattern borders the image recalling oriental fabrics and carpets. Within this border-frame there are many human figures in varied situations. Their elegant faces, gestures and movements gravitate around the central part of the main subject of the painting, the skeleton galloping on its swift horse. All the figures are placed against a background of wonderful natural environment. The plants, trees and the people can be associated with the allegorical description in *the Romance of the Rose*. The characters representing the

various social classes, sexes, age and tempers are as colourful as the allegoric personifications in 'The Garden of Pleasure', which according to J. Huizinga are 'at the same level as the truly medieval representations of the virtues and sins in human form'.[114]

Another mode of interpretation is to see the wealth of nature with its plants, flowers and the fountain as a wonderful recreation of God's garden of paradise. And the many human figures can be viewed as the descendants of Adam and Eve. The paradisiacal idyll and the oblivious behaviour of the people are upset by the terrible appearance of death – the apocalyptic rider. This is to be interpreted as a paragon of the fall of men from Garden Eden.

Death speeds on its horse menacingly towards a gaily dancing and merrymaking group. On the left side the group of the poor and aged people looking at death with yearning eyes appear. With folded hands they beg death to put an end to their weary lives. But death, carelessly leaves them aside. A blind nobleman is drawn by his two well-bred dogs in the opposite direction of death, towards the woods. Some young people, one of them showing his back to the beholder are standing next to the fountain. This fountain has a hexagonal shape and its architectural design recalls the Gothic architecture of the cathedrals. The fountain can be interpreted as the spring of life and equally as a fountain of youth. The latter had become a theme of representation in the cycle of the Manta Castle, fig.37 close to Saluzzo in the region of Piedmont (c.1420).[115] The beautiful natural elements all around and the fountain suggest the great human desire for life and happiness. It stands in contrast to the dramatic appearance of death.

The beholder of the picture is invited to spend a pleasant time within the garden of nature, but is also shocked by the upsetting appearance of the terrible apocalyptic rider. Here, as in all famous Triumph of Death frescoes the contrast between the harmony of life and the cruel destiny of death is shown in a way that the beholder can feel the tension and the dramatic event of death.

Lorenzo Costa, Triumph of Life and Death, Bentivoglio Chapel, San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna

As already mentioned in the second chapter of my papers, there is a new version of the triumphal death, which is called 'The Triumph after Petrarch' from the fifteenth century onwards. Painters started following the idea of triumph described by Petrarch based on ancient Roman and medieval pageantry.[116]

Lorenzo Costa (c.1460-1535), in service to the Bentivoglio family at Bologna created a series of frescoes in the family chapel for his patron prince Galeazzo Bentivoglio. Two of Costa's frescoes represent the Triumph of Death, fig.15 and the Triumph of Fame. Both of them were meant to glorify the Bentivoglio family and their funeral chapel in the church of San Giacomo Maggiore was the most appropriate place for such representations. In Costa's Triumph, death shrouded in linen kneels on a coffin placed on a cart. Death holds its weapon, the scythe, in one hand and with the other he points toward heaven. The cart of death is drawn by two black bulls wearing rings in their nostrils. Two skeletons ride on their backs. One of them looks back to the dignified appearance of death kneeling on the coffin, the other follows its task to guide the bulls. A festive procession of men and women coming out from a canyon follows the cart. Among this train Costa represented the highest members of the Church and elegantly-clad bourgeois. One group of people stands next to the passing funeral train and a nobly-clad young man in disputation with two other men can be identified as members of the Bentivoglio family. Young ladies standing in front of the funeral train observe the procession. Next to them a high banner flutters in the air. In the immediate foreground, close to the right edge of the painting, a man moves in full dignity towards a musician sitting on a stone playing his instrument. On his head he wears a turban indicating that he comes from the oriental world. Another group of people are looking on and paying attention to the musician. Among them a young mother with a nude child holding its toy can be seen. An old man with a long beard moving aside the cart on his crutch and looking toward heaven is also present.

All this is shown in the foreground!

Behind this festive event a hilly landscape with a large river stretches off to the far horizon. Above this earthly image in the lofty sky there are several oval lines consisting of heavenly figures as flying angels and groups of saints. These figures ordered along oval lines converge at the very top into the ternary group of God the Father, His son Christ and His mother Mary. All this concentric composition has a most dazzling effect and is emphasized by the white light which leaves no doubt that this is Heaven.

Costa's representation of the triumphal death is full of iconographic images deriving from Petrarch's poetry. One could say that this representation is par excellence Petrarchian. Death has been conceived with great serenity. There is no trace of the former fearful apocalyptic scene so typical for the Trecento frescoes. Still, death is the central figure of the event, but the skeletons have lost their wild appearance and are represented in a most dignified manner. Death does not raise its scythe to mow down the living, but only points to heaven to make it understood that the final end of human history is subordinated to the will of God in heaven. The idea of human guilt and punishment has totally vanished and a serene atmosphere emphasizes that in spite of death human beings are gifted by the grace of God with great qualities like reason and religious faith.

Notes, Chapter Four

[1] For the discussion of the possible artist: "Percorsi e tempi della visione nel 'Trionfo della Morte'" in *Critica d'Arte*, no.16 (gennaio-marzo, 1988), pp. 33-48.

Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture Italienne* (Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1950).

Giorgio Vasari had attributed the fresco to Andrea Orcagna. In his *Commenti su Vasari* Milanesi had ascribed it to Bernardo Daddi, a disciple of Giotto. Venturi on his side attributed it to a scholar of the Lorenzetti brothers. According to Supino, Van Marle, Berenson and Meiss (*Art Bulletin*, 1933) the creator of the fresco was the disciple of Andrea Orcagna, Francesco Traini. Thode, on his side, attributed the fresco to a master of Pisa standing close to Traini and named him 'Master of the Triumph of Death of Pisa'. Longhi attributed the work to Vitale da Bologna (*Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz, 1933*, p. 135).

[2] Lucia Battaglia Ricci, *Ragionare nel Giardino* (Roma: Editrice, 1987).

[3] This social imbalances between poorly rewarded workers and rich merchants as the bankers found vent in the worker revolts in Siena in 1328 and 1349, in Florence in 1342 and 1345 and in Lucca and Perugia 1370. Finally the Ciompi-revolt in Florence, 1378 signed the apex of this social inequalities. The unskilled workers sought for political representation.

[4] Hans Belting und Dieter Blume, *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit* (Munich: Hirmer, 1989), p. 69. Richard Kuhn remarks that Buffalmacco appears in VIII, 3; VIII, 6; VIII, 9; IX, 3; IX, 5.

[5] Ibid., p. 65.

[6] Paul Binsky, *Medieval Death* (New York: Cornell University, 1996), p. 128.

  Henk Van Os, "The Black Death and Sienese Painting: A Problem of Interpretation." *Art History*, no. 4/3 (1981): 237-249.

[7] Roberto Longhi, Vitale da Bologna e i suoi affreschi nel Camposanto di Pisa, in *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, IV, 1932/34, pp. 135-137.

[8] Luciano Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1974), pp. 3, 19, 24.

[9] Maria Laura Testi Cristiani, "Maestri e Maestranze nel 'Trionfo della Morte' di Pisa," 3, *Critica d'Arte*, no.2 (maggio-giugno, 1995), pp. 28-52.

M. L. T. Cristiani, "Maestri e Maestranze nel 'Trionfo della Morte' di Pisa," 2, *Critica d'arte*, no.7 (luglio-settembre, 1991), pp. 38-47.

M. L. T. Cristiani, " Maestri e Maestranze nel 'Trionfo della Morte' di Pisa," 1, *Critica d'arte*, no.5/6 (gennaio-giugno, 1991), pp. 44-55.

M. L. T. Cristiani, "Voci Dialoganti e Coro nella 'Umana Commedia' del Trionfo della Morte," *Critica D'Arte*, no. 19 (gennaio-marzo, 1989) pp. 57-68.

M. L. T. Cristiani, "Percorsi e Tempi della Visione nel Trionfo della Morte,"*Critica d'Arte*, no.16 (gennaio-marzo, 1988), pp. 33-48.

[10] M. L. T. Cristiani , "Percorsi e Tempi della Visione nel Trionfo della Morte," *Critica d'Arte*, no.16 (gennaio-marzo, 1988), pp. 33-48.

Gert Kreytenberg, *Orcagna, Andrea di Cione: Ein universeller Künstler der Gotik in Florenz* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2000), p. 47.

Simone Saltarelli entered the Dominican Order, held the position as prior in Santa Maria Novella between 1298-1301and 1305-1306, received the office as general procurator of the order in 1313-1316 and was appointed by Pope John XXII to the position of archbishop of Pisa in 1323. In the fight between Kaiser Ludwig and Pope John he played an important role. As a Dominican and archbishop he possibly set up a

program in which he summarized the political issues and interests of the Church, the Guelf party to counter against the Ghibelline faction of the Kaiser. He as well as his advisors almost certainly have inspired the artist and his creation on the walls of the Camposanto.

[11] International University of Florence, Centre of: Studi di Museologia, C. N. R (Centre of National Research)

[12] Maria Laura Testi Cristiani, "Percorsi e tempi della Visione nel 'Trionfo della Morte'" in *Critica d'Arte*, no.16 (gennaio-marzo, 1988): 33-48.

[13] The Dominican archbishop Simone Saltarelli was one of the very important protagonists in the strife between Pope John and Kaiser Ludwig der Bayer.

[14] The first act corresponds to the middle section of triumphal death, the second act to the delights in the garden and the third to the Encounter and hermitic life.

[15] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), pp. 417-421.
In Dante's *Divine Comedy* purgatory is also described as a mountainous island with daunting cliffs rising out of the seashore. It is most strenous to ascent the steep mountain. This can be compared to self-purification in order to reach heavenly bliss. Once up on the top the earthly paradise can be seen. Beatrice replaces Virgil and guides Dante through the final perils of purgatory to the highest spheres of paradise. Petrarch's ascent to Mount Ventoux, which I have described in my paper, can be seen under similar circumstances. The ascent can be interpreted as an ascent to purgatory. In these ascents both writers, Dante and Petrarch, feel the tension between physical and metaphysical energy. This notion is most typical for humanistic spirits where the conflict between empirical knowledge and devout introspection surfaces in their writings (S. Schama). Buffalmacco's mountain with the crater pit of hell can be see as an elevation containing physical and metaphysical tension so typical of the period also explaining the penitential thoughts and the birth of purgatory (Jaques le Goff).

[16] Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptures and Architects.* Vol. I. Trans. Gaston du C. de Vere (New York: Everyman's Library, 1996), p. 180.
Vasari in *Artist's Lives* calls in his description of the Triumph at Pisa the Genii Cupids, as these flying beings have the same appearance as the love god of Renaissance. According to ancient Roman belief, a guardian spirit assigned to a person at birth or a guardian deity or spirit of a person are intended as Genii.

[17] Ibid., pp. 180 -181.

[18] They recall the death angels of antiquity holding torches upside down.

[19] John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers, 2002), p. 140.
'If your mind will be well aware, keeping here your view attentive, your vainglory will be vanquished and you will see pride eliminated. And, again you will realize this if you observe the law which is written.'
The monk appearing in the Italian Encounter refers to the abbot Saint Macarius, who used to live in the fifth century and was one of the first promoters of Christian ascetics. In the thirteenth century Saint Francis of Assisi followed his example.

[20] Buffalmacco's colourful character appears in the *Decameron* on the eighth day in the third, sixth, ninth and tenth novellas as well as on the ninth day in the third novella.

[21] Though there are no records and proofs that Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted the panel, it is generally attributed to him or to his workshop. Chiara Frugoni and Renate Colella ascribe the panel to Ambrogio Lorenzetti on the basis of its great similarity to its landscape of that represented in Ambrogio's frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena (The Effects of Good and Bad Government).

[22] Originally in Tuscany and other regions the cassone was called 'forziere'. Not so in Siena where they called it 'goffano' or 'cofano'. The painted and often gilded chest served as a storage for clothing and jewelry or important records. Sometimes the Renaissance chests (cassoni) were decorated with motifs taken from Petrarch's *Trionfi*. For instance, there are the cassoni (1450) of Pesellino Francesco in the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum, Boston, Iacopo Sellaio and that of a jewel case at the Cathedral Museum, Graz on which Petrarch's *Trionfi* are shown. With great probability the cassoni of monasteries and other ecclesiastical institutions were painted with religious and moralistic motives.

[23] Hans Belting und Dieter Blume, *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit*, pp. 171-185.

[24] Ibid., p. 182.
R. Colella compares the representation with Lorenzetti's predella of the Carmelites displaying the Handing over of the Rules of the Order. This painting is 37 x 154 cm.

[25] R. Colella holds the opinion that the panel had been painted on purpose for private and devotional use in a chapel or palace.

[26] Chiara Frugoni, *Pietro und Ambrogio Lorenzetti* (Florence: Scala, 1988), p. 75.
According to L. Ghiberti's *I commentarii* the cycle of the Allegory of the Good and the Bad Government was known as La guerra e la pace (the War and the Peace). The title of this artwork was changed by Achille Lanzi in 1792. In spite of Lorenzetti's signature 'Ambrosius Laurentii de Senis me pinxit utrinque' the frescoes received little attention in Ghiberti's *Commentaries*.

[27] In Franco Sacchetti's *Il Trecentonovelle* and in Boccaccio's *Decameron* personages of the various strata of society become protagonists of everyday life of the Tuscan cities.

[28] In the Museum of the Fine Arts of Siena there are two other small panels called the City on the Sea (22 x 32 cm) and the Castle on the Lakeshore (22 x 33 cm) showing the characteristics of early Tuscan landscape-painting. These landscapes seen in the bird's eye view display an amazing well-constructed city and castle in a well-depicted representation of the environmental surroundings just as the panel of the Christian Allegory of Humankind and the frescoes of the Allegory of the Good and Bad Government.

[29] Hans Belting und Dieter Blume, *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit*, p. 171.

[30] Tommaso di Salvo, Giuseppe Zagarrio, *Tavola Rotonda* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1973), pp. 850-851.
These verses are taken from the *Canticle of the Creatures*, which is ascribed to Saint Francis.

[31] In the earlier medieval representation, death is intended in the shape of beast-like beings as one can see in the Torcello mosaics. Wild beasts regurgitate body parts for the resurrection and a fish symbolizing Leviathan vomits up the dead. The latter recall the *Legend of Jonah*, who was swallowed and regurgitated intact by a whale. Throughout the Middle Ages the monster-like and regurgitating Leviathan symbolized the Resurrection from death. Devouring, body-partition and disorder was associated with death and hell. But through the sacrifice of Christ the monsters were forced to regurgitate the swallowed bodies. The wholeness of the body and order symbolize paradise and eternal life.

[32] Archangels Gabriel and Michael, Lucifer, Cupid, Hermes, Pegasus, Psyche, Cronus and others.

[33] L. Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture Italienne*, p. 28.
In this poetry death is announcing its terrible appearance. The poem is published in P. Vigo's book: *Le danze macabre in Italia* (Bergamo: Arnaldo Forni, 1901).

[34] As already suggested above, the inscriptions might have vanished or had never been painted.
As R. Colella observes in her essay *Die Erlösungsallegorie des Ambrogio Lorenzetti,* the aged people appear to belong to the elegantly clad group of women and men. If these two elderly represent the group of beggars as in the other Triumph of Death frescoes, they are far less evident.

[35] H. Belting und Dieter Blume, *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit*, pp. 171-183.

[36] Ibid. pp. 171-183.

[37] The worldly clad man resembles the allegorical figure of Avarice.

[38] Nicolò Rasmo, *Affreschi medioevali atesini* (Milan: n.p., 1972), p. 133.
N. Rasmo points out that the Triumph of Death has apocalyptic roots. He relates the beggars to the *Revelation* of Saint John, (9,6): 'And people will seek for death and not find; they will arduously desire to die, but death will flee from them.'

[39] N. Rasmo, when reviewing the historical records, identified Nicolò Bamabarossi and his wife as kneeling donors.

[40] Edmund Theil, *St.-Johannes-Kapelle in der Dominikanerkirche von Bozen,* Kleiner Laurinführer Nr. 17 (Bozen: Athesia Verlag, 1972).

[41] Nicolò Rasmo, *Note sulla pittura giottesca - padovana nella regione atesina, in: Da Giotto al Mantegna,* (Padua: Electa, 1974), pp. 64--67.

[42] The restoration of the chapel brought to light layers which don't belong to the above described frescoes, but date back to an earlier period of the local Gothic Linear style. This local style can be understood as a painting style of transition between the Romanesque and Gothic. The style was only practised by Nordic and local artists and is unknown in Italian-Byzantine and Romanesque painting. The four masters of the above-described cycles introduced many innovations. Thus, they strongly influenced the following artistic work of the local artists.

[43] E. Theil, *St.-Johannes-Kapelle in der Dominikanerkirche von Bozen.*
According to E. Theil, Botsch derives from Nicola's nickname Boccione.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Roberto Salvini, 'Un ciclo di affreschi trecenteschi a Bolzano' in *Rivista del R. Istituto di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, VIII, 1941, pp. 228-255.

[46] Nicolò Rasmo, Revisioni: 'Gli affreschi trecenteschi della Cappella di San Giovanni a Bolzano' in: *Cultura Atesina – Kultur des Etschlandes*, III, 1949, pp. 85-102.
N. Rasmo, *Affreschi medioevali atesini.*

[47] Maria Welzig, *Diplomarbeit: „Die Freskoausstattung der Johanneskapelle in der Bozner Dominikanerkirche "*(Wien: Universität Wien, 1987/1988), pp. 51, 52.
Already Wart Arslan (1935) noticed a resemblance of the Triumph to Vitale's artistic works. Roberto Salvini (1941) held the opinion that some frescoes on the eastern wall of the chapel (frescoes in the cycle of Saint John the Evangelist and of Saint Nicolas) and the Triumph bore stylistic qualities of Vitale's art. N. Rasmo saw a certain similarity in the representation of the fleeing horses to Vitale's horse in the panel of Saint George and attributed the fresco of the Triumph in a first moment to Vitale da Bologna (1949). Later, when Vitale's authorship of Saint George was confirmed, N. Rasmo changed his mind and expressed the idea that the Master of the Triumph might have been influenced by the artistic Bolognese style, in which Vitale da Bologna's artistic personality developed. C. Gnudi, who wrote a monographic work on Vitale da Bologna, opposed strictly N. Rasmo's ideas.

[48] The Latin text had suffered damage and was only partly legible. Nicolò Rasmo deciphered the Latin text, which throughout the ages had partly vanished. He also examined and analyzed the contents and gave an interpretation to the whole composition.

[49] Edmund Theil, *St.-Johannes-Kapelle in der Dominikanerkirche von Bozen.*

[50] Gemeinde Bozen Assessorat für Kultur, Erziehung und Schauspiel, *Trecento. Gotische Maler in Bozen* (Bozen: Temi, 2000), p. 30.

[51] The sinopias are executed in fresco, whereas the coloured surface is in secco. Today only the sinopias are visible.

[52] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori.* I ed. 1550, II ed. 1568 (Florence: R. Bettarini, P. Barocchi, 1967), pp. 217-227.

[53] Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptures and Architects.* Trans. Gaston du C. de Vere (New York: A. Knopf, 1996), p. 183.

[54] Gert Kreytenberg, *Orcagna, Andrea di Cione: Ein universeller Künstler der Gotik in Florenz* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2000), p. 216.
Andrea Orcagna's artworks, differently from that of Buffalmacco, are well-documented. Franco Sacchetti in *Il Trecentonovelle* (1390), Lorenzo Ghiberti in *I commentarii* (1452/55), Antonio Billi, in the *Strozzi-manuscript*, (1490/1510) tell about Orcagna. In the *Codex Magliabechiano* (1537/42) an anonymous attributes the Paradise and Hell in Santa Croce to Orcagna. Giovanni Battista Gelli in *Vite d'artisti* (1549/55) writes: "Dipinse ancora in santa Croce dietro al pergamo que' tre quadri ne l'uno de' quali è il iudizio, nell' altro il paradiso et ne l'altro l'inferno,...dipinse ancora a Pisa in san Paulo a Ripa d'Arno assai e in Camposanto." (in Santa Croce behind an altar he painted those three paintings: one is the Judgement, another Paradise and still another Hell, ...)

[55] Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (Yale: Yale University, 1995).

[56] G. Kreytenberg, *Orcagna, Andrea di Cione: Ein universeller Künstler der Gotik in Florenz*, p. 124.
Orcagna was registered as a painter ever since 1344 in the guild of the medical arts and trade of spices (Arte dei Medici). Painters belonged to this guild. Some time later in 1352, he registered with the arts of the master-masons and carpenters (Arte dei Maestri di Pietre e Legnami). His early paintings: the panel of the Maestà in Bagno a Ripoli, Osteria Nuova, San Giorgio, 1337, the fresco the Banishment of the Duke of Athens in Palazzo Vecchio and the fresco of the Crucifixion in Santa Marta a Montughi, Florence, 1342/43.

[57] Ibid., pp. 39-41.

[58] Ibid., p. 42.
In the identification of these representations G. Kreytenberg refers to Richardson Offner, who sees in the apocalyptic events the *Revelation* of Saint John the Evangelist. After R. Offner the solar eclipse relates to the following expression: "And I saw the lamb opening the sixth seal, and a terrible earthquake occurred, the sun darkened like a coarse sack." G. Kreytenberg observes that also in the *Revelation* of Saint Mathew (24:7), Saint Mark (13:8) and Luke (21:11) earthquakes and solar eclipses occurred in sign of the end of times.

[59] Ibid., p. 42.
G. Kreytenberg, unlike R. Offner, identifies the represented event with the emptying of the second cup, which refers to God's wrath in the *Revelation* of Saint John (16:3): "And an angel poured the content of his cup into the sea which changed into blood; all living souls died in the sea."

[60] In Aramaic and Hebrew Golgotha means the place of the skulls and indicates a burial place. It is also called the mountain of Calvary where all criminals of Jerusalem suffered the final punishment. After the *Script* of Saint Marc (15:22), Jesus was crucified and died on this mountain.

[61] Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press Philadelphia, 1999), p. 176.

[62] G. Kreytenberg as other art historians date the frescoes of Santa Croce on the basis of Orcagna's admittance to the guild of the artists.

[63] G. Kreytenberg, *Orcagna, Andrea di Cione: Ein universeller Künstler der Gotik in Florenz*, p. 43.
The missing parts of the text were completed with help of the inscription in the fresco of the triumph at Pisa. The fragmented text:
B DI PDEZZA V.../ LPI DISCOSTEI EDAC...NO / SI TRUOVA CONTRO ALLLEI / OLECTORE NIVNO ARGOMENTO / HONORNONA VERE LINTELLECTO / SPENTO, DISTARE SENPRE / SIAPPARECCHIATO, CHENO / TI GUNGHA INMORTALE PEC...

[64] Orcagna's work at Santa Croce, to whom Vasari attributed the Triumph at Pisa -whilst G. Gelli attributed the frescoes in San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno to him -, should be understood in the spirit of the time, when the Church's political situation in Italy was most critical and undergoing significant changes.

[65] The verses are the same as at Pisa. It seems that none of the two painters have really invented these verses, but they might have been composed by an ecclesiastic literate (Fra Domenico Cavalca), possibly the circle of the Dominican Simone Saltarelli first at Santa Maria Novella and later at Pisa.

[66] G. Kreytenberg, *Orcagna, Andrea di Cione: Ein universeller Künstler der Gotik in Florenz*, p. 43.
The inscription is incomplete and today only these letters can be read: DACHE PSPERITADE C.../ HOMORTE MEDICINA D.../ CI ADARE OMAI LVT....
L. Brion-Guerry informs that the verse appears in manuscripts: *Codex II IV 61* of the National Library of Florence, *Codex Laurenziano Mediceo Palatino* and *Codex Laurenziano*. The same verse appears also on the scrolls which are held the mendicants in the representation of death in Pisa.

[67] This is the same verse as it appears in the banderol of the beggars at Pisa.

[68] In their *Gospels* the Evangelists Mark, Luke, John and Mathew gave many examples of the healings Jesus performed. Miraculously he healed people from various afflictions. By doing so, Jesus states that also their sins are forgiven. Lepers were considered to be unclean as were women who suffered continuous blood-flow. Miracles performed by Jesus are to be found in Saint Mathew 9: 1-8 (lame), 8: 1-4 (leper), 9: 27-31 (blind), in Saint Luke 8: 26-36 (obsessed), in Saint Mark 8: 22-30 (blind) and in Saint John 9: 1-12 (blind).

[69] Watts Sheldon, *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power and Imperialism* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press 1999), p. 52.

[70] These light effects differently to the chiaroscuro in Renaissance and Baroque paintings is softer in the transition from light to shadow. The choice of the sculpture-like expression and the warm colours make them less evident.

[71] Orcagna's twisted columns recall in design the twisted columns with the inlaid mosaics of the cloister in San Paolo fuori le mura at Rome, c.1200.

[72] Later, twisted columns most pertinent to Orcagna's artistic design have been realized in the Tabernacle of Orsanmichele (1352/60).

[73] Gnudi, Borsook and Baccheschi date Giotto's wall-paintings (executed in secco technique) displaying the stories of Saint John the Baptist and Evangelist c.1320, others as Bellosi and Boskovit earlier c.1310/1316.

[74] Taddeo Gaddi, The Life of the Virgin, fresco cycle, 1332-1338, Baroncelli chapel, Santa Croce, Florence

[75] G. Kreytenberg, *Orcagna, Andrea di Cione: Ein universeller Künstler der Gotik in Florenz*, pp. 58-61.

[76] Francesco Petrarch, *De vita solitaria, II, 9.*

[77] Petrarch in the *Ascent to Mount Ventoux* shows the first desires to contemplate the world by turning his spirits inwards and renouncing to vanity. However, he still hunted worldly glories and looked for the laurel crown, which he finally received in Rome. His ascetic view was different from that of the medieval monks,

who most often renounced to earthly pleasure and goods. That can be understood best from *Secretum* (1342-1343), *De ocio religiosorum* (1347), *De vita solitaria* (1346-1356). In *Secretum* he consults Saint Augustine and the allegoric figure of truth on the purpose of analyzing his own condition in front of the religious truth. He does not give up his earthly lifestyle, but nevertheless keeps contemplating on religion and moral values. In his great effort to look for eternal bliss, he becomes aware that he cannot renounce the desire for glory.

[78] The monasteries of Subiaco, Sacro Speco and Santa Scolastica are built on the ruins of Nero's palace. Sacro Speco means holy cave representing the place on which Benedict of Nursia used to meditate for three years before dictating the fundamental rules to the Benedictine monks. In 529 Benedict went to Montecassino where he founded the first Benedictine monastery.

[79] Pius II, Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405-1464) like Petrarch showed the same passion for the antiquity and concept of glory. Coming from a powerful noble family he enjoyed a luxurious life. Saint Bernhard of Siena convinced him to change lifestyle. Later on Enea Silvio was elected to be Pope Pius II (1458-1464).

[80] P. Egidio, G. Giovannoni, F. Hermanin, *I Monasteri di Subiaco* (Roma: Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1904), p. 407.

[81] The frescoes stem from the various periods of the Italian painting experience and range from the early Byzantine style until the late Baroque.

[82] The stairway is called the Scala Santa on behalf of Saint Benedict, who used it when leaving the hermitage.

[83] To arrive to the cemetery the monks carried the corpses of their brethren descending on the Scala Santa.

[84] P. Egidio, G. Giovannoni, F. Hermanin, *I Monasteri di Subiaco*, p. 516.
During the Trecento many Sienese painters were at work in Latium. In San Francesco at Tivoli there is a triptych with the Virgin on the Throne, the Annunciation and the inscription 'Bartholomeus de Senis pinxit hoc opus'. This master is recorded in documents as a painter of the Vatican. Possibly, on his way to Subiaco he had spent some time in Tivoli to paint this triptych for the church of San Francesco. Can these paintings be attributed to him?

[85] Stephan Cosacchi, *Makabertanz* (Meisenheim: Hain, 1965), pp. 560-571.

[86] Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture Italienne.*
L. Brion-Guerry names the artist Meo of Siena and means probably Meo di Guido da Siena, who had died in 1334. She refers to the attribution of Van Marle, who identified the painting style as that of the Master Meo of Siena. According to this hypothesis the Subiaco cycles of the Life of the Virgin and Jesus had been created under his guidance and the frescoes were executed by the hands of various pupils of his. That means that these frescoes are one of the earliest representations of the Triumph of Death and had been executed under Abbot Bartholomew II. Meo di Guido da Siena, who had immigrated to Perugia used to work there and in the surroundings. There he partly acquired the Umbrian painting style, fused the Sienese and Umbrian style and influenced the Umbrian painters of the first three decades of the Trecento. Because of R. Longhi's negative judgement Meo di Guido da Siena was an underestimated Sienese artist for long time. But today he is revaluated. The polyptych with the Madonna, the infant Jesus and Saints (1315-20), the Madonna (1328-30) originally coming from the Benedictine Abbey Montelabate (1315-20), a Giottesque Madonna (1310-1315) and other works, which are preserved in the Provincial Museum of Perugia, are attributed to him. His original painting style derives from that of Duccio, but possesses also the austere and monumental expression recalling the archaic classical style of the Roman region. Today the attribution to Guido da Siena is uncertain, as no art historian can prove it. The names of the artists and the abbots might have been taken one for the other. Meo is the abbreviation of Bartholomew, which is also the name of the two abbots.

[87] It was Bartholomew III to invite the German monks from Melk to the monasteries at Subiaco in order to organize the typography at Santa Scolastica and divulge the reformation of the Benedictine rules in Germany. The relationship between the monastery of Melk and Subiaco was of long tradition. Around 1160 Heinrich von Melk wrote his *Ermahnung an den Tod* (exhortation of death) containing the motive of the contrast between the living and the dead. The contacts between the two monasteries were of outmost importance for the propagation of the reformation of the Church. The monks exhorting the living as in the Encounter were regarded as one of the leitmotifs during this troubled time the Church went through. The Subiaco monks were of great example to all other Benedictine monks, who were in favour of reformation. Urban V wrote about their exemplary life in a letter of 1370: 'nonnulli sunt exemplum imitationis observantiae prelibatae'(some are an example to imitate for an excellent observation [of the rules]). Because of this the monasteries of Santa Giustiniana in Italy, Castel, Pietershausen, Melk, Trier and Bursfeld in Germany engaged monks to visit the monasteries of Subiaco to receive advice and instruction. During this time all these Benedictine monasteries exchanged permanently letters in regard to the Reformation.

[88] P. Egidio, G. Giovannoni, F. Hermanin, *I Monasteri di Subiaco*, p. 515.

[89] The scenes of the Life of Jesus can be seen in the upper church and on the walls of the Scala Santa. In the chapel of the Madonna the Sienese master and his pupils painted the following scenes on the lateral walls: the Nativity, the Announcement to the Shepherds, the Adoration of the Magi; in the lower part of the apse Christ on the Cross with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Benedict, Saint Placid and Saint Mauro, in the upper tier the Virgin sitting on the throne with Jesus, angels and two popes as donors.

[90] The paintings in the upper church of Sacro Speco, in the chapel of the Madonna and that of the Scala Santa are part of two extensive cycles, which are that of Jesus and the Virgin.

[91] Once this macabre scene displayed inscriptions just like in the Triumph of Death, which is depicted on the side of the stairway, the Scala Santa. Today they have vanished. Hermanin in *I monasteri di Subiaco* tells about Celstino Ramella (1874), who deciphered the text. The text and its meaning was the one I have already mentioned in chapter three when speaking about the theme of the Encounter.

[92] Cosacchi suggests that the Encounter and the Triumph are part of the same story. The two themes are thematically linked, but not part of the same story. The Encounter turns up in the thirteenth century, whereas the Triumph appears in the fourteenth century. From the iconographic content the Encounter and the Triumph can be understood as two different moments of the story of death.

[93] P. Egidio, G. Giovannoni, F. Hermanin, *I Monasteri di Subiaco*, p. 511.

[94] Ibid., p. 511.

[95] Ibid., p. 511.

[96] Ibid., p. 509.

[97] Pietro Vigo, *Le danze macabre in Italia* (Bergamo: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1901), p. 68.

[98] Ibid., p. 68.

[99] Ibid., pp. 68, 69.

[100] Parkes Weber, *Aspects of Death* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1910), p. 124.
Evelyn Welch, *Art and Society in Italy 1350-1500, Oxford Art History* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 161.

[101] *VI Convegno internazionale di studi la danza macabra e il trionfo della morte,* Clusone-19-21 Agosto, 1994.

Luciano Patani in "*Il trionfo della morte*, Chiesa di S. Francesco, Lucignano, Arezzo."

[102] Ibid.

[103] The fresco is attributed to Bartolo di Freddi, but there are not enough records proving his authorship.

[104] Alison Cole, *Art of the Italian Renaissance Courts* (London: Everyman Art Library, 1997), p. 48.

[105] Ibid., pp. 49-50.

[106] In the fifties Carlo Scarpa, renovating Palazzo Abatellis, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, took care of putting each artwork in relation to its historical moment and to the whole exhibition of the museum. C. Scarpa took special care of the outstanding Triumph, which was transferred to the gallery in 1953.

[107] *VI Convegno Internazionale di Studi La Danza Macabra e il Trionfo della Morte,* Clusone-19-21 Agosto, 1994.
Giuseppe Carta in "*L'Affresco del Trionfo della Morte dell' Ospedale Grande e Nuovo di Palermo*."

[108] Ibid.

[109] L. Brion-Guerry, *Le thème du «Triomphe de la Mort» dans la peinture Italienne*, pp. 150.

[110] A. Cole, *Art of the Italian Renaissance Courts,* pp. 58-60.

[111] Ibid., p. 50.

[112] *VI Convegno internazionale di studi la danza macabra e il trionfo della morte,* Clusone-19-21 Agosto 1994.
Giuseppe Carta in "*L'affresco del Trionfo della morte dell' Ospedale Nuovo di Palermo.*"

[113] A. Cole, *Art of the Italian Renaissance Courts,* p. 50.

[114] Guillaume De Lorris and Jean De Meun, *The Romance of the Rose.*Trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
Hohan Huizinga, The Autumn of the Middle Ages. Trans. by Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1996), p. 1996.
The external character of the figures of the Rose are occasionally reminiscent of the fantastic flowery figures of Botticelli.
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[115] This fresco cycle is based on the text of the romance the *Chevalier Errante*, written by Marquis Tommaso III, who ruled the area of Saluzzo between the years 1396-1460.

[116] Petrarch demonstrated an abiding interest in contemporary art and in ancient archaeology and owned works of Giotto and Simone Martini. Theodor Mommsen writes that Petrarch saw the 'Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua' of Giotto. Petrarch's writings referring to antiquity like *Africa, De viris illustribus* or *I Trionfi* inspired the humanists and influenced European expression in literary and visual art for a great length of time. Many artists like Andrea Castagno with the cycle of *The Famous Women and Men,* 1450, Carducci Villa and Andrea Mantegna with *The Thriumphs of Ceasar,* (1484-1490, Hampton Court, London) drew inspiration from Petrarch's work.

Summary

In Chapter One I emphasized the arguments on the history of purgatory in Western culture. J. Le Goff's *Birth of Purgatory* deals with the developing doctrine of Purgatory, which triggered off a rich repertoire of images and new themes in the interpretation of Christian religion. The Church used powerful images like the skeleton appearing in the theme of the Encounter, the Triumph of Death and the Dance Macabre to elicit Christian morals and convince people of all the good and bad things to be expected in afterlife. In his *Medieval Death* Binsky rightly observes that almost everything represented on the walls of the churches, chapels and cemeteries and public buildings alluded to purgatory.

In Chapter Two I examined preceding thoughts and artistic expressions in the visual arts and in literature of the late Middle Ages, which might have contributed to develop the themes about death and the dead. I came to the conclusion that the knowledge of anatomy, the expression of three-dimensional thinking and natural representation in the visual arts as well as the imagination of space and time in literature was of main importance. Dante in his visionary journey to afterlife, Petrarch in *The Ascent of Mount Ventoux* interpret space according to their problematic relationship with empirical knowledge (the world of sensual perception) and devout introspection (religious thought going back to the teachings of Saint Augustine). Boccaccio in his turn experiences space and time in the lives of the individuals and realistically describes the life in Italian cities. S. Y. Edgerton's *The Heritage of Giotto's Geometry* in which he imagines Petrarch questioning Giotto about his artistic creation in the Scrovegni chapel, and R. Kuhn's short essay *The Writer as Painter* and other writings in Belting's *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit* suggest a close relationship between Trecento literature and the visual arts. In the theme of the Triumph the many scrolls and banners with moral inscriptions are most evident and suggest how Tuscan language was accepted in the other regions of Italy.

In Chapter Three I described four themes, the Encounter between the Three Living and the Three Dead, the Triumph of Death, the Triumph of Death after Petrarch's poem *I*

Trionfi and the Dance of Death. They all relate to the representation of death and show its cronological development.

When describing the triumphs in Chapter Four, the many moralistic inscriptions on scrolls were most conspicuous and interesting to analyze. They evince once again how the artistic expressions like literature and music complemented each other. They appear in the artworks of Giotto, Orcagna, Lorenzetti, Buffalmacco and others making clear that the Tuscan vernacular experienced a fast acceptance. Dante, who elevated the Tuscan vernacular called 'volgare' to artistic heights found this language most appropriate to express art and the beauty of human thought. The frescoes decorating the medieval buildings were visible to the citizens of all social classes of the Italian towns. The above-treated Triumph of Death paintings display stereotype figures such as the poor, the nobles or the triumphant death most often armed with scythe, sword, bow and arrow chasing the lives of the humans from all social classes. The meaning of this powerful iconography not only meant physical, but eternal death, which expected the sinner if unprepared in the hour of dying. When visiting the sacred and public buildings like the New Hospital at Palermo, Santa Croce, the Camposanto at Pisa, San Francesco at Lucignano, the monastery of the Sacro Speco and the many chapels the people could see the triumphs which reminded them of morals and their final destiny, which made them all equal.

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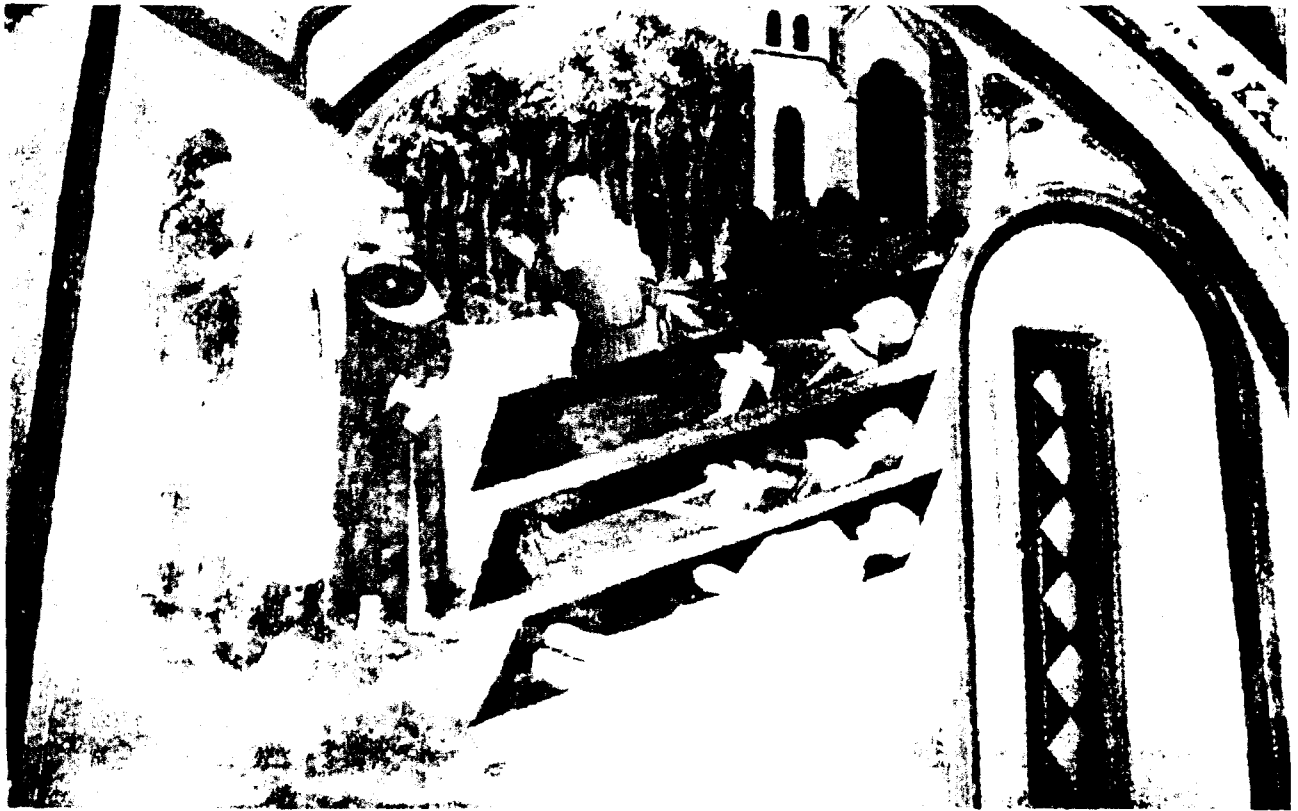Fig.11 Buonamico Buffalmacco, *Detail of the Triumph of Death: Aristocrats Viewing the Three Dead,* fresco 1336, Camposanto, Pisa

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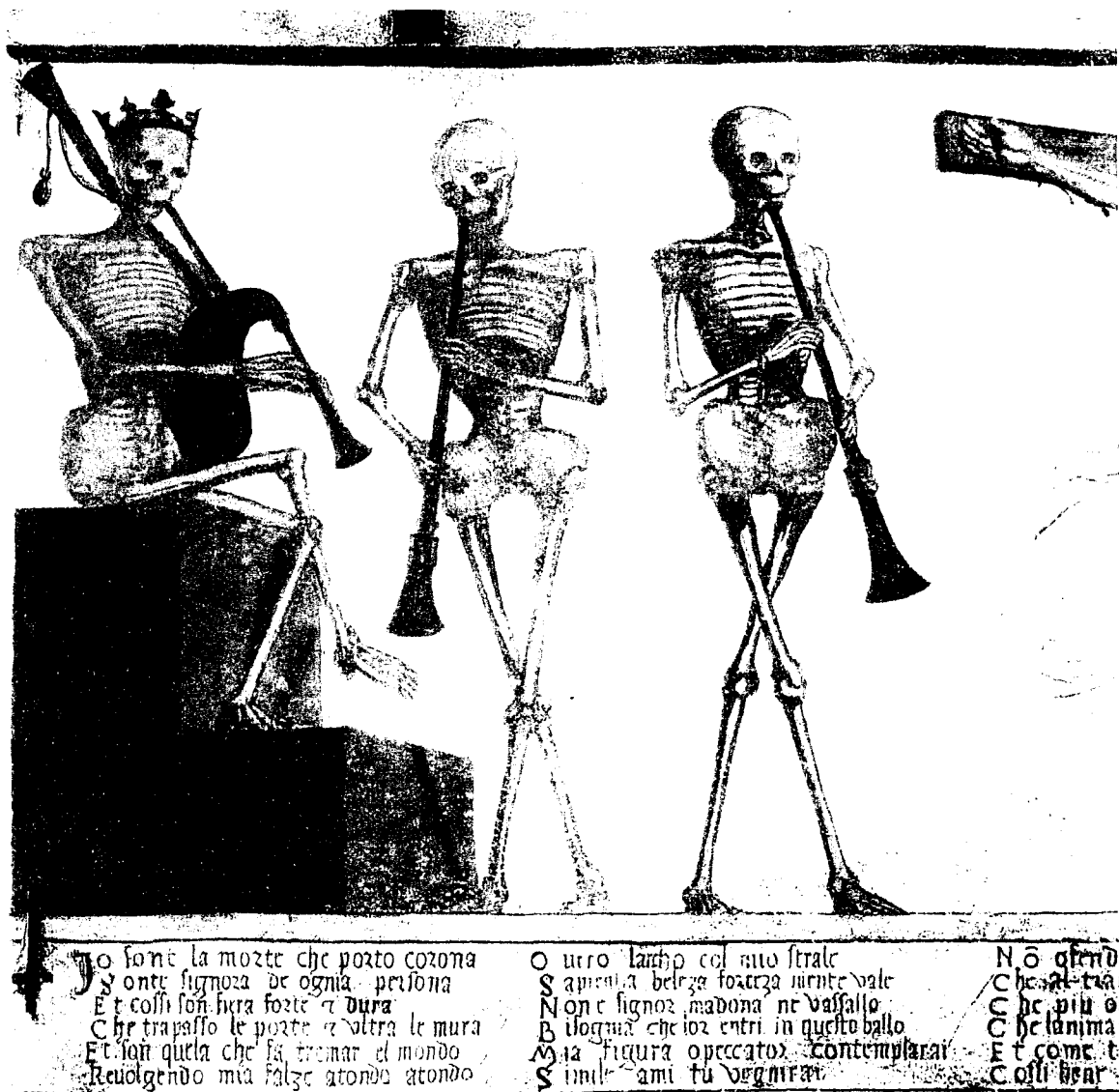Fig. 15 Lorenzo Costa, *Triumph of Death*, fresco, c. 1480-1490, Bentivoglio Chapel, San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna

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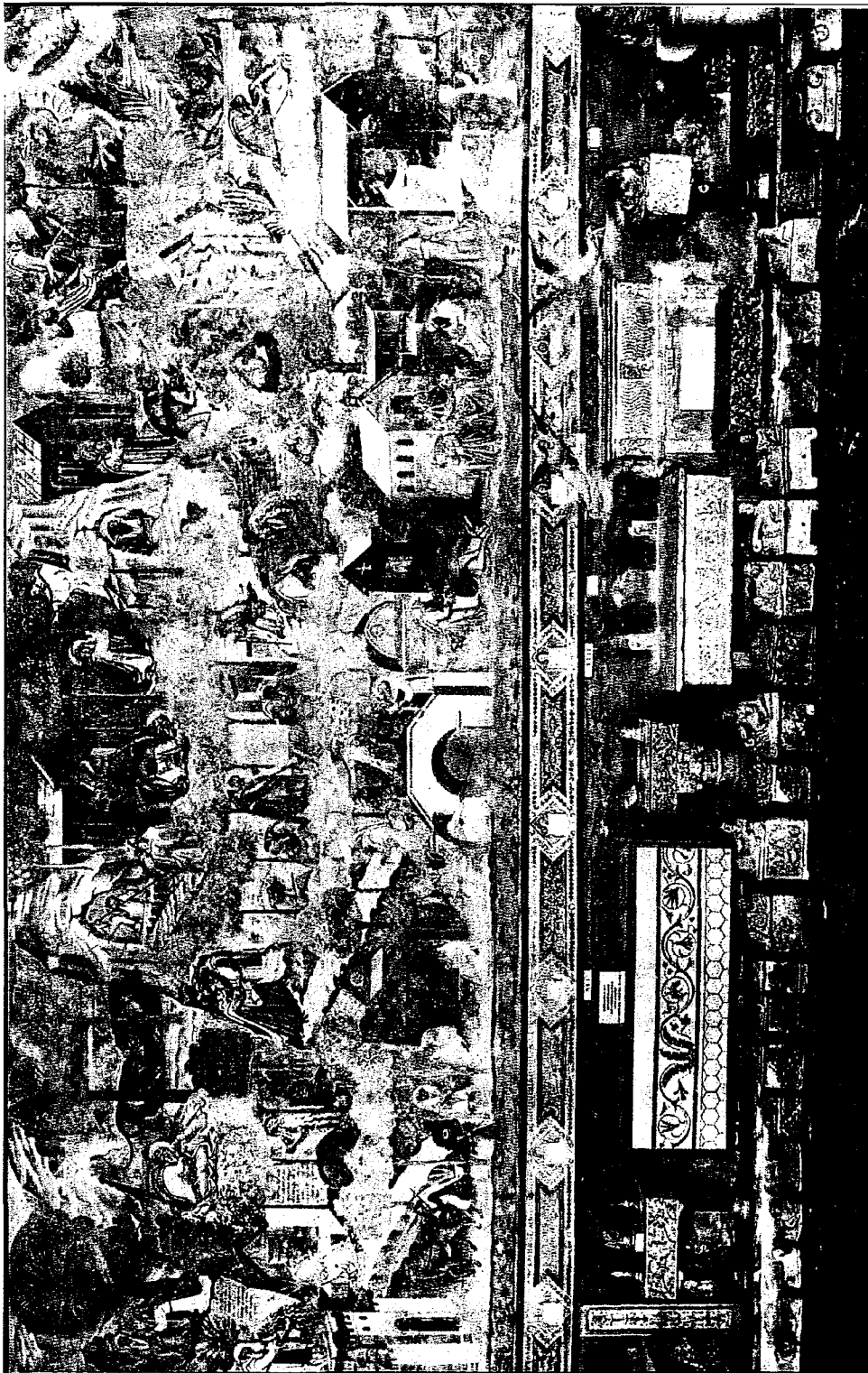
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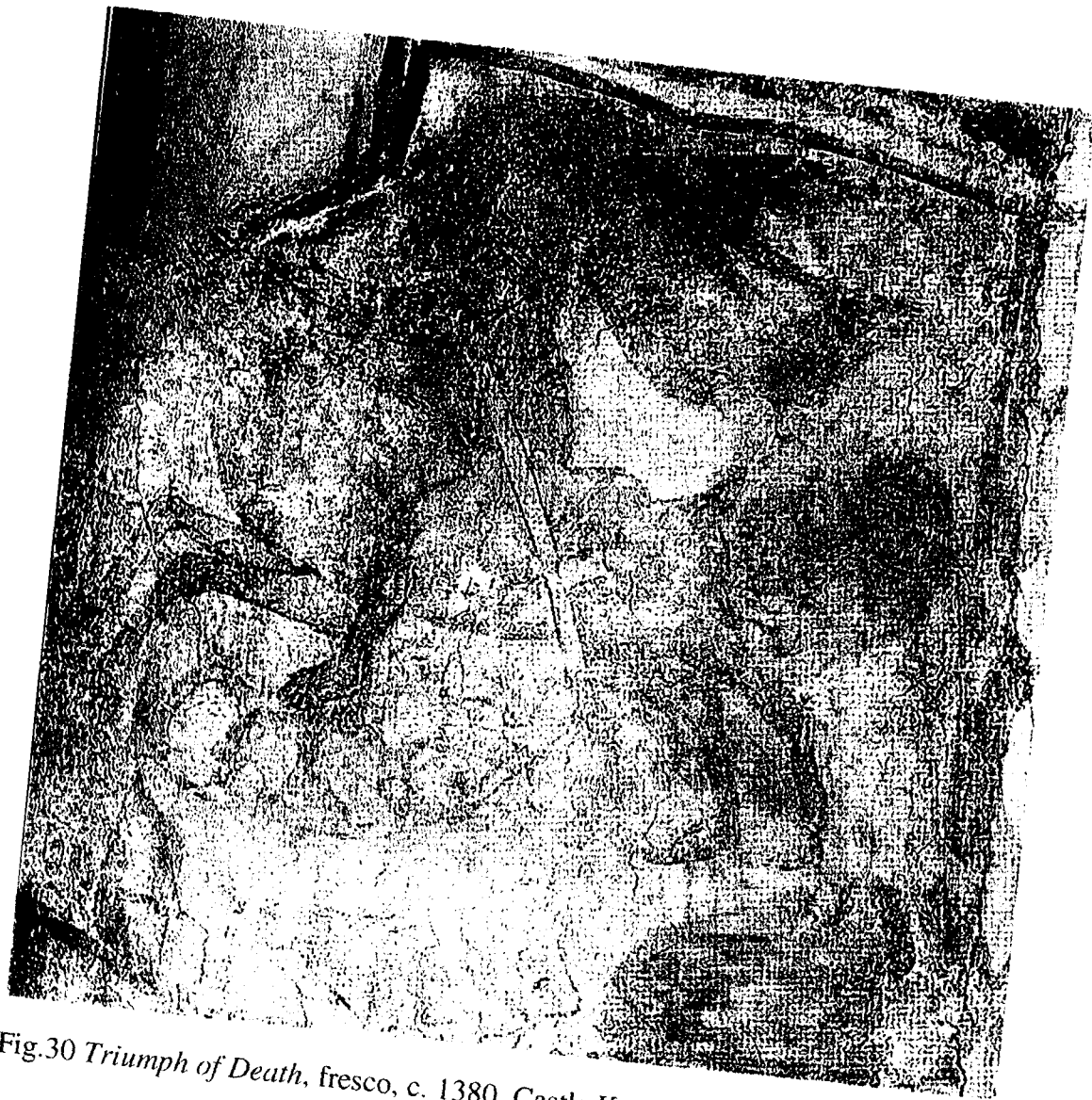Church, Bozen

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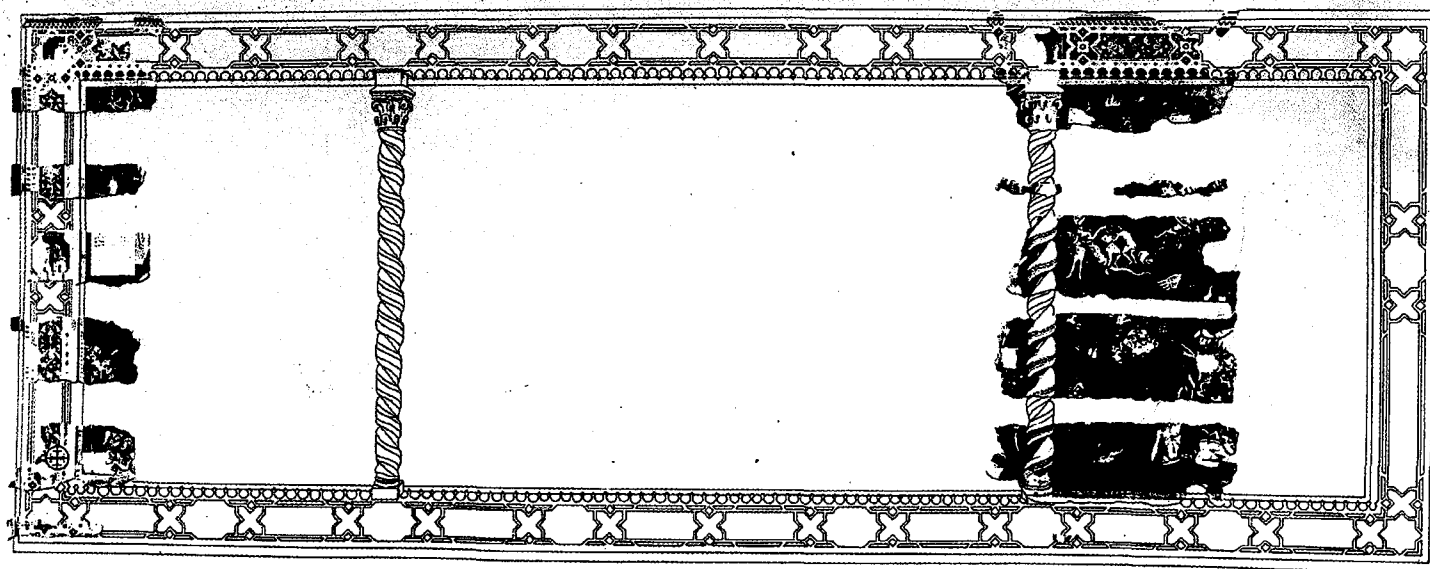
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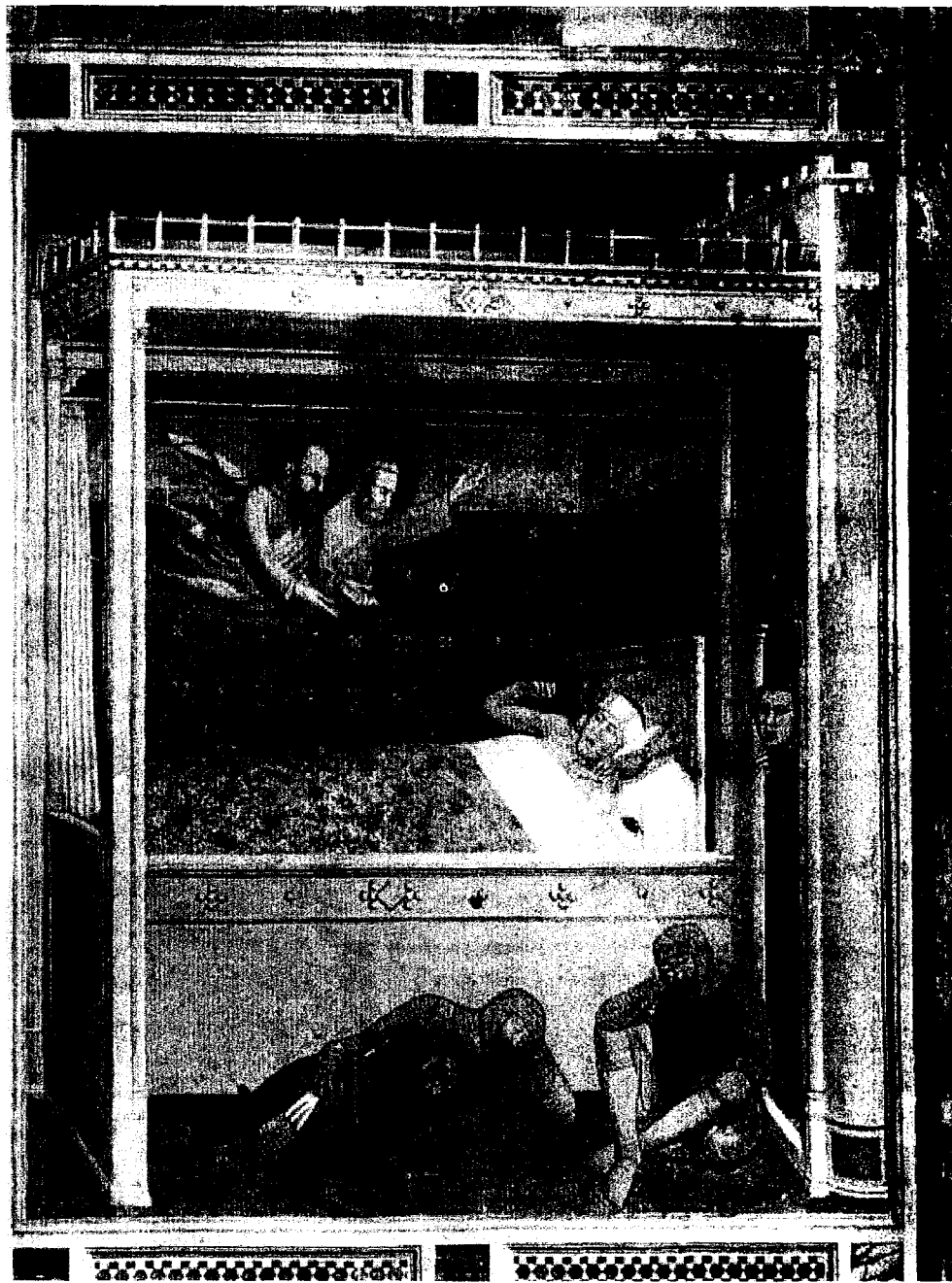
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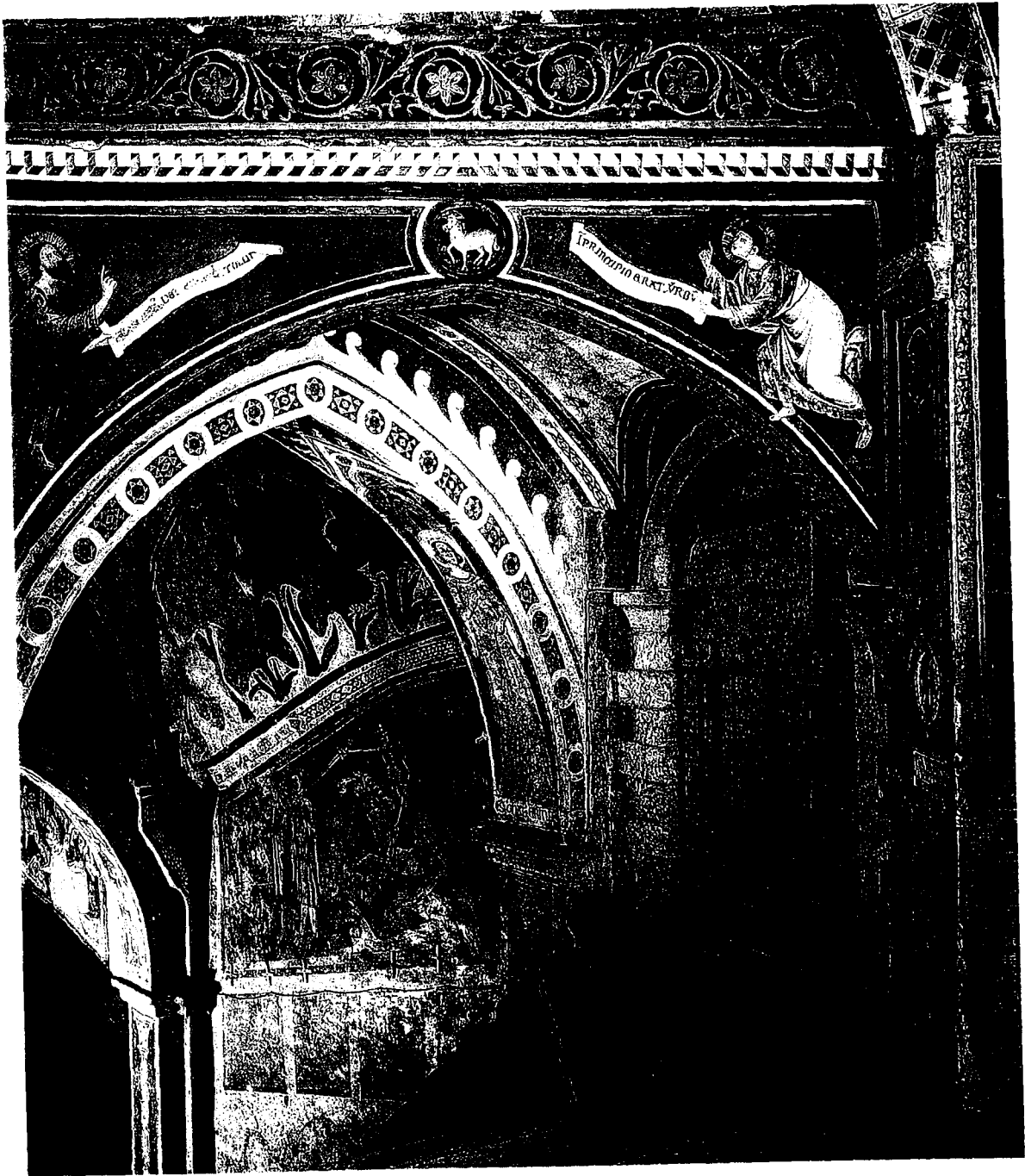
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