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STRANGE FOOTING

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Poetic Form and Dance in the Late Middle Ages

SEETA CHAGANTI

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## “A Certain Slant of Light”: Reenacting *Danse macabre* as Dance

*Strange Footing's* first case study is *danse macabre*, a late-medieval tradition that combines visual art, architecture, poetry, and other media.<sup>1</sup> Featuring skeletons interspersed with human dancers from a broad spectrum of social estates, *danse macabre* is preternatural in many senses and thus might not appear to us as dance in the sense of a physically enacted movement tradition. And yet, I shall argue, *danse macabre's* incorporation of a virtual supplement makes it danced spectacle to its medieval audiences. To illuminate this virtual supplement, I engage in the narrative reenactment method I described in chapter 1, reading *danse macabre* in terms of Lucinda Childs's iconic *Dance* (1979), a choreographic work that, like *danse macabre*, introduces multiple media into a dance-based spectacle and generates virtual forces in that network.<sup>2</sup> By identifying the virtual forces in *danse macabre* installation, this chapter will elucidate *danse macabre's* impact upon its medieval audiences. While to us *danse macabre's* predictable seriality might undermine its potential to terrify or shock, medieval audiences experience in *danse macabre's* multiple virtualities the disorientation of multiple rates and types of temporal passage occurring simultaneously. My reading locates an experience of *danse macabre* in the space between the postmodern spectatorial practices we bring to *Dance* and the

1. *Danse macabre* is not the only medieval artistic tradition that integrates dance-based imagery with other media, in particular poetic inscription. Discussing the Lorenzetti *Buon governo* frescoes, which include both dance imagery and written inscription, Quentin Skinner mentions Giotto's *Justice* fresco, which shows three dancers directly above a short Latin poetic text. "Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Buon governo* Frescoes: Two Old Questions, Two New Answers," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 62 (1999): 17, 25.

2. See my "Danse macabre and the Virtual Churchyard," *postmedieval* 3 (2012): 7–26, for an earlier argument about virtuality in the *danse macabre* installation.

medieval *danse macabre* archive. In narratively reenacting this experience, the present chapter describes a perceptual practice for *danse macabre*. The next chapter will argue that this perceptual practice dictates the medieval audience's engagement with *danse macabre* poetry and their experience of its form.

### THE PROBLEM: DANSE MACABRE AND DANCE

In one sense, *danse macabre* is obviously dance. Its surviving manifestations depict choreographic gesture and blocking in detail. In addition, certain forms of evidence obliquely suggest that the idiom of *danse macabre* bears some relationship to performance practice, whether its aesthetic might inform components of sermons, plays, or other occasions of embodied and kinetic spectacle. When we try to consider the dance-based component of *danse macabre* specifically as dance, however, we tend to do so in conceptual rather than embodied terms. If medieval dance often finds itself tipping into symbolic realms, *danse macabre* seems to initiate its existence suffused with symbolic resonance rather than material identity. In this section, I will discuss why, despite various forms of evidence linking *danse macabre* to embodied movement tradition, it has been difficult to discern any actual, rather than symbolic, relationship to dance that it might have.

The extant representations of *danse macabre* seem to reflect a few basic conventions pertaining to a dance vocabulary.<sup>3</sup> Often *danse macabre* features loping, gesticulating skeletons parading in alternation with live figures representing descending degrees of social estate: popes, kings, empresses, knights, lawyers, and so on. In their representation of danced movement, it has often been noted, the skeletons appear more animatedly agile than their human counterparts, moving in a way that looks to us like dancing.<sup>4</sup> The skeletons also sometimes carry musical instruments to reinforce the terpsichorean nature of the activity being depicted.<sup>5</sup> These features of *danse macabre* appear in a variety of static media, including stained glass, wood-

3. For reproductions of intact Continental pictorial *danse macabre* examples, see Elina Gertsman, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); and Ashby Kinch, *Imago Mortis: Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 17–19.

4. See, for instance, David A. Fein, trans., *The Danse Macabre: Printed by Guyot Marchant, 1485* (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2013), 3.

5. On skeletons carrying musical instruments, see Kathi Meyer-Baer, *Music of the Spheres and the Dance of Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 300.

cuts, and tapestry, in addition to book illustration and wall painting.<sup>6</sup> Notable examples of wall paintings survive in Reval, Berlin (badly damaged), Stratford-upon-Avon (badly damaged and subsequently covered), Inkoo, Brittany, and elsewhere. Recent work, particularly that of Elina Gertsman, Sophie Oosterwijk, and Ashby Kinch, has provided thorough surveys of the extant visual tradition's range of possibilities as well as the social and political functions its iconographic programs fulfill.<sup>7</sup>

Some important examples of *danse macabre* art, including influential *danse macabre* churchyard installations in London and Paris, have not endured beyond the early modern period, but various forms of indirect evidence provide a sense of these installations. The Pardon Churchyard in London once contained what appears to have been a well-known set of wall paintings containing *danse macabre* images and poetry.<sup>8</sup> Paris's Cemetery of the Holy Innocents' *danse macabre*, the inspiration for the Pardon Churchyard, is known to have been a mural running underneath the cemetery's *charniers*, whose open skylights left their human bones visible to the public.<sup>9</sup> The entrance portal to the church there contained a Three Living

6. For an account of the existing evidence relating to *danse macabre* art in various media, see Sophie Oosterwijk, "Of Corpses, Constables, and Kings: The *Danse Macabre* in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Culture," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 157 (2004): 61–90, esp. 70–71. Léonard Paul Kürtz, *The Dance of Death and the Macabre Spirit in European Literature* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1975), 145, enumerates different manifestations of this tradition, including a nineteenth-century account of a tapestry in the Tower of London. See also Francis Douce, *The Dance of Death in a Series of Engravings on Wood from Designs Attributed to Hans Holbein . . .* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1902), 44–47, for a brief survey of English examples. David Dymond and Clive Paine, *The Spoil of Melford Church: The Reformation of a Suffolk Parish* (Ipswich: Salient, 1989), 23, list, in the inventory of Holy Trinity Church of Long Melford for 1529, "Three long cloths hanging before the rood loft, stained, or painted with the Dawnce of Powlis." See also Jennifer Floyd, "Writing on the Wall: John Lydgate's Architectural Verse," PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 2008, 34n10 for a discussion of the references to these cloths.

7. See, for instance, Elina Gertsman, "Death and the Miniaturized City: Nostalgia, Authority, Idyll," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 24 (2007): 43–52; as well as *Dance*; Sophie Oosterwijk, "For no man mai for dethes stroke fle': Death and *Danse Macabre* Iconography in Memorial Art," *Church Monuments* 23 (2008): 62–87, 166–68; Oosterwijk, "Dance, Dialogue and Duality: Fatal Encounters in the Medieval *Danse Macabre*," in *Mixed Metaphors*, 9–42; Oosterwijk, "Of Dead Kings, Dukes, and Constables: The Historical Context of the *Danse Macabre* in Late Medieval Paris," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 161.1 (2008): 131–62; and Kinch, 185–260.

8. On the destruction of this site within a critical narrative concerning Lydgate and vernacular literary production, and the status of the poem as a "perfectly representative artifact of a 'reformist' culture" (62), see James Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 2, 1350–1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 34–62.

9. Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 101–2; the mural itself was painted along the ten arcades of the south wall, the Charnier des Lingères (102). See also Guillebert de Metz's fifteenth-century

and Three Dead sculpture, which contributed to the imagery of the painted *danse macabre* installation by providing another idiom of confrontation between the living and the dead.<sup>10</sup> Associated with this early-fifteenth-century installation is a series of woodcuts first published by Guyot Marchant in 1485, which bear some relation to the Paris installation, as well as the mural's verse dialogues, here printed in 1490 with Latin text (figure 2).<sup>11</sup> This imagery, if conjectured to resemble the wall installations at Paris and at London, replicates the basic conventions of the alternating parade members, the skeletons, the variously gesticulative poses, and other components. Thus, even though a significant portion of *danse macabre* art is fragmentary or conjectural, certain general commonalities shaping an image of a processional dance seem identifiable across it.

*Danse macabre* also makes use of partner configurations and engages these in visual play with the surrounding architectural elements. As partnered movement, *danse macabre* recalls to some the fifteenth-century idiom of *basse danse*, a sedate, decorous, and in some instances partnered tradition that gained popularity in the fifteenth century. Eustace and King consider the ways that the visual imagery of *danse macabre* resonates with specific features of dance practice potentially relevant to processional dance or *basse danse*: the choosing of partners, the holding of hands or garments, and the empathetic mirroring of couples.<sup>12</sup> *Basse danse* also reminds us that while modernity might separate the categories of dance and procession, they over-

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description, which records that the Holy Innocents cemetery contains "paintures notables de la danse macabre et autres, avec escriptures pour esmouvoir les gens à devotion." Le Roux de Lincy, ed., *Description de la ville de Paris au XVe siècle par Guillebert de Metz* (Paris: Auguste Aubry, 1855), 63–64.

10. Robert W. Berger, *Public Access to Art in Paris: A Documentary History from the Middle Ages to 1800* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 29–30. The etiological relationship between these artistic traditions is uncertain, because while they both portray conversations between the dead and the living, they also differ in the social levels of the doomed people they portray (Christine Kralik, "Dialogue and Violence in Medieval Illuminations of the Three Living and the Three Dead," in *Mixed Metaphors*, 133–34). But as two visual motifs they were juxtaposed in late-medieval France (Marco Piccat, "Mixed Encounters: The Three Living and the Three Dead in Italian Art," in *Mixed Metaphors*, 155). And their conceptual relationship was suggestive; Paul Binski, for instance, points out that *danse macabre* and the Three Living and Three Dead both create a *mise-en-abyme* between the living and the dead. *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 54, 138.

11. Gertsman, *Dance*, 4–5, sees the woodcuts as preserving the mural's images, but Amy Appleford cautions that this relationship is conjectural. Appleford, "The Dance of Death in London: John Carpenter, John Lydgate, and the *Daunce of Poulys*," *JMEMS* 38.2 (2008): 287.

12. Eustace with King, 56–70. For a discussion of *basse danse* that summarizes twentieth-century dance history's major claims about it, see my "Proleptic Steps: Rethinking Historical Period in the Fifteenth-Century Dance Manual," *Dance Research Journal* 44.2 (2012): 29–47.

**D**ado moſi ſapientia eſt quid ſapientia noniſ  
ſpōntis anteaſe falſe dabo moſi



**D**ado moſi ſperantia per ſonatum ſuare eſt que  
forte dies ſit eſt ſultima dabo moſi

**E**t ſapientia: marce ſapientia morie rediundans **D**icitur: ſapientia moritioris fluit.

**D**ado moſi magneſtiam eſt moſi que  
ſunt ſperantia poſſunt dicitur dabo moſi



**E**t ſapientia: marce ſapientia morie rediundans **D**icitur: ſapientia moritioris fluit.

**E**t ſapientia: marce ſapientia morie rediundans **D**icitur: ſapientia moritioris fluit.

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**E**t ſapientia: marce ſapientia morie rediundans **D**icitur: ſapientia moritioris fluit.

Fig. 2. Guyot Marchant, *The Dance of Death* (Latin text), woodcut edition [1490].  
Death, the Astrologer, the Bourgeois, the Canon, the Merchant. Photograph:  
Rosenwald Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division  
of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



lap in the arena of medieval dance. Partnered procession might most effectively characterize what seems consistently depicted in *danse macabre* as a dance idiom, though its procession seems oriented somewhat differently from *basse danse*. Furthermore, as the Marchant example indicates (figure 2), *danse macabre* embellishes upon that choreography of partnering by using architectural elements both to frame and to lend dimension to bodily configurations of pairing in the procession.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the fact that *danse macabre* is thus recognizable in certain ways as dance, however, we remain limited in our understanding of the visual idiom's relationship to embodied dance practice. Instead, we find ourselves focusing on the material context of *danse macabre* in order to speculate about the bodily movement this tradition might have involved. The Pardon Churchyard offers one example. That installation came about after John Lydgate translated the Holy Innocents verse inscriptions around 1426; his English verses were then inscribed on what was probably a similar painting executed on wooden boards and hung along the walls of the Pardon Churchyard at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.<sup>14</sup> Because the early modern historiographer John Stow discusses this installation, a narrative account of it is available to us. Stow refers to both the Pardon Churchyard and the Holy Innocents cemetery as "cloisters," aligning them with each other and thereby allowing a measure of conjecture about their similarity in appearance and structure as a series of paintings presumably running along one or more walls of a cloister arcade.<sup>15</sup> Other details about various contexts for the London *danse macabre* paintings exist as well. For example, early in its history, the Pardon Churchyard was a burying ground for plague victims but later became a cemetery for the socially elite.<sup>16</sup> According to Amy Appleford, the churchyard's name suggests that those buried there would be pardoned for their sins even if interred without proper ceremony. In addition, Thomas More's construction of the Pardon Churchyard's surround-

13. Eustace with King, 57–64, 67–70.

14. Caroline M. Barron and Marie-Hélène Rousseau, "Cathedral, City, and State, 1300–1540," in *St. Paul's: The Cathedral Church of London, 604–2004*, 33–44, ed. Derek Keene, Arthur Burns, and Andrew Saint (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 36, cite John Stow describing the murals as a sequence of painted boards, paid for by John Carpenter around 1430.

15. Warren and White, xxii. On the construction of the Holy Innocents installation in the longer history of that site's development, see William M. Ivins, Jr., ed., *The Dance of Death Printed at Paris in 1490: A Reproduction Made from the Copy in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1945), vi–viii.

16. Barron and Rousseau, 35.

ing cloister in the 1420s was accompanied by his renovation within the churchyard of a chapel to St. Thomas à Becket and his mother St. Anne.<sup>17</sup>

Such specificities of historical and material context indicate something important about the installation's setting, which is that it included bodies in motion responding to the painted dancers. As a site of interest to a wealthy clientele, and containing a chapel to an important English martyr, the Pardon Churchyard almost certainly incorporated into its overall spectacle the presence of embodied spectators performing a kind of *de facto* procession as they walked along the walls of the cloister to peruse the art and accompanying inscriptional verse. Gertsman describes this effect of *danse macabre* images in their installation contexts as fostering "complex relationships between visual and performative arts in the Middle Ages, and their reception by a spectator."<sup>18</sup> She develops her analysis by positing that a dance of death installation could "induce the beholder to participate in a particular practice of viewing, and the impetus to do so is provided by the dancing itself: the movement of the painted figures is echoed in the movement of the viewer who must advance to take in the entire piece."<sup>19</sup> Thus, the paintings set the viewers in a motion parallel and responsive to them.

In contributing an additional medium to the installation, the walking body encourages the perception of still other types of movement in the installation. Exploring premodern perambulation, Paul Strohm has contended that the medieval walker is never an aimless wanderer—a Baudelairean *flâneur*—because he is always interacting with the "symbolic character of late-medieval space." The areas through which he moves are "densely marked" symbolically, and those physical terrains offer experiences of dynamic time and space. To walk through the medieval city is to sustain simultaneously a perception of static pattern and, at the same time, the enrichment and complication of such pattern by "invisible lines of force," animated trajectories of alternative space and time existing in relation to the material body.<sup>20</sup> *Danse macabre* localizes this concept by suggesting the possibility of such animated trajectories within it. Reinforcing this idea is Gertsman's further observation that live viewers would stroll in the

17. Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 84.

18. Gertsman, *Dance*, 98.

19. *Ibid.*, 124.

20. Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 3–6.

opposite direction from the characters in the paintings to read the poetic inscriptions.<sup>21</sup> Walking along the installation is thus a choreographic activity, an orchestrated pattern that introduces conflicting experiences of directionality, motion, and time. Interacting with the imagery on the walls, the body can, while moving in one direction, draw to a perceptual surface the painting's impulse of movement in the other direction. These forces, reactions, and interactions between the body in motion and the symbolically laden site give visible shape to the concept Strohm posits. In doing so, they reveal the kinetic force in the *danse macabre* itself, beyond the embodied gestures of its spectators. The processional quality of the spectator's embodied movement, in other words, generates a multimedia spectacle of kinesis from a painting of a procession. Later, I will elaborate in more detail upon the virtual motion generated across specific aspects of the installation, but for now this account outlines the installation's overall spectatorial effect.

*Danse macabre* installation art connects to embodied movement in other ways as well. First, beyond the ambulatory spectatorship of its friezes, *danse macabre* art is conjectured to have engendered choreographed and consciously performed movement. Pearsall, for example, speculates concerning sermon-related performance in the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents. He posits the cemetery as a backdrop that might have affected the components of the sermons taking place in front of it. The image of a preacher in the pulpit at the end of a dance of death mural from Metnitz intriguingly evokes such a scheme.<sup>22</sup> Pearsall suggests the incorporation of "dramatic impersonation" into a *memento mori* sermon, a performance employing a moving figure to remind the congregation of death's approach. He wonders if a performer costumed as death might glide amidst the congregation during the sermon's delivery.<sup>23</sup> This performer could emphasize the power of the *danse macabre* imagery by foregrounding, through his movement, the bodily excess that the congregation should avoid and that the *danse* betokens in the background.<sup>24</sup> The audience's experience of a dancer creeping among them, in concert with the art, could also inspire a creeping dread of

21. Gertsman, *Dance*, 123, on the Reval dance of death.

22. See Sophie Oosterwijk, "'Fro Paris to Ingland'? The *Danse macabre* in Text and Image in Late-Medieval England," PhD diss., Leiden University, 2009, 113.

23. Derek Pearsall, "Signs of Life in Lydgate's *Danse Macabre*," *Zeit, Tod und Ewigkeit in der Renaissance Literatur*, vol. 3, ed. J. Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), 61.

24. Michael Freeman, "The Dance of the Living beyond the Macabre in Fifteenth-Century France," in *Sur quel pied danser? Danse et littérature, Actes du colloque organisé par Hélène Stafford, Michael Freeman et Edward Nye* . . . , ed. Edward Nye (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 18, 29.

Judgment.<sup>25</sup> The mechanics of relation between the representational art and the performer's activity are important here because they offer another way to characterize the relationship between the art and the moving body.<sup>26</sup> Like the ambulatory spectators, the performing figure responds in bodily and gestural terms to the visual imagery of the *danse macabre* figures (as well as the churchyard's open charnel houses). But the specific engine driving this response differs from the one generated by the audience walking along the churchyard walls. The processional movement of the spectators generates a pattern that results from the kinesis required of the object's perusal. Pearsall's speculation, by contrast, posits a performer who intends deliberately to enhance and develop the visual art through a choreographed program of embodied spectacle. This difference intimates the breadth of the possible spectrum accommodating *danse macabre's* kinetic components.

Other examples of performance might reflect the features of *danse macabre* imagery even beyond the installation setting. These possibilities range from dancers, costumed as skeletons performing ritualistic dances, to dramas, or other performance occasions, structured around what we might call death dancing. Gertsman describes a fifteenth-century Corpus Christi procession featuring a figure costumed as a skeleton, who tries to touch everyone in the procession with his scythe.<sup>27</sup> She also cites evidence of the Burgundian court's commission in 1449 of a "certain jeu, histoire et moralité sur le fait de la danse macabre."<sup>28</sup> Eustace and King offer Spanish and English texts that take the form of dance songs and allude to themes reminiscent of

25. Pearsall, "Signs," 61. See also Gertsman's comment that "In the Dance of Death, the Preacher becomes one with the image he comments on, and the procession of Death transforms the Preacher's words into flesh, so to speak" (*Dance*, 85).

26. The more general possibility that a performance would include both kinetic spectacle and static representation was familiar to late-medieval culture. Pamela Sheingorn offers another version of this embodiment/representation nexus in medieval performance, depicting medieval drama as combining static *tableaux* with animated scenes. "The Visual Language of Drama: Principles of Composition," in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, ed. Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldewey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 185. Sheingorn cites a review that she and Theresa Coletti wrote of a 1982 Carmina Burana *Greater Passion Play* production at the Cloisters, which performed the hypothesis about *tableaux vivants* by playing "many scenes" as "frozen for somewhat less than a minute, so that the play progressed as a series of tableaux." Coletti and Sheingorn, "The Carmina Burana Greater Passion Play at the Cloisters," *RORD* 25 (1982): 143. These representational moments might thus appear as juxtaposed with the dramatic activity that precedes and follows them, a scene "cut out . . . from the flow of events" (Otto Pächt quoted in Sheingorn, 185).

27. Gertsman, *Dance*, 79.

28. Cited in *ibid.*, 268n17.

*danse macabre*.<sup>29</sup> In a more speculative vein, Robert Eisler has pointed out that images of *danse macabre* skeletons regularly carry the equipment of grave diggers, and also that they sometimes are manifestly not skeletons but figures wearing skeleton costumes. He therefore suggests that the iconography of *danse macabre* reflects a folk ritual involving gravediggers pantomiming and possibly dancing.<sup>30</sup> James M. Clark mentions a dance of death “masque” performed as part of a wedding in Jedburgh in 1285, citing a description in John of Fordun’s *Scotichronicon* of a performer “of whom it might almost be doubted whether he was a man or a phantom.”<sup>31</sup> E. K. Chambers also refers to speculation that *danse macabre* originated as a “quasi-dramatic ceremony, in which a priest pronounced [lines] from a pulpit, while appropriately clad figures, led by Death, passed to a tomb in the nave of the Church.”<sup>32</sup> For David A. Fein, *danse macabre* “reflects important aspects of the farce” or “suggest[s] a theatrical tableau.”<sup>33</sup> Fein’s characterization illustrates in particular how attested dramatic conventions—like farce—give shape to a possible scene of dance. In these different ways, then, scholars have made constructive use of evidence that is somewhat thin on the ground to posit dance-related spectacles that may have borne some relationship to *danse macabre* imagery.

Fein’s comment about farce gives us another way to consider *danse macabre* as an artistic tradition with a life in dramatic, kinetic performance. Specific performance idioms, including but not limited to farce, are themselves more stable in their evidence than performed *danse macabre*. Such traditions might have incorporated danced scenes reflecting in some way the painted imagery of *danse macabre*. For instance, Jane H. M. Taylor sees in the *Jeu d’Adam’s* devils, as well as in the *branle* of the *Mystère de Sainte Barbe*, some ties to the visual *danse macabre* idiom.<sup>34</sup> Clark speculates

29. Eustace with King, 51–52.

30. Robert Eisler, “Danse Macabre,” *Traditio* 6 (1948): 217–24; see also Meyer-Baer, 310.

31. James M. Clark, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1950), 93.

32. E. K. Chambers, *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 52–53. See also Brian J. Levy, *The Comic Text: Patterns and Images in the Old French Fabliaux* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 119, on *fabliaux* with scenes that indicate a format comparable to a dance of death.

33. Fein, *Danse*, 8.

34. Jane H. M. Taylor, “Que signifiait *danse* au quinzième siècle? Danser la *Danse macabré*,” *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 18 (1991): 269–70. On the incorporation of dance into dramas originating in the Middle Ages, see Katherine Steele Brokaw’s discussion of the Digby *Mary Magdalene* and *Wisdom*. *Staging Harmony: Music and Religious Change in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 26–32.

that the *danse macabre* mural in Paris shared with other early versions at Lübeck and in Spain a common origin in drama, a "chorea Machabaeorum" performed during the fifteenth century. Although specific references to these performances do not date earlier than the middle of the century, Clark and Gertsman point out that fifteenth-century dramatic texts such as the *Pride of Life*, *Everyman*, and parts of the N-Town cycle depict death in ways that draw upon the *danse macabre's* conventions.<sup>35</sup> For instance, we might note that while the character of Death vanishes from the stage before the substance of *Everyman's* reckoning begins (l. 180), *Everyman* queries whether no one will "lede" him from life (l. 156), and the play emphasizes sequential structure in its character interactions.<sup>36</sup> These features leave room either for speculation about *macabresque* choreography embellishing the play or simply for the sense that *Everyman's* framework echoes the *danse macabre's* idiom.

This survey of possibilities, however, only foregrounds the original problem, which is that the correlation between the visual art and the spectrum of performance possibilities pertaining to movement practice remains opaque. The examples above suggest movement-based practices somehow reflecting the imagery of *danse macabre* art. Missing, though, is an attested choreographic tradition that either inspires the art in the first place or responds to those images.<sup>37</sup> The surviving textual and visual witnesses to

35. Clark, 91–92; Gertsman, *Dance*, 80, 95.

36. David Bevington, ed., *Everyman*, in *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 944–45.

37. Clark's citation (92) of a glossary of medieval Latin that contains an entry for "machabaeorum chorea" refers to a mid-eighteenth-century record of a reference to a 1453 dance of death (my translations follow): "Sexcallus solvat D. Johanni Caleti matriculario S. Joannis quatuor simasias vini per dictum matricularium exhibitas illis, qui choream Machabaeorum fecerunt 10 Julii (1453) nuper lapsa hora missae in Ecclesia S. Joannis Evangelistae propter capitulum provinciale Fratrum Minorum." Domino du Cange et al., eds., *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, dig. G. A. L. Henschel, vol. 4 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1845), 168. [The seneschal paid John of Calais, registrar of St. John's, four units of wine to said registrar, to be furnished to those people who made a *danse macabre* on July 10, 1453, shortly after the hour of mass in the church of St. John the Evangelist, on behalf of the provincial chapter of the friars minor.] On the one hand, this text seems to indicate a performance, given that those who have been paid for it appear to have "made" (*fecerunt*) the *danse macabre* at a specific hour, a designation that would more easily imply a performance occasion than the creation of a painting or other artifact. On the other hand, it is the glossary itself leading its readers into a performance-based notion of *danse macabre*, not specific medieval evidence. The glossary editor calls it a "ritus" and describes how its participants lead themselves ludically to death ("Ludicra quaedam ceremonia ab ecclesiasticis pie instituta, qua omnium dignitatum, tam ecclesiae quam imperii personae choream simul ducendo . . . evanescebant. . .") [a ludic ceremony piously established by ecclesiastics, by which people of every rank, as much of the church as of the empire, disappeared alike in leading the dance], but this is not a passage

performances do not specify that their choreographic conventions actually correlate with the processional mode that the artistic tradition of *danse macabre* represents. As Gertsman rightly notes, many elements of *danse macabre* painting indicate an impulse toward performance. To argue that “the Dance was meant to be performed, its words pronounced, and its movement enacted” is the only way to acknowledge fully its gestural, dramatic, and dialogic nature.<sup>38</sup> But to try to reconstruct performance that in any way alludes to *danse macabre* requires depending on several speculations and untestable assumptions. Some challenging questions would include: How exactly were the partners arranged and where were the points of contact between and among them? Did they always process in a line? How did such procession configure itself when incorporated into plays, sermons, or other performance occasions? What do the differing orientations of performers in the paintings tell us about the use of directional change? How would such a dance end and still sustain its *memento mori* agenda? Were poetic texts incorporated into the performers’ actions?

Ultimately, questions like these destabilize the very meaning of the word *dance* in *danse macabre*. Some critics treat the dance element of *danse macabre* as metaphoric rather than literal. While it is certainly the case that dance could do a great deal of symbolic work in the Middle Ages, one also has to wonder if this critical strategy responds to a situation of unreconstructability. Jane Taylor, for instance, answers the question “Que signifiait *danse*?” in the term *danse macabre* by considering its meaning metaphorically. Distinctions among particular qualities of movement, such as decorous reserve or lubricious animation, that is, are indexed to moral, spiritual, and social difference.<sup>39</sup> Taylor points out the tendency of death dances to make their audiences feel grimly compelled to join in (the theme of compulsory dancing is familiar from the story of the cursed carolers of Kölbe, doomed to turn in a circle for a year as punishment for inappropriate churchyard dancing).<sup>40</sup> This theme of compulsion, constraint, and sub-

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from the medieval text. In addition, the example following the John the Evangelist reference seems to concern what is almost certainly the painting at the Holy Innocents, based on its date of 1424. To what degree has Clark superimposed the modern editorializing of the glossary upon the fifteenth-century payment record? The nature of whatever performance occurred is unspecified in the version of the medieval record itself.

38. Gertsman, *Dance*, 81.

39. Taylor, “Que,” 265.

40. On the dance in Mannyng’s version of this story, see Mark Miller, “Displaced Souls, Idle Talk, Spectacular Scenes: *Handlyng Synne* and the Perspective of Agency,” *Speculum* 71

jugation to command allows dance to stand in as a metaphor for the fact of death itself.<sup>41</sup> This reading indicates that to ask what dance signifies in *danse macabre* cannot be a question primarily concerning what choreographic practices, or spectatorial experiences, are designated in the titular reference to dance. No matter the direction from which we approach *danse macabre*, a reconstructive protocol for such an approach will eventually confront us with *danse macabre's* obscurity as danced practice. In this situation, one recourse is to empty embodied kinetic performance from the idiom's dance reference. But defanging the dance of *danse macabre* does not entirely sit right with us either, because it elides this tradition's strong affiliation with choreographically-based imagery. Thus, we have tended to respond by envisioning spectacles like some of those listed above, which place it in the general category of performance but do not confront the experience it offers as dance.

#### A SOLUTION: *DANSE MACABRE* AND *DANCE*

This section responds to that problem by narratively reenacting a spectatorial experience of *danse macabre* through its juxtaposition with a post-modern counterpart. Using this approach to *danse macabre*, I will argue for its identity as medieval dance by bringing to light the virtual forces that we have detected supplementing other medieval dance-based scenes thus far. To locate the virtuality of *danse macabre*, I read it alongside Lucinda Childs's 1979 *Dance*, a visionary integration of dancing bodies, film, music, and light. In the experience of watching *Dance*, the audience perceives virtual forces both between bodily movements and among media. Through the process of narrative reenactment, *Dance* will reveal *danse macabre* to be dance by virtue of its premodern virtuality. We shall begin by examining the experience of spectating *Dance* and then turn to the Middle Ages, considering its perceptual experiences in light of *Dance's*, and, finally, reenacting the experience of *danse macabre*.

Subsequent to her work with Philip Glass on *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), Childs premiered *Dance*, featuring music by Glass and film by the artist Sol LeWitt. In this multipart work, dancers perform highly structured choreography, involving phrases that are repeated and varied in complex patterns.

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(1996): 606–32; my "Choreographing *Mouvance*: The Case of the English Carol," *Philological Quarterly* 87.1/2 (2008): 83–86; and Farina, 97–113.

41. Taylor, "Que," 266–69.



Childs draws upon a repertoire of classical steps—*glissades*, *saut de basque* turns, *pirouettes en attitude*, *sautés*—but presents them in a manner stylized at the levels of both gesture and configuration. The effect of the whole is that of an understated perpetual-motion machine driven by enormous underlying energy. As the live dancers perform, a translucent scrim hung downstage displays LeWitt's films of the same dance being performed by the piece's original 1979 dancers. The filmed dancers are sometimes larger, sometimes the same size as the live dancers, and the film images occupy the projection space in inventive and unexpected ways, appearing sometimes above the dancers, sometimes to one side, and sometimes superimposed directly upon them (figure 3 and plate 1).<sup>42</sup> In the latter instance, the translucency of the projected images creates the effect of live and filmed dancers crossing and moving through each other. Caitlin Scranton, a dancer in Childs's company, sees the piece as having "harnessed the ideal of mixing . . . media."<sup>43</sup>

*Dance* is a particularly appropriate object of analysis here because it uses different media to delineate a space between past and present experience. In the Childs company's recent revivals, the filmed dancers in the piece have been those who performed it originally in the late 1970s.<sup>44</sup> This means that while its premiere featured the same dancers on the screen and on the stage, these revivals have necessarily introduced a new disjunction, whereby the dancers on stage are not the same as the ones in the film. Many viewers have remarked upon the differences in movement quality between the 1979 dancers and the present ones, despite the fact that the choreography is the same and is being set on the dancers by the same living choreographer.<sup>45</sup> In fewer than fifty years, innumerable considerations

42. All images are of the 2009 Bard SummerScape performance of *Dance*, produced by Pomegranate Arts (Linda Brumbach, Director). This reconstruction was commissioned by the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Bard College, with additional support from The Yard, a colony for performing artists on Martha's Vineyard; Wendy Taucher; and the National Endowment for the Arts' "American Masterpieces: Dance" Initiative, administered by the New England Foundation for the Arts.

43. Interview with Caitlin Scranton, 28 January 2017.

44. The Lyon Opera Ballet's 2016 revival of this piece, however, features new films of the current dancers, made by Marie-Hélène Rebois; this version aligns film and performers in a manner different from what Childs's company has been performing.

45. See, for instance, "Dancing Perfectly Free: Past Meets Present in Lucinda Childs' 'Dance,'" <http://dancingperfectlyfree.com/2009/10/12/past-meets-present-in-lucinda-childs-Dance/>. Deborah Jowitz comments on the changes in footwear and technical training as well as the appeal of the earlier performers' less ballet-based aesthetic: "I prefer the fluid, free-flowing arms of the dancers in the film to the more precise positions their onstage doubles etc." "Lucinda Childs, Philip Glass, and



Fig. 3. Lucinda Childs, *Dance* (1979), with music by Philip Glass, film by Sol LeWitt, lighting by Beverly Emmons, and original costume design by A. Christina Giannini. The Lucinda Childs Dance Company, Bard SummerScape Festival. Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 2009. Photograph: Sally Cohn © 2009.

of training, context, aesthetic principles, and material accoutrements (like footwear) make the work different.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Scranton explains that in working with more recent generations of dancers, Childs has not simply directed them to mimic the style of the film's original dancers. Rather, Childs teaches the original choreography while also invoking a classical vocabulary ("arms in second, arms in first"); what the audience perceives is her company's original style juxtaposed with the "classic clean line" of

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Sol LeWitt 'Dance' at Bard's Summerscape," *Village Voice*, 15 July 2009, <http://www.villagevoice.com/arts/lucinda-childs-philip-glass-and-sol-lewitt-dance-at-bards-summerscape-7133919>.

46. Scranton notes a difference in "base technique" between the 1979 dancers and her contemporaries: "Lucinda Childs' DANCE (1979) Revival (2009)," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cE0RmY2e2vI&feature=related>.

many contemporary professionals.<sup>47</sup> Revivals of the piece thus make visible a juxtaposition of past and present experience. In that sense, *Dance* enacts visually what I construct verbally as narrative reenactment.

Its juxtaposition of dancers and filmed representations shapes *Dance*'s identity as a performance in another way as well. Specifically, the representation of the dance contributes integrally to—and thus even becomes—the performance of the dance for its spectators. While Childs's and LeWitt's idea that "The décor becomes the dancers" might seem to suggest that the films function as a backdrop to the live performers, the statement is also intriguingly ambiguous.<sup>48</sup> It leaves unspecified, as do the interweaving mechanics of the spectacle, which dancers are the décor and which the performers at any given moment. What we apprehend as the integral performance therefore relies on all these components. In its effects of chasing and crossing, the installation posits the filmed and live dancers as interacting with each other. The disembodied representations shift into the category of present performance and indeed interrogate the very distinction between the dancing body and the representation of dance. *Dance* elaborates on Philip Auslander's theory of "liveness," which troubles ingrained distinctions between live and technologically mediated performances because of the extent to which even "live" performance is itself deeply mediated through the material conditions of the spectacle.<sup>49</sup>

This category destabilization does not occur simply by reconceiving of representation as performance; it occurs also because the spaces between the filmed and live dancers have a mobile and surprising life of their own, through which they assert themselves as part of the danced spectacle. Superimposing or otherwise interweaving the bodies and filmed dancers emphasizes, in the spectator's experience, the presence and shape of the moving spaces between them. Still images make this effect somewhat apparent (plate 2). More successfully communicative of this experiential occurrence is video of the performance.<sup>50</sup> Like the dancers themselves, these interstices

47. Scranton interview. On Childs's interest in working with new generations of young dancers, see Jessica Gelt, "Lucinda Childs's First New Dance for Her Company in 16 Years Comes with an Arcade Fire Connection," *LA Times*, 4 November 2016.

48. Julie Caniglia, "Past & Present: An Interview with Lucinda Childs," Walker Art Center, *Fourth Wall*, 17 February 2011.

49. Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 10–11 and *passim*. See also Auslander, "Live and Technologically Mediated Performance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 108–11.

50. Some exemplary instances appear from 2:30–2:40 at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_uHPXMsuX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_uHPXMsuX8).



Fig. 4. Lucinda Childs, *Dance* (1979), with music by Philip Glass, film by Sol LeWitt, lighting by Beverly Emmons, and original costume design by A. Christina Giannini. The Lucinda Childs Dance Company, Bard SummerScape Festival. Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 2009. Photograph: Sally Cohn © 2009.

perpetually shift in configuration. Sometimes the live and filmed dancers create parallelograms. At other times, their gestures and orientations produce more complex relations, less easy to categorize as pure symmetry (figure 4). It is perhaps in these latter instances that space in the dance becomes most compellingly animate and energized. These moments that challenge expectations of straightforward alignment emphasize the dynamism of the space between moving figures in the visual intersection of live and filmed dance.

In those animate spaces between live and filmed dancers, *Dance* makes visible a theory of danced virtuality with which we are already familiar. This theory of virtuality underlies Susanne K. Langer's characterization of dance (see chapter 1) as inhering not in the muscles and movements of dancers but rather in the "interacting forces" that these create in the spectator's perception.<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere she elaborates upon this perceptual experience of dance:

51. Langer, "Dynamic," 78.

. . . one does not see *people running around*; one sees the dance driving this way, drawn that way, gathering here, spreading there—fleeing, resting, rising, and so forth; and all the motion seems to spring from powers beyond the performers. In a *pas de deux* the two dancers appear to magnetize each other; the relation between them is more than a spatial one, it is a relation of forces; but the forces they exercise, that seem to be as physical as those which orient the compass needle toward its pole, really do not exist physically at all. They are dance forces, virtual powers.<sup>52</sup>

According to Langer, the motion of which an audience is aware locates itself not within the dancer's body itself but rather in the spaces that danced performance creates between, around, and beyond physical bodies and limbs. Langer calls these forces "virtual." As chapter 1 suggested, such virtual forces are ontologically indeterminate; they may not occupy a material realm, but like the magnetism to which Langer analogizes dance's virtual powers, they interact with and manifest themselves through material elements. By incorporating a filmed component into the performance, *Dance* illustrates this description of choreography's impact on the viewer as located in the interstitial forces between movements rather than emanating from the movements themselves. In specifying these forces as virtual, Langer's theory suggests that *Dance* consists of a virtual component not in the plain unreality of its filmed dancers but rather in the more subtly shaded sense of virtuality that we have discussed. The piece uses the space between its material and immaterial components to make visible forces of kinesis and potential that surround, link, and move through any particular bodily articulation.

*Dance* further defines dance by locating the constitution of the virtual supplement in the collaboration of dance and spectator. Childs's title invites speculation as to whether the piece intends to explain what dance means, or what dance is. Indeed, what has often been characterized as its minimalist and stylized nature suggests this kind of aim, a presentation of something that is, in a sense, purely dance. Sally Banes notes that in Childs's "dances of the 1970s it is the very structure of the dance that supplies divergent points of view. Phrases and fields of movement are stated, broken down, and reconstructed."<sup>53</sup> Childs experimented within a context

52. Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Scribner's, 1953), 175–76, emphasis in original.

53. Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 136. Elsewhere, Banes comments that "The work of both Glass and Childs is characterized

of choreographic work in the 1970s and 1980s that "shunned fiction and drew our attention to structure and process," according to Deborah Jowitt.<sup>54</sup> In both its own features and the aesthetics influencing it, then, *Dance* appears to designate, in its title, a sense of what dance means by presenting its most stripped-down incarnation. But Banes adds another important point to her discussion. For Childs, Banes notes, "the collaborative work functions didactically, turning attention to modes of perception . . . the act of dancing provokes a conscious act of seeing."<sup>55</sup> Childs's work thus invites us to consider the mechanics and results of perceptual experience as crucial to danced performance. What occurs in the audience's perceptual interaction with dance shapes dance's definition. In the case of *Dance*, the perceptual intervention of the audience identifies the virtual forces between the live and filmed dancers. *Dance* is dance, then, in its incorporation of Langer's virtual forces and in its location of their production not only between the dancers' moving gestures but also between the audience and the work. Self-defining in its eponymy, *Dance* tells its audience that it is dance in part because of the virtualities it creates in its spectatorial experience.

These virtualities derive from what we have called the *ductus* of dance. For LeWitt's films carefully lead the audience's sightlines within the piece. LeWitt frequently changes the camera's perspective on the dancers being filmed as well as the placement of the filmed dancers in relation to the live ones, so that while we must watch the live dancers from a static position in the audience, the film draws our visual perspective over, under, around, and through them.<sup>56</sup> Thus, even if they cannot move from their seats to follow a structured process, the audience's gaze is conducted through space in highly specific ways. The films allow the piece as a whole to loosen the distinction between audience and participant by creating visual trajectories that originate from various points around the dance, not just from the audience's proscenium-dictated position. From this perspectival position, it is

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by repetition and accretion of simple sounds and movements." *Subversive Expectations: Performance Art and Paratheater in New York, 1976–85* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 24.

54. Deborah Jowitt, "Beyond Description: Writing beneath the Surface," in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, ed. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 9.

55. Banes, *Terpsichore*, 145.

56. Scranton points out that the space in which the dancers were filmed was much "tight[er]" than the stage space upon which performances take place, so in that sense as well the films set the audience into a different spatial relationship with the choreography (Scranton interview).

*ductus*, a leading of the audience's perceptual acts, that makes visible the interstitial forces of motion and intent as these emerge between real and represented dancers. *Dance* creates for the viewer an experience of being moved around, placed, and led through different spatial and perspectival configurations within the dance, and this experience shapes the virtual spaces and forces that we see in the performance.

This characterization of *Dance* casts into relief *danse macabre's* virtual effects: *Dance* illuminates some experiential possibilities for *danse macabre* that would not be detectable in a reconstructive study of its archival evidence alone. *Dance's* integration of representational and embodied components reflects the installation-based situation of *danse macabre*. In *Dance's* positing of representational components as integral to danced performance, this work foregrounds that possibility for *danse macabre*. As a two-dimensional manifestation, *danse macabre* imagery can suggest—even on its own—the possibility of virtual forces in its interstices. But ultimately, to reenact the experience of *danse macabre* as three-dimensional spectacle, its juxtaposition with *Dance* becomes necessary. This reenactment process will show that the audience's ductile experience of *danse macabre's* media generates the kinetic virtualities that define this medieval tradition as dance.

One prominent feature of *danse macabre* as a visual tradition is its elaborate use of interstitial space in the processional configuration. A ca. 1491 French book image provides a useful illustrative example because its layout, Gertsman argues, aims to preserve the effect of continuity found in the churchyard murals (plate 3).<sup>57</sup> The printer and bookseller associated with this image, Anthoine Vérard, also produced a number of printed play scripts at the close of the fifteenth century; this image thus exists within a textual environment interested in the conversion of performance occasion to book perusal.<sup>58</sup> The precise relationship of this image to the lost churchyard paintings in Paris and London is, of course, impossible to determine. But the illustration's elements bear some relationship to those manifestations, particularly in its incorporation of architectural elements into the painting. In displaying the different kinds of space possible in the *danse macabre* as visual tradition, this image draws attention to the complex interstitialities of the skeletons. Along with the spaces between each moribund couple, the painting encourages the perception of seriality across the skeletons themselves, not only through their similar appearance but also through the ways

57. Gertsman, *Dance*, 174.

58. Weigert, *French*, 11.

their gestures and gazes hail each other. In one sense, a viewer might not register the space between the skeletons because a living unfortunate fills that space. But looked at another way, the series of skeletons highlights the area between them beyond simply the interposition of the living interlocutor. Indeed, one critical tradition sees the skeletons not as individual revenants arising one by one but rather as serial representations of a universal Death figure.<sup>59</sup> The interstitial dynamics of the image reinforce this idea, offering not only the possibility of one couple replacing another in the process of the dance, but also the possibility of engineering continuity among all the skeletons so that they become one figure seen over time.<sup>60</sup> The *danse macabre* thus creates a sense of play among different possible borders for the serial interstices the viewer perceives—between the arcades, between the living figures and the skeletons, between the skeletons as individual agents, and between the skeletons as serial manifestations of a single entity.

Interstitial space appears in numerous guises across medieval artistic traditions, and it seems to evoke dynamic modes of seeing. Art historical scholarship draws upon theoretical discourses around liminality to consider the work that interstitial space does for medieval viewers of art. Corine Schleif, for instance, returns to Victor Turner and Arnold Gennep's constructs of liminality to explore how the interstitial spaces of donor art signify for viewers. She points out that depictions of donors sometimes appear in marginal spaces as part of a piece's visual program. Through images' placement in such loci, she argues, they can experiment with the testing and reinforcement of rules.<sup>61</sup> Schleif's reading of the donor figure in the margins implies that such conventions habituate medieval viewers to detect important representational or conceptual work in interstitial spaces. Other readings suggest that what such viewers detect is a transformative and transitional dynamic. In Michael Camille's analysis, page margins, an "extra-textual space" of liminality, provide "a site of artistic elaboration" in the transition from one visual focus to another.<sup>62</sup> Speaking back to Bakhtinian theory, marginal

59. Ernst M. Manasse, "The Dance Motive of the Latin Dance of Death," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 4 (1946): 83–84.

60. For Manasse, the seriality of *danse macabre* speaks to the nature of death in this tradition. That is to say, while on the one hand this art form might suggest that the repeating visual motif of dancing corpses represents a plurality of individuals, on the other hand we cannot rule out the presence of a Death figure as master piper compelling his followers, one figure seen many times in the process of compulsion (96–98).

61. Corine Schleif, "Kneeling on the Threshold: Donors Negotiating Realms Betwixt and Between," in *Thresholds*, 206–7.

62. Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 16–18.



images and the spaces containing them perpetually generate more than themselves and strain against their boundaries.<sup>63</sup>

As a still medieval image that negotiates transition and interstice, *danse macabre* art potentially responds to these habits of seeing by presenting more than just its static self to its viewers. For in addition to their attention to liminal space, audiences of medieval art appear to discern motion in stillness, detecting animate stirrings while looking, for instance, at the painted likeness of a holy figure.<sup>64</sup> While such effects often occur in devotional images, Gwenfair Adams specifies that the kinesis of eucharistic visions depends less upon the devout attitude of the viewer than upon the act of looking itself.<sup>65</sup> Medieval looking, then, can seem ready to see movement not materially there. Sarah Stanbury wonders, for instance, if Lollard polemic against “dead images” reflects “a fear that images will come to life.”<sup>66</sup> Hans Belting, meanwhile, has discussed the interaction between the narrative and iconic qualities of images, suggesting that these qualities can merge within particular images (rather than existing as qualifying categories of image) to endow the static image, again, with “liveliness.”<sup>67</sup> The gesturing figures that appear in devotional imagery, Belting argues, do not originate exclusively in private worship but rather engage in a reciprocal relationship with cultic practices, rituals, or plays that comprise “the staging of the cult.”<sup>68</sup> In this sense as well, the medieval image communicates movement to its viewer, sometimes even a genuinely interactive “display gesture” that involves the viewer.<sup>69</sup> If the apprehension of kinesis is thus possible in static imagery, *danse*

63. *Ibid.*, 54.

64. Sponsler, *Queen's*, 71–2.

65. Gwenfair Walters Adams, *Visions in Late-Medieval England: Lay Spirituality and Sacred Glimpses of the Hidden Worlds of Faith* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 152–154.

66. Sarah Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 26. Stanbury attributes the late-medieval devotional image's ability to “violate natural boundaries delineating object, body, and spirit” to its “troubled links to capital” (31). Stanbury also argues that in Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Christ*, “images take on life as scenes of participatory spectatorship” (179), and they invite the real spectator to replicate the stance of the spectator within the kind of visual representation he would frequently have encountered (180).

67. Hans Belting, *The Image and its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Ramond Meyer (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990), 46.

68. *Ibid.*, 189, 90.

69. *Ibid.*, 189. Also relevant here is P. A. Skantze, *Stillness in Motion in the Seventeenth-Century Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2003), which questions assumptions about the stasis of early printed material, noting that such material requires an “effort to reanimate kinesthetic exchange in time and space” (6), in both its performance and its circulation contexts, to be accurately understood (6–10).

*macabre's* networks of transitional force, its skeletons' tending into each other's frames, identities, and spaces, might enable with particular effectiveness a perceptual experience of motion.

In *danse macabre's* potential to contain such motion and force—supplementary to, yet born of, the concrete visible image—lies its virtuality. Indeed, a closer look at those skeletons shows us that they, in particular, present a visual experience of what we have been calling virtuality. In the Marchant woodcuts, Eustace and King posit energies within the interstices on which we have focused; for them, these energies manifest themselves as the resistance that the skeletons' human counterparts exert against them, forces made visible in folds of clothing pulled in either direction.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the skeleton images themselves interiorize liminality and transformation through their translucent, perpetually progressive state between life and death. Embodying transformative mechanisms, and therefore demanding that the viewer supply perceptions of movement within them, the skeletons position themselves to conjure, in the perceiver's eyes, potential movement in the spaces between them. In this way, the features of *danse macabre* as visual image produce the dynamics of virtuality as I have defined these: the forces of potential motion and energy that are animated within but also supplement what is tangible or unambiguously apprehensible.

Another discourse that can helpfully characterize virtual movement in *danse macabre* exists in the study of early serial imagery. Richard Brilliant's work on Etruscan and Roman art, for instance, acknowledges the serial image's dual effect as both caught in narrative momentum and contained within itself. On the one hand, Brilliant sees in serial images the possibility of apprehending an entire scene at once by combining all the elements of the series. The viewer's eye "may track the line of temporal succession in unbroken continuity as it moves stage by stage."<sup>71</sup> As Otto Pächt argued before Brilliant, "It is the very essence of continuous narrative to render changes visible by means of comparing the same person in different moments or states."<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, Brilliant also considers what happens when the premodern eye rests in one place, both acknowledging the single point and, at the same time, working against the sense of discontinuity created by the frame around the image. This dynamic usefully describes

70. Eustace with King, 63.

71. Richard Brilliant, *Visual Narratives: Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 18–19.

72. Otto Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 8n1.

a possible experience of looking at the *danse macabre* scene above, with its directional momentum in constant play with the frames that hold each image in discrete place.<sup>73</sup> Such a model offers an additional way to locate the *danse macabre's* forces of potential suspended across it. It further specifies how the still artistic image of *danse macabre* presents itself in virtual motion through certain conventions of premodern seeing.<sup>74</sup>

One might even say that *danse macabre's* interstitial virtual motion profits from modern theories of the comic book “gutter” as a site of movement. Scott McCloud refers to the gutter as a “limbo” where human perspective and “imagination” intervene to run two separate images together and lend them narrative cohesion.<sup>75</sup> Colin Milburn elaborates on this point by naming movement as an ingredient in this process: “The comics medium compels us to suture internal gaps with assumptions of spatial and temporal movement.” The comic engages us in play, asking us to “fill in the blanks with imaginary moving parts, connecting and reconnecting, animating stories on the fly.”<sup>76</sup> Given the context informing the medieval viewer's experience, one that habituates him to the possibility of motion within static images and to activity within the interstitial space, we might conceive of such a viewer performing an operation analogous to what Milburn describes. In the gap between one skeleton and another, behind the intervening live figures, exist such “imaginary moving parts,” particularly if one considers the skeletons to represent a continuous identity rather than a set of discrete ones.

Comparing *danse macabre* to comic book art also exposes, however, what this reading of the skeletal imagery does not take into account: the three-dimensionality of *danse macabre* in its architectural settings and, con-

73. My student Jillian Kern thus articulated this feature of the *danse macabre* painting during a seminar meeting (2014). See also Gertsman on the potential of *danse macabre* to register as both integral and processional (*Dance*, 33).

74. When a nineteenth-century playwright sets a scene before a *danse macabre* painting in the cathedral at Grüssau, he imagines the skeletons becoming animate, leaving their two-dimensional confinement, sitting down at a banquet table, and dancing. Their gestures then mimic and “moc[k]” those of the scene's living characters. Thomas Lovell Beddoes, *Death's Jest-Book; or, The Fool's Tragedy* (London: William Pickering, 1850), 153–55. While not a medieval example, the scene suggests *danse macabre's* invitation to its audiences to envision it in interactive motion.

75. Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 19.

76. Colin Milburn, *Mondo Nano: Fun and Games in the World of Digital Matter* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 143.

sequently, its greater complexity of space and interstice. The late fifteenth-century *danse macabre* at Chaise-Dieu, for instance, is painted on an expanse of wall divided by piers. These piers structurally interrupt the flat space of the painting, and some of them also contain alternative imagery. Gertsman argues that through their structure and imagery the piers disturb the "spell" that the *danse macabre* casts on viewers even as the whole installation produces another kind of experience for its viewers by interweaving its iconographies. In this configuration, the piers manipulate the viewer's experience by introducing another dimensional coordinate into the experience of the spectacle: they "jut out . . . dramatically."<sup>77</sup> Chaise-Dieu emphasizes that the spatial dimensionality of architectural features lends to *danse macabre* installations a complexity beyond that of a gutter or separator on the two-dimensional page.

To continue our reenactment we must therefore take that architectural element into account, and the surviving evidence has by chance left us with a tool to with which to do so, one perhaps even more useful than an integral extant *danse macabre* churchyard. This is Simon Marmion's fifteenth-century depiction of a French cloister, which portrays both a dance of death mural and its spectators. The foreground of this section of the altarpiece depicts St. Bertin receiving Winnoc and his brothers at the monastery, one of the altarpiece's scenes of his life. Behind them is a *danse macabre* cloister.<sup>78</sup> This painting might have been inspired by the dance of death in the city of Amiens, of which Marmion was a native (plate 4 and figure 5).<sup>79</sup> The painting endows us with a significant advantage for reenactment—and for the detection of virtual force in the installation—because it not only features the distinctive imagery of the *danse macabre* itself but also provides a window onto the perceptual situations of medieval spectators engaging with the installation.

The altarpiece treats movement, its representation, its spectatorship, and its setting as integral components of the *danse macabre* spectacle. As a painting of a painting of a dance, it foregrounds both representing and viewing

77. Gertsman, *Dance*, 134; see also 130–31 and 159.

78. The altarpiece's depiction of the *danse macabre* appears have undergone alteration. From the underdrawing, it appears the alterations render the *danse macabre* both more visible and more accessible to the figures in the scene. Rainald Grosshans, "Simon Marmion and the Saint Bertin Altarpiece: Notes on the Genesis of the Painting," in *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and "The Visions of Tondal,"* ed. Thomas Kren (Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1992), 240.

79. Clark, 85.



Fig. 5. Simon Marmion, *Scenes from the Life of St. Bertin* (1459). Right wing of the Altarpiece formerly at Saint-Omer. Photograph: bpk Bildagentur / Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin / Joerg P. Anders / Art Resource, New York.

dance-based imagery. Another painting attributed to Marmion seems similarly interested in the project of representing motion in all its complex contexts (figure 6). Sandra Hindman notes that this breviary miniature depicts scenes from the marriage of the Wise Virgins to Christ (Common of the Virgins).<sup>80</sup> The left border scene, which appears to involve the virgins' choreographed movement in a circle, draws attention to its interactions with other bodily modes of motion and stasis, as well as with architecture, in the painting. Hindman sees a number of "figural" and "architectural" correspondences between this work and the St. Bertin altarpiece.<sup>81</sup> Together, the two paintings make the point that for Marmion, kinetic spectacle in its integrity includes the activities and structures adjacent to it in both space and time. The holy virgins' depiction in the breviary miniature encourages us to understand the *dance macabre's* constitution of animate spectacle in the fullness of its multiple components. For example, in Marmion's *danse macabre*, the spectatorship of the installation is a major preoccupation. And while the painting's viewer—medieval or modern—cannot precisely inhabit the experiences of the spectators in the painting (most of whom face it from angles not possible for that of the painting's viewer to replicate), the viewer as spectator of the painting is brought into collusion with the spectators within the painting. The experience of the viewer looking at the paint-

80. Sandra Hindman, "Two Leaves from an Unknown Breviary: The Case for Simon Marmion," in *Margaret of York*, 224.

81. *Ibid.*, 226–27.

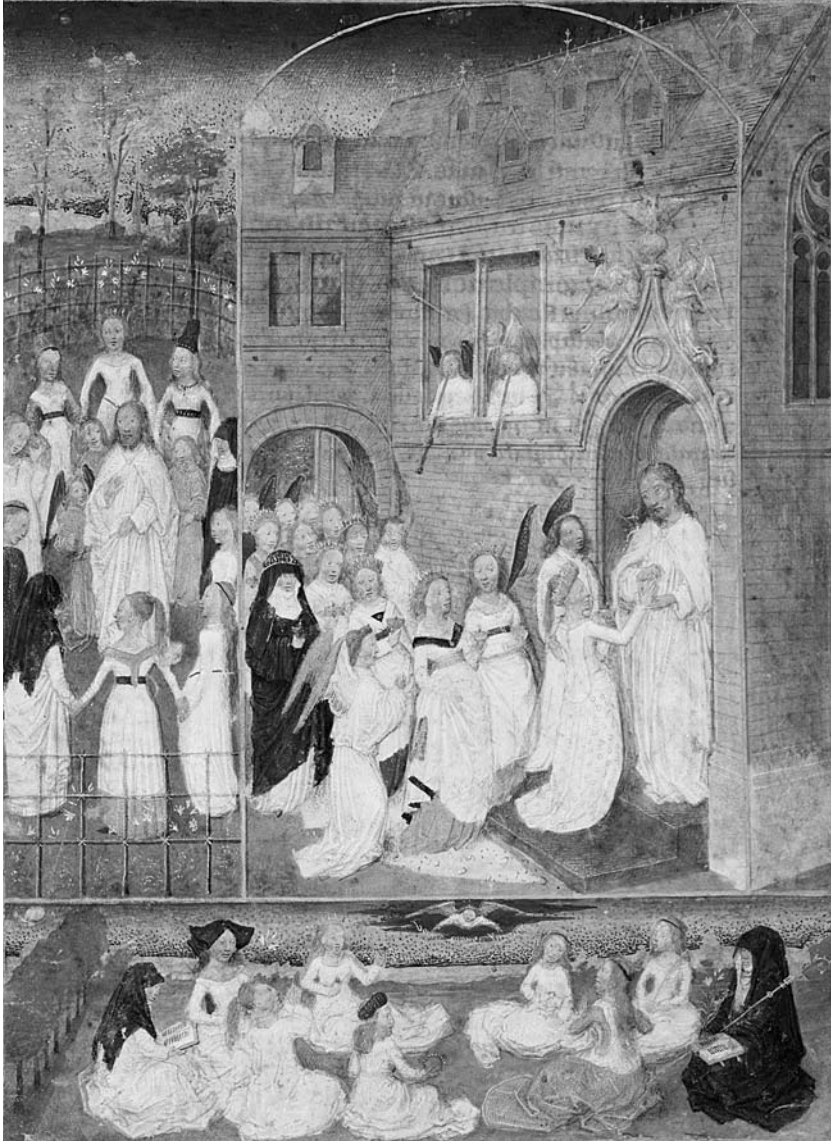


Fig. 6. Simon Marmion (attributed), *The Holy Virgins Greeted by Christ as They Enter the Gates of Paradise* (ca. 1467–70). Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection (1975.I.2477).



ing enters the network of spectatorship spun by the painted figures walking through the architecture as they gaze within the scene.

In this scene of site-specific spectatorship, *danse macabre's* interstitial dynamics exist in three dimensions. In embedding the processional mural within the scene, Marmion draws upon the effect we have already seen in the visual image of the procession, whereby a transition or transformation asserts itself in the space between one skeleton's gestural articulation and another's. As in the case of the book page (plate 3), the depiction of the mural weaves different categories of liminality together, not only the space between skeletons but also the space between partners. But both the architectural frame itself and the perspective in which Marmion places the viewer multiply the dimensionality and complexity of the interstices. Looking at the churchyard through the various architectural elements and at a slight angle, the viewer perceives the archways and other structures not only to frame the dance images (as on the manuscript page) but also to produce other kinds of interstitial space. In Marmion's presentation of depth, arches and pillars overlap, crossing into each other's space, and thereby draw visual attention to an increased range of interstitial shapes between different medial components.

To reenact the experience of this three-dimensionality and its interstices in *danse macabre* installation, we must turn back to *Dance*, for Childs's work can illuminate the virtual forces in *danse macabre's* multiple dimensions and multiple media. In *Dance*, the spectator apprehends virtual force and motion in the spaces between different medial components. As I suggested earlier, these spaces can animate themselves most powerfully in moments of complicated angling or skewing. This dynamic helps us to read the painting's interstices and its material figures. Like the viewers within the painting, the viewer of the painting cannot apprehend the cloister scene in a simply centered or symmetrical way. The left-hand colonnade creates one kind of directional conduit in the parallel angle of the line of columns and the wall containing the painting; there, the columns do not interrupt the view of the painting because of the perspectival angle. On the right, however, something different occurs, with the empty space in front of the painting traced as a weaving trajectory interrupted by the stone columns and other elements. In *Dance*, the perception of asymmetries in space becomes an important means for the spectator to trace virtual force in the spectacle's interstices. Within this context, we might consider how the generation of small perspectival asymmetries in the *danse macabre* (between, for instance, its left and right sides) enhances the viewer's awareness of the mobile potential of those spaces, the forces to which they give rise. *Dance* can thus help us to read the spectatorial experience that Marmion conveys,

one in which the scene of *danse macabre* incorporates not only stone, paint, and bodies but also the energies animating the spaces where these media cross in the architectural setting.

*Dance* furthermore reveals *ductus's* investment of the *danse macabre's* interstices with a sense of movement. As we saw in *Dance*, forces emerge in a ductile process of multiple trajectories, created in the film, its interaction with the live dancers, and the spectator's participatory perspectival work. Looking at Marmion's painting in these terms, we can see that it engages its viewer in a *ductus* that layers the interstitial force of the skeletal procession with the viewer's additional sense of being tipped around stone corners and drawn through columned archways. In this way, the painting's different virtual forces—in its interstices both within the mural and along the arcades—draw out and interact with each other as the viewer participates in the ductile process, his perspective led through different points as is the spectator of *Dance's*. At one level, painted cloisters like this will always reflect Erwin Panofsky's sense of medieval architecture's fractal unity, its orderliness gesturing toward the realm of the ideal. But at another, the experience of the *danse macabre* churchyard produces a supplement to this ordered effect through the "mental habit" of apprehending it.<sup>82</sup> In Marmion's painting, we might reenact a medieval viewer's experience of a ductile momentum, one that makes apprehensible the layers of virtual motion in the interacting media of *danse macabre's* three dimensions and the dynamically irregular spaces between them.

Reading Marmion by means of *Dance* thus reenacts the experience of *danse macabre* spectatorship specifically as dance-based. This reenactment illuminates something we could not see before: that what seemed a general performance dynamic associated with the visual tradition can be more specifically choreographic because of its virtual supplements. In juxtaposition with each other, Childs and Marmion mutually reinforce the spectator's role as not only participatory but also as engaged in the perceptual practice that dance encourages: one that is led through multiple directions of looking to encounter the strange forces of virtuality in spaces that diverge from what is parallel or regular. *Dance's* film incorporates into itself the audience's shifting spectatorial perspectives on the choreography. Marmion's depiction, meanwhile, emphasizes the participatory capacity of the audience by positioning its internal and external viewers as variously oriented

82. Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957), 28, 43, 21.



toward the mural, facing it at different angles and situating their bodies in different ways. Their combined presence suggests multiplicity of perspective—even originating within the single spectator—as a component of the encounter with this installation. Marmion's painting thus enables a reenactment of *danse macabre* as a ductile experience of virtual forces and their layered, skewed, multidirectional trajectories. The presence of these virtual forces in the participatory spectatorship of *danse macabre* defines its experience as dance.

### VIRTUALITY AND TEMPORAL EXPERIENCE IN *DANSE MACABRE*

The dance-based experience of *danse macabre* affects perceptions of both space and time. For the virtualities of *danse macabre* produce, I will argue in this final section, an experience for the viewer that layers several temporal rates of passage at once. Making this case will require shifting our perspectival axis from the horizontal one along which we have been considering this processional tradition to a vertical one from which to notice different aspects of its kinesis and virtuality. *Danse macabre's* horizontal momentum speaks to its thematics of relentless seriality, a traditional view of this idiom.<sup>83</sup> But in both Childs's *Dance* and *danse macabre*, virtual and actual motion plot themselves on vertical as well as horizontal axes. Continuing to juxtapose *Dance* with *danse macabre*, this section will illustrate how *danse macabre* uses vertical orientation to dictate the viewer's experience of time. Casting its forces of motion along both vertical and horizontal axes, *danse macabre* makes the confrontation with death a disorienting experience of multiple rates of temporal passage in simultaneous operation. As Isabel Davis has noted, medieval audiences were in many ways accustomed to highly complex temporal models.<sup>84</sup> *Danse macabre's* reenactment as dance-based experience reveals its species of temporal strangeness.

To continue this reenactment, we must note that *Dance* organizes itself on vertical as well as horizontal axes and that its virtual supplements appear along both. Certain moments in *Dance* emphasize a vertically configured

83. On the *danse macabre* as expressing compulsion in its impulse to repetition, see Taylor, "Que," above, as well as R. H. Bowers, "Iconography in Lydgate's 'Dance of Death,'" *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 12.2 (1948): 118 (discussing Manasse).

84. Isabel Davis, "Cutaneous Time in the Late-Medieval Literary Imagination," in *Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture*, ed. Katie L. Walter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 100.

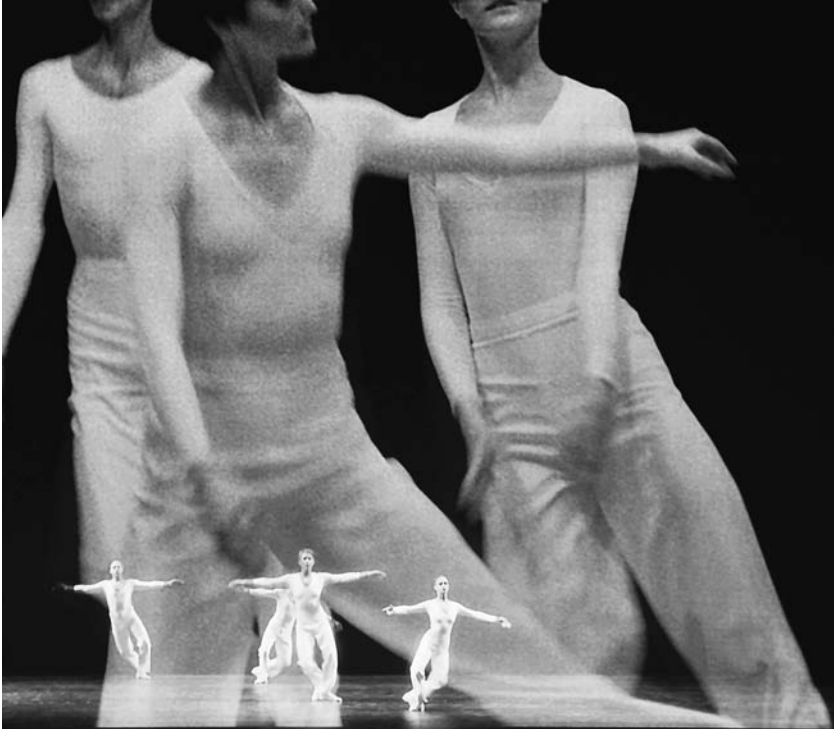


Fig. 7. Lucinda Childs, *Dance* (1979), with music by Philip Glass, film by Sol LeWitt, lighting by Beverly Emmons, and original costume design by A. Christina Giannini. The Lucinda Childs Dance Company, Bard SummerScape Festival. Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 2009. Photograph: Sally Cohn © 2009.

relationship between the live and filmed dancers (figure 7). There are also instances in *Dance* when LeWitt shifts the angle of the camera so that the filmed dancers appear on a plane above the live dancers, sometimes with the image of the filmed dance space's floor visually separating them (figure 8).<sup>85</sup> In one sense, the effect of moving shapes and forces between live and filmed dancers is the same whether articulated on a horizontal or a vertical axis. In both cases, as figure 8 shows, the piece makes visible the same range we see horizontally, from coordination between the two media, on the one hand, to

85. See, for example, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_uHPXMsuX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_uHPXMsuX8) at 1:33, 2:20, and 2:30 for such moments.

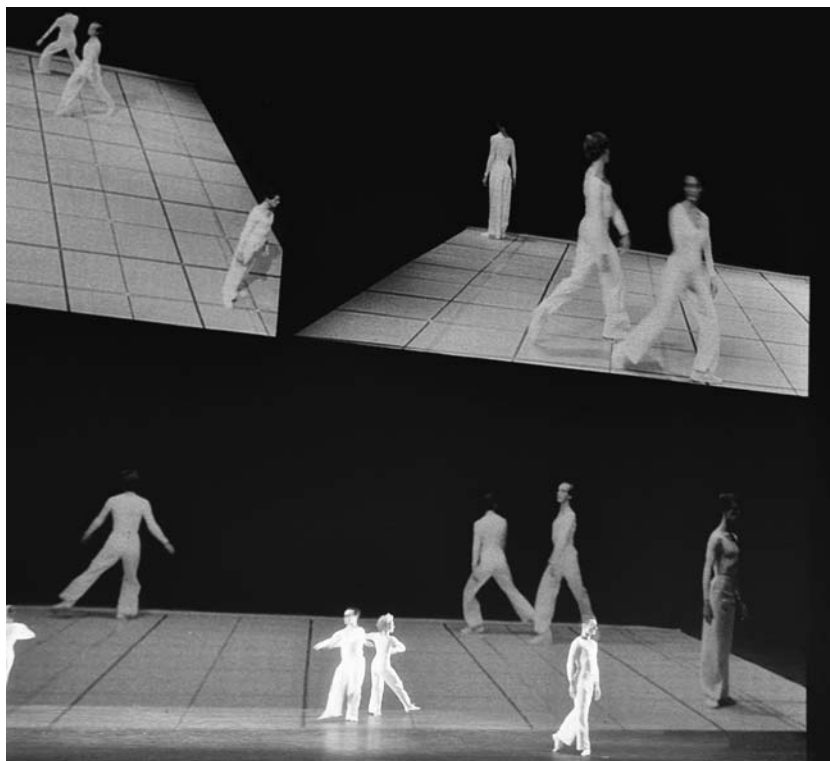


Fig. 8. Lucinda Childs, *Dance* (1979), with music by Philip Glass, film by Sol LeWitt, lighting by Beverly Emmons, and original costume design by A. Christina Giannini.

The Lucinda Childs Dance Company, Bard SummerScape Festival. Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 2009. Photograph: Sally Cohn © 2009.

something more skewed, on the other. The vertical axis offers another way of detecting dynamic force between and around physical bodies.

There is also, however, an important difference: the vertical juxtapositions of live and filmed media confront the spectator with different kinds of temporal passage. Considered on a horizontal axis, both live and filmed dancers similarly follow Childs's processional aesthetic, sharing the same general quality of momentum to get the across the stage. On the vertical axis, however, the juxtaposition of different media elucidates different modes of temporal passage simultaneously. Looking at the piece on a vertical axis can challenge our sense of live and filmed performers dancing together, causing them inhabit more deeply distinct categories of motion. In those instances, asyn-

chrony results from the way that a lived and filmed dancer must each occupy a different medial time. The filmed dancers' luminous indistinction compels them to move through the music at a subtly different pace from the time that a live body in motion appears to inhabit. The live dancers' more sharply outlined bodies, as well as the purposiveness with which their material limbs imbue their gestures, prevent them from replicating fully the rhythms of the hazier filmed bodies. If we earlier identified gestural character to distinguish live and filmed dancers, here we discern a more fundamental difference, established in the nature of the media, concerning the time of the dance. On the vertical axis, the spaces between the real and filmed dancers allow the viewer to register a sense of time as variously inhabited by different media.

These spaces in *Dance* manifest our sense of virtuality as untimeliness, time that does not quite follow the order of the material world and is ahead of or behind itself. That untimeliness becomes further evident when we understand that the two medial components' responses to light produce their differing relations to time. The influence of light on visual effect becomes particularly clear (if the spectator is focusing on the vertical axis) when the filmed dancers appear as larger in scale than the live dancers, dancing above as well as around the live dancers (plate 1). The way that each medium—bodily and filmed—reflects light reinforces its distinct temporal quality. The live bodies become more precise as their angles are illuminated, enhancing the viewer's sense that they are cutting through musically marked time. But for the magnified films in particular, light operates as a diffusing mechanism that countermands this momentum. Attending to the spectator's perception of light thus further specifies the sense of temporal difference we might perceive in the spaces between live and filmed dancers.

*Dance* foregrounds medieval *danse macabre's* presentation along its own vertical axis. The fragmentary wall paintings on the north wall of the Guild Chapel in Stratford-upon-Avon (possibly commissioned at the end of the fifteenth century) will illustrate this claim. This *danse macabre* mural was subject to early-modern whitewashing and possible subsequent wall painting.<sup>86</sup> Wooden paneling has covered the north and south walls throughout

86. Wilfrid Puddephat, "The Mural Paintings of the Dance of Death in the Guild Chapel of Stratford-upon-Avon," *Birmingham Archaeological Society Transactions* 76 (1960): 30–31. Clifford Davidson, *The Guild Chapel Wall Paintings at Stratford-upon-Avon* (New York: AMS, 1988), 10–11, 33; see also Davidson on a nineteenth-century restoration and drawings (11–13). Puddephat dates the paintings to the early sixteenth century (29). On the figures and colors in the paintings:

The sixty participants in the dance were arranged in pairs, each consisting of a sprightly cadaver with a reluctant victim in its grasp. There were two pairs of characters in each



Fig. 9. Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon (2016). Interior north wall.  
Photograph: Michael Brooks / Alamy Stock Photo.

much of the chapel's modern configuration (figure 9), although at this writing a project has been undertaken, involving the removal of some paneling, to conserve certain of the chapel's wall paintings.<sup>87</sup> In the 1950s, Wilfrid Puddephat removed the panels then in place to study the painting (figures 10, 11). Unlike the French book illustration or Marmion's painting, this *danse macabre* survival presents serious obstacles to our present apprehension of it. Even in its nearly illegible state, however, the Guild Chapel installation makes clear its dramatic use of vertical orientation in its visual program.

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compartment. The figures were lighter in tone than the rich scarlet background against which they were represented in attitudes which suggested that they were moving to the left along a floor paved with vermilion and black tiles, which formed a chequered pattern of squares in the upper tier but of lozenge shapes in the lower. (Puddephat, 32)

Davidson notes, however, the tenuousness of some of Puddephat's records (50). On early-modern whitewash and the dynamics of erasure and preservation, see Juliet Fleming, "Whitewash and the Scene of Writing," *Shakespeare Studies* 28 (2000): 133–38.

87. Project supervised by Trevor Edwards, AABC Conservation Architect. What has thus far been uncovered of the dance of death is highly degraded, but it is possible that future work might yield more revealing results regarding this painting. (E-mail conversation with Cate Statham, project manager, July 2017.)



Fig. 10. Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon (1955–62). Restoration work.  
Photograph: Wilfrid Puddephat by kind permission of the  
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (DR409\_6\_24).





Fig. 11. Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon (1955–62). Restoration work.  
 Photograph: Wilfrid Puddephat by kind permission of the  
 Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (DR409\_6\_26).

With Puddephat's removal of the wooden paneling, a contrast appears between the horizontal trajectory that the mural impels and the verticality of the tall windows in the nave. This nave, a bequest of Hugh Clopton, reflects the late-Gothic building style known as Perpendicular.<sup>88</sup> As the name implies, this architectural idiom emphasizes vertical lines; its features respond to what John Harvey calls the "demand for vertical emphasis."<sup>89</sup> The building's Perpendicular style suggests that the tall windows held special significance in the visual and aesthetic program of the architecture, declaring their distinction from the horizontality of the mural.<sup>90</sup>

88. Puddephat, 29, 31.

89. John Harvey, *The Perpendicular Style 1330–1485* (London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1978), 68.

90. Harvey suggests that in the Perpendicular tradition, the use of ogee-shaped cusping in windows was meant to "ad[d] to the impression of verticality" (58). He continues, "Windows were enlarged to reach their practical limits, stretching from buttress to buttress and eliminating wall-space. Their verticality of effect was emphasized, not only by Perpendicular detail and other tricks of design, but by actual height . . ." (67). Gail McMurray Gibson discusses the proliferation of churches in this style in East Anglia, where they often resulted from the profitable wool trade. *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 26. On the device of "vertical reading" in the De Lisle



Plate 1. Lucinda Childs, *Dance* (1979), with music by Philip Glass, film by Sol LeWitt, lighting by Beverly Emmons, and original costume design by A. Christina Giannini. The Lucinda Childs Dance Company, Bard SummerScape Festival. Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 2009. Photograph: Sally Cohn © 2009.





Plate 2. Lucinda Childs, *Dance* (1979), with music by Philip Glass, film by Sol LeWitt, lighting by Beverly Emmons, and original costume design by A. Christina Giannini. The Lucinda Childs Dance Company, Bard SummerScape Festival. Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 2009. Photograph: Sally Cohn © 2009.



Plate 3. Detail of the Archbishop, the Knight, the Bishop, the Squire, the Cordelier (Franciscan), the Child, the Cleric, and the Hermit. From *La danse macabre* (Paris: Pierre le Rouge for Anthoine Vérard, ca. 1491–92). BnF, Réserve Te-8-Fol, page 3. Photograph: Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Plate 4. Simon Marmion, *Scenes from the Life of St. Bertin* (1459) (detail). Right wing of the Altarpiece formerly at Saint-Omer. Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.  
Photograph: bpk Bildagentur / Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin / Joerg P. Anders / Art Resource, New York.

Given the site's obfuscation of the original *danse macabre* mural, we are fortunate to have in the Digital Guild Chapel a means to reenact this installation (figure 12).<sup>91</sup> Restoring the painting, this digital site shows what the actual site cannot. But it accomplishes more as well, using virtual reality to reenact, according to chapter 1's definition, rather than merely to reconstruct. The Digital Guild Chapel introduces virtuality as a force in time to our encounter with this setting. It does so by setting the wall paintings in motion, conveying their different states over time as well as the conjectural nature of their placement. While virtual technologies that aim to reconstruct sites sometimes reify their components, the Digital Guild Chapel uses the virtual platform to do the opposite. The creators use the digital platform to convey the lack of critical consensus around the church paintings' placement, to suggest thematic as well as structural connections between them, and, perhaps most importantly, to avoid a false impression of stability by depicting the building as existing in states of change.<sup>92</sup> The Digital Guild Chapel provides different perspectives on the chapel over time by presenting it as a site in virtual motion. This project harnesses the indeterminate time of virtuality (see chapter 1) in order to present an unstable past.

The Digital Guild Chapel is especially useful because in concert with *Dance*, it makes evident the original installation's use of different media to experiment with horizontal and vertical forces. While the *danse macabre*

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Psalter's illustrated "three living and three dead" material, see Susanna Greer Fein, "Life and Death, Reader and Page: Mirrors of Mortality in English Manuscripts," *Mosaic* 35.1 (2002): 86.

91. This project is located at "The Digital Guild Chapel," <http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue32/1/GuildChapelInterface3.html>. See also Kate Giles and Jonathan Clark, "The Archaeology of the Guild Buildings of Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon," in *The Guild and Guild Buildings of Shakespeare's Stratford: Society, Religion, School, and Stage*, ed. J. R. Mulryne (New York: Routledge, 2016), esp. 164.

92. For example, Giles et al. have pointed out that the Guild Chapel *danse macabre*'s incorporation of Seven Deadly Sin imagery resonates with the Doom painting above the chancel—this connection potentially constitutes another form of kinesis in the still images, one that the virtual chapel can emphasize. As these critics also note, "within the digital heritage field there has been increasing concern about the use of virtual models in this rather uncritical way. Scholars have pointed out that the creation of 'a' virtual model inadvertently closes down alternative and multiple interpretations of the same evidence." Giles, Anthony Masinon, and Geoff Arnott, "Visualising the Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon: Digital Models as Research Tools in Historical Archaeology," *Internet Archaeology Journal* 32 (2012). See also the discussion of the limitations of "virtual heritage" in terms of its spatial fixity and oculo-centrism in Erik Champion, "History and Cultural Heritage in Virtual Environments," in *Oxford Handbook of Virtuality*, 271–72.





Fig. 12. Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon. North wall of the nave. Digital model reconstruction by Anthony Masinton and Geoff Arnott (2008). Still image by Geoff Arnott (2017).

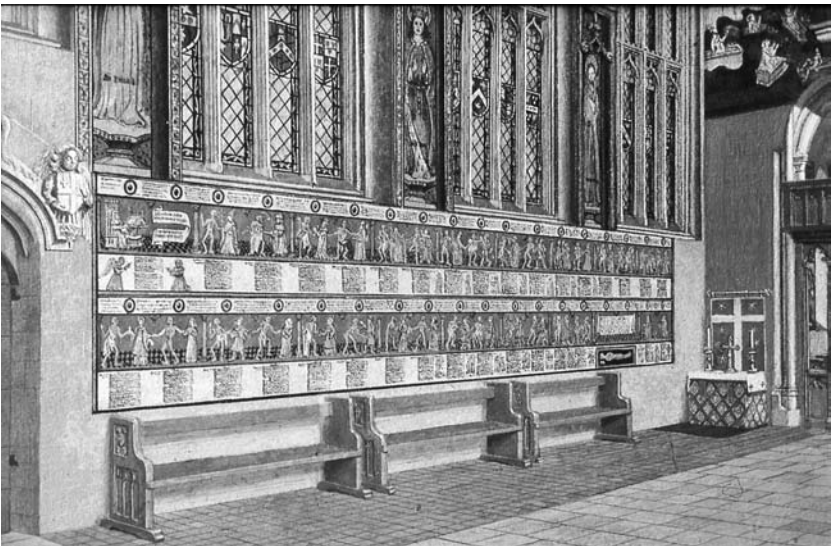


Fig. 13. Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon. Dance of death, north wall. Credit: Wilfrid Puddephat by kind permission of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (DR399\_I\_3\_GC\_G51).

painting generates processional, lateral momentum (emphasized by the mural's depictions of the horizontal *gisant* and banner), the windows express vertical impulses. The Guild Chapel's relations among media thus emerge as an interaction of horizontal and vertical vectors.<sup>93</sup> In addition to the soaring height of the windows, the vertical aesthetic of the wall behind and above the mural might receive even further emphasis in what Puddephat speculates were tall figures in the alcoves above the *danse macabre* (figure 13). These figures between the windows intensify the focus on verticality by introducing proportional play in the installation as well, offering human bodies much enlarged, along a vertical axis, beyond their counterparts in the procession. In an evocative reminder of the imagery of Childs's *Dance* (figure 7), the Guild Chapel *danse macabre* (in Puddephat's conjecture) offers its audience, within a predominantly interstitial structural aesthetic, a towering expanse along a vertical axis while also asking the eye to follow the progression of its horizontal one. And like *Dance*, this *danse macabre* plays with scalar enlargement and diminishment along these horizontal and vertical axes. *Dance* casts into relief the dynamic quality of Guild Chapel's horizontal and vertical impulses as they structure its medial relations.

The installation also enhances its conceptual resonances by subverting its own alignment of direction with medium (glass : vertical :: mural : horizontal). It introduces verticalities into the ostensibly horizontal mural. The Guild Chapel painting is arranged in a double layer, soliciting attunement to the dynamics of both vertical and horizontal space as its viewers look up and down as well as across to follow its visual program. We might ascribe the Guild Chapel's visual layout purely to the happenstance of architectural constraint introduced by a single interior wall rather than by a square churchyard. But the result still encourages the viewer's attention to the various directions, including vertical, in which his perceptual acts cast themselves in the apprehension of the spectacle. Locating the play of horizontal and vertical tendencies within the mural itself enters the mural's configuration into dialogue with its sociopolitical meaning. Amy Appleford has seen the lateral nature of the *danse macabre* as

93. Scholarship of *danse macabre* suggests that it is an aesthetic tradition particularly invested in the dynamics of interactivity as multimedia conditions establish them. These occur, for instance, not only between author and reader (Oosterwijk, "Dance," 21) but also in the introduction of *macabre* imagery into other decorative programs (Kristiane Lemé-Hébuterne, "Places for Reflection: Death Imagery in Medieval Choir Stalls," in *Mixed Metaphors*, 271).

a departure from a more traditional, vertically-oriented hierarchy, producing a “community organized along horizontal or lateral lines,” representative of what David Wallace has termed an “associational ideology” for the city of London.<sup>94</sup> The directional complexity in the *danse macabre*'s media accommodates the conceptual dichotomy of hierarchy and association.

But besides elucidating this type of social thematic, attention to the verticality of the *danse macabre* installation also alerts us to another medium, one that is mobile itself and also produces the appearance of moving forces: that medium is light. In particular, the painting would have received illumination from the south windows across from it. Viewers contemplating the *danse macabre* for any length of time would also be aware of the shifting angles, qualities, and intensities of light from the chapel's windows. Light in fact comprises an important factor in medieval church architecture, in terms not only of its Sugerian symbolism but also of its role in the mechanics of viewing experience.<sup>95</sup> Simon Roffey, for instance, suggests that English chantry chapel design took into account the directional vectors of incoming light in order to highlight certain architectural features of the structure, like altars or tombs.<sup>96</sup> The placement of the painting under and across from a set of perpendicular windows suggests this kind of intentional interaction between the site of the artwork and the sources of light (fig-

94. Appleford, *Learning*, 96. See also Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 65–82. The play of lateral movement and vertically-configured placement within the mural potentially foregrounds the mural's political intervention. That is, the mural's capitalization on vertical and horizontal lines of sight—made obvious in the media interaction of glass and paint but then further articulated within the mural itself—becomes ideologically revelatory. For other arguments that deal with visual detail's relationship to sociopolitical content, see Sophie Oosterwijk, “Death, Memory, and Commemoration: John Lydgate and ‘Macabrees daunce’ at Old St. Paul's Cathedral, London,” in *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval England*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Clive Burgess (Harlaxton: Harlaxton Symposium Proceedings, 2010), 185–201; and Kinch, 198–99.

95. See, for instance, the references to light in the poetic inscriptions for Saint-Denis that Suger records. *Oeuvres*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Françoise Gasparri (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1996), 116, 120.

96. Simon Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archeology* (Woodridge: Boydell, 2007), 64, 134. See also Roffey, “Reconstructing English Medieval Parish Church Chantries and Chapels: An Archaeological Approach,” *Church Archaeology* 5/6 (2004): 63–66 on the importance of orchestrating sightlines and vision in medieval chantry chapels and the use of view-shed analysis. Roffey also discusses the architectural feature of chapel squints, another means by which such architecture emphasized its integration of dynamic sightlines. *Chantry*, 57–59.

ure 9).<sup>97</sup> In such an arrangement, moving light maps itself onto the vertical and horizontal axes of motion in the *danse macabre*. As the installation leads its ambulatory spectators along a horizontal space, they see and pass through another kind of motion in the shifting of the sun through the vertical windows. Light has its own animate quality, migrating over time as it pours through a window. But in addition, Kate Giles posits that "light and architecture could be used to structure a belief in the power of images to look back and affect the observer."<sup>98</sup> In this way light's own migration in actual space might engage the imagery of the mural in another kind of virtual motion, catching the skeletons' weird translucencies in diverse ways.

In another sense, *danse macabre* contrasts the ontological strangeness of the procession's virtual momentum with light's more conventionally apprehensible motion; *Dance* can help us to see how complex and suggestive this contrast is. In *danse macabre*, the passage of time in the shifting of light, measurable in a worldly and predictable sense, exists at odds with the stranger time of the processional figures' virtual motion across their interstices. The Guild Chapel installation thus incorporates a light-based mode of temporal pacing along its vertical axis that is in a sense irresolvable with the temporal experience that its horizontal trajectory creates. Comparing this effect to what occurs in *Dance* magnifies the strangeness of *danse macabre*. When I asked Scranton about the relationship between her performing and spectating experience, she noted that the precision of *Dance's* music and choreography requires the dancers to train their focus "very much on the down. . . . We're constantly almost pulling our vertical down . . . and that's . . . where we are, down, down, down. . . . Knowing that as a dancer and then watching it from the outside, I can appreciate . . . as a spectator . . . how important it is to have this vertical draw [in the films] in order not to make the dance so heavy. . . . The film takes something that's so rhythmic and gives an

97. C. Pamela Graves revises conventional architectural historical approaches to "capture" instead "the way in which light and human sight worked within the churches." *The Form and Fabric of Belief: An Archaeology of the Lay Experience of Religion in Medieval Norfolk and Devon* (Oxford: Hadrian Books, 2000), 1. See, for instance, her account of the play of light, shadow, and movement as the viewer experienced these in an early church at Ingworth: "on entering the original church, the lay person would have experienced a lofty, narrow space, with an overhanging gallery at the west end, lit from windows in the tower behind. Their attention would be drawn to the smaller, penumbral space of the chancel by the movements of the priest himself" (83).

98. Giles, "Seeing," 115.



ethereal . . . vibrate to it."<sup>99</sup> In integrating participatory and spectating perspectives, Scranton sees in *Dance* a vertically oriented contrast between the temporal quality of the embodied dance and another less palpable ingredient that the films offer. "Down" pertains to both direction and the beat of time in dance: the "rhythmic." In this characterization, the embodied dance seems to inhabit a worldly time, located in the performing body's moment-by-moment experience of intense focus upon the choreography. The film as "ethereal," however, capitalizes on light and lightness to create an alternative to that temporal experience; it is the stranger time and space for the audience to experience in an upward impulse. This contrast foregrounds how surprising *danse macabre's* temporal contrast is. In the medieval example, light becomes the worldlier manifestation of temporal passage, its sunlit source marking time on the vertical axis in a manner that grounds itself in physical and natural law. It is the force of virtual motion generated in the ambulatory spectator's encounter with the painting that occupies time in a more inscrutable manner. What might be the "down" of the embodied *danse macabre* spectator rhythmically treading his own processional choreography subjects itself to multiple other trajectories of desynchronizing force in the dance-inflected encounter with the installation.

This account indicates an experience of multiple modes of temporal passage at once.<sup>100</sup> I noted above that *Dance's* animate spaces between live and filmed dancers on the vertical axis express virtuality as untimeliness and asynchrony. In this way, *Dance* provides a guide with which to specify the different and conflicting temporal structures produced in *danse macabre's* negotiations of horizontal and vertical space, of material and immaterial media. It has often been remarked that the movement quality of the skeletons appears to differ from that of the live characters, being more animated and gesticulative, a difference generally attributed to social marking or a reminder of the chaos of death.<sup>101</sup> But perhaps this difference in movement quality emblemizes something about the experience of the entire installation: the presence not only of different motion but also of different and misaligned markings of time cast across the work.

99. Scranton interview.

100. As Dinshaw points out, Aristotle's strategy to approach to time's measuring capacities by means of "experience" can "ope[n] up the question of temporality," accommodating its ambiguity and heterogeneity (10).

101. Taylor, "Que," 265; Gertsman, *Dance*, 65–67.

The passage of light through the windows marks one only kind of time. There are other, stranger, time signatures to be experienced in the perception of those virtual forces emerging from *danse macabre's* manifold and multidimensional interstices. These temporal experiences find themselves further multiplied by the virtual forces that present themselves to the eye while the sun, tracing its quotidian arc, directly illuminates the installation's marvelous, liminal figures. In one sense, *danse macabre* offers some obvious temporal trajectories that the speaker might inhabit, particularly intending forward to the possibility of death. But reenacting *danse macabre* in terms of its danced virtuality locates experiences of time in a more multivectorized *ductus*.

That multiplicity of simultaneous temporal modes, at base apprehensible through the perceptual habits of dance, is not a neutral effect; it seems likely to disorient or overwhelm a viewer. In this way *danse macabre* communicates the terror of death's encounter. The popularity of this idiom at the end of the Middle Ages suggests that something about it was profoundly effective, but it is hard for us to discern this when on the surface *danse macabre* seems to espouse a predictable, repetitive message concerning death's inevitability, violence, and power. Claire M. Waters has argued that earlier in the Middle Ages, narratives of medieval encounters with death establish themselves to be far more didactically elaborate and complex than the eliciting of visceral fear they might seem superficially to involve.<sup>102</sup> Within this context, we might wonder if something more conceptually and aesthetically adventurous, or even surprising and estranging, might be at stake in the *danse macabre's* program. A reenacted *danse macabre* responds to this question by revealing the disorientation and confusion that the installation's virtual environment has the potential to create. The space between *Dance* and *danse macabre* demarcates the medieval agent's experience: led through a network of multiply overlapping axes and trajectories in space, he perceives the forces that intend in animate bodies, representational media, and the interstices among all those elements. That dance-based perceptual practice coerces him to inhabit a daunting array of temporal modes at once. In this manner, *danse macabre* produces a temporal experience neither blandly and conventionally serial nor simplistically visceral. Rather, through an intricate aesthetic experience, *danse macabre* destabilizes its

102. Claire M. Waters, *Translating Clergie: Status, Education, and Salvation in Thirteenth-Century Vernacular Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 62.

audience to cause a sense of estrangement at a level as deep as their sense of time.

I conclude with a brief reference to a familiar Emily Dickinson poem, which describes the “certain slant of light” that titles this chapter. In addition to being preoccupied with representing subtle and distinct experience, Dickinson also shifts our focus to poetry:

There’s a certain Slant of light,  
 Winter Afternoons—  
 That oppresses, like the Heft  
 Of Cathedral Tunes—

Oren Izenberg sees Dickinson as centrally concerned with the experiential, “the epistemological problem of third-person access to first person states.” The imagery of this poem, he suggests, privileges itself as idiosyncratic experience rather than subsuming itself to abstract concept or metaphor.<sup>103</sup> Dickinson’s reference to light emblemizes the dynamic of perceptual experience we have negotiated in our medieval example.

When it comes, the Landscape listens—  
 Shadows—hold their breath—  
 When it goes, ’tis like the Distance  
 On the look of Death—<sup>104</sup>

For Dickinson, *Dance*, and *danse macabre*, light wanes, angles to indirection, suspends itself agitatedly (causing a kind of held breath) between bodies and pictures, and is otherwise contingent in the way that premodern experience necessarily is to us. But at the same time, experiences of illumination make reenactment possible in that space between the Middle Ages and modernity. Light in Childs’s *Dance* attunes us to dance’s accommodation of different ontological categories of motion as well as different systems of temporal marking. In this way, *Dance* reveals some possibilities in the ductile experience of *danse macabre* that its archives alone, necessarily alienated from its dance-based identity, would not be able to convey. The next chapter will consider how the dance-based *ductus* of multimedia

103. Oren Izenberg, “Poems Out of Our Heads,” *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 220, 221.

104. R. W. Franklin, ed., *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 142–43.

*danse macabre* establishes an experience of poetic form in *danse macabre* verse. Through these means, *ductus* forms a bridge between dance and poetry that is built from habits of perceptual experience, uncovering different—and stranger—experiences of poetic form than might otherwise be available to us.