



DEATH





The tomb of John Baret



Homicide

War



Accident

DEATH

Act of God



Disease

Famine



Famine
20,000 1235
18,000 1258
5,000+ 1315–7

Child mortality
c.50%

War
Towton, 1461,
28,000

Animals

Childbirth
mortality c.10%

Homicide
London C14th/15th
c.5
(now c.1.3)

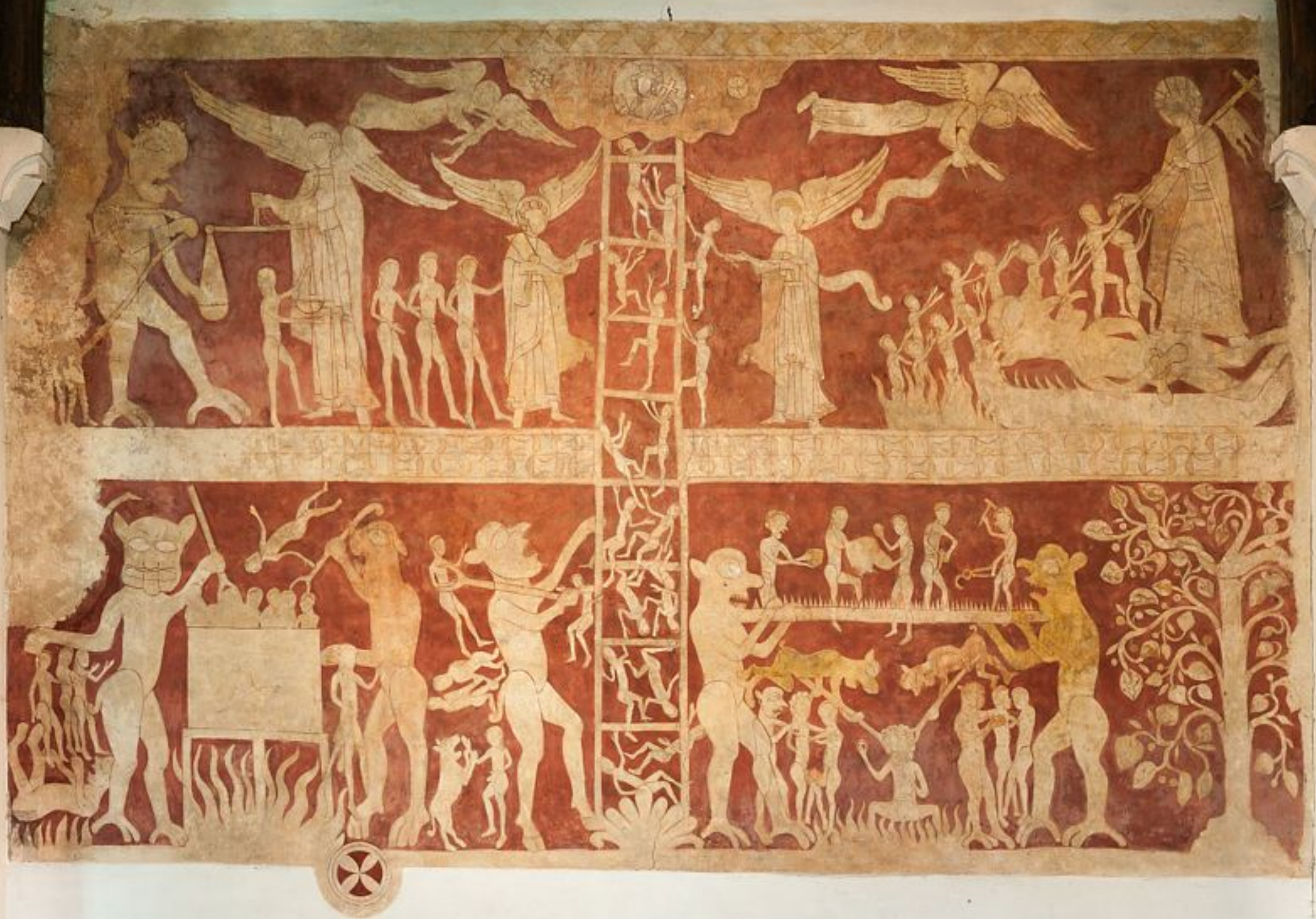
Fire

Deodands

Buildings

Travel

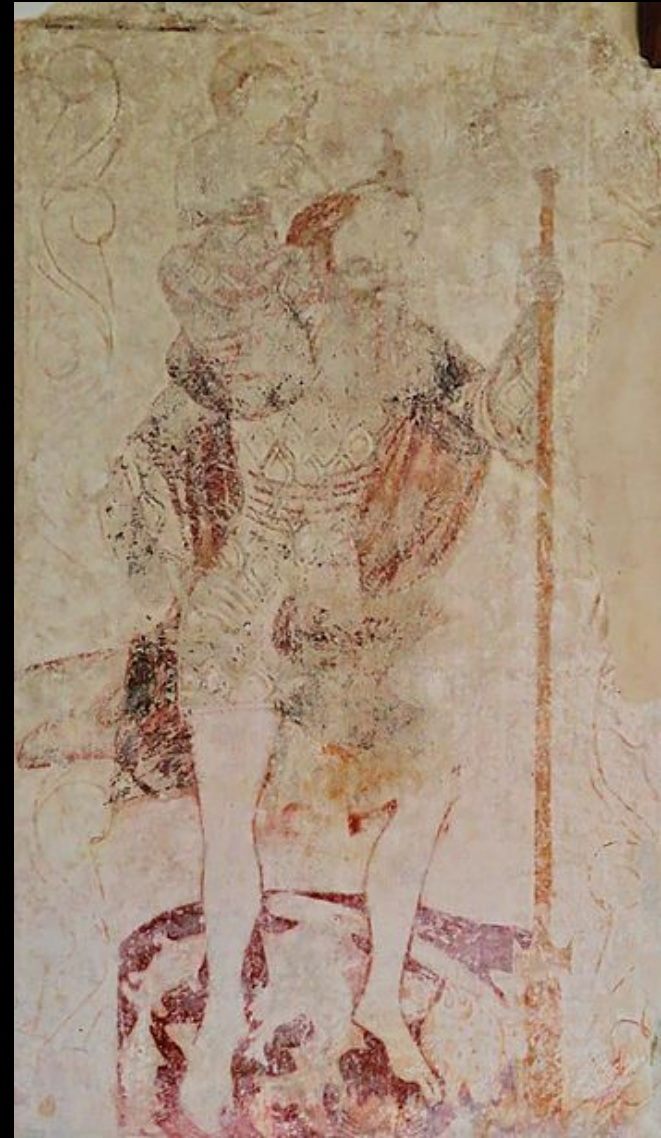
Infection







St Christopher,
Wickhampton
Norfolk (s.xv)
photo: Anne
Marshall



Two Norfolk fonts –
Toftrees (s.xii);
Aylsham (s.xv)
photos: Lionel Wall,
George Plunkett



Ars moriendi

1. Death comes for a man



3. Receiving communion



5. Extreme Unction
annointing with holy oil
(eyes, ears, nostrils, lips,
hands, feet, (men) loins)



2. Making confession

- interrogation
- intention

4. Making a will

- instructions for burial
- provisions for care of soul
- pay off debts
- bequeath property

6. Final Temptation

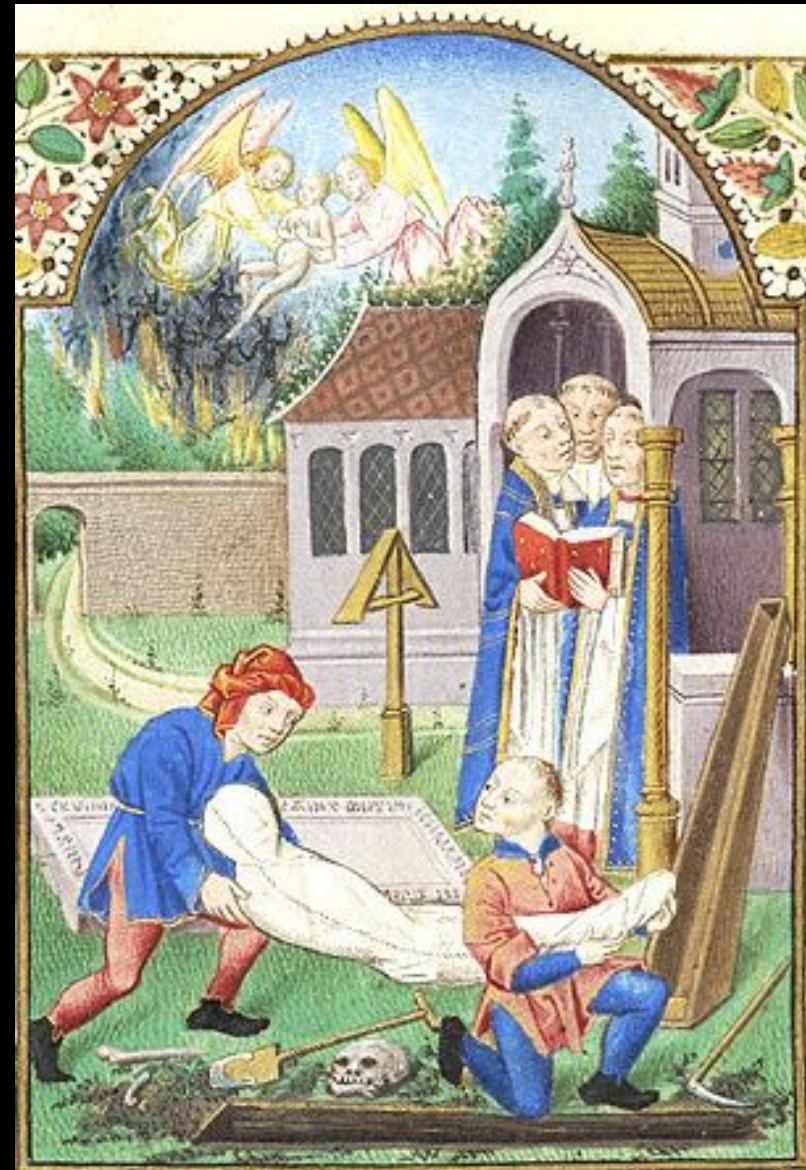
Lack of faith [Faith]
Desperation [Contrition]
Impatience [Patience]
Complacence [Humility]
Avarice [Detachment]



All from French books of hours (s.xv),
New York, The Morgan Library



Burial under the church floor
 Master of Charles de Neufchâtel, c.1470
 French book of hours
 New York, The Morgan Library, MS M.28, fol.111



Burial in the churchyard
 Follower of the Coëtivy Master, c.1465-1475
 French book of hours
 New York, The Morgan Library, MS M.1055, fol.87v

Revenants

Problem

- The body of a knight who was “extremely wicked” in life continually visiting his daughter’s home.
- The body of “a certain evil Welshman” who “died irreligiously” calling out the names of villagers, who die three days later.
- The body of another man who “died irreligiously” wandering at night
- The body of a sinful man who returns to attack his family
- The body of a wealthy man wandering at night
- The body of a “too-secular” priest visiting his former mistress
- The body of a wicked man, who died in an accident, attacking people

Solution

Sprinkle the body with holy water

Cleave open the head (holy water didn’t work)

Give the body a proper burial

Lay a letter of absolution on the tomb

Dismember and burn the remains

Wound the body and burn the remains

Burn the remains

Royal Effigies

- First documented effigy in 1327 at funeral of Edward II
- Edward III, Henry V, and Edward IV also had effigies
- As a replacement for the king's physical body or presence (body not fit to be seen)
- Effigies were made of boiled leather or carved wood and dressed in royal robes
- Effigies were placed on top of closed coffin during the procession and funeral





Tomb of Rudolf of Swabia

Bronze with traces of gilding, c.1080–84

Merseburg Cathedral, Germany

Rudolf was elected “anti-king” of the Germans in 1077, promising to respect church investiture and the Germans’ elected monarchy

Rudolf was killed in battle (1080) against the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV

? first figural tomb of a secular person



The Black Death

- Bubonic (lymph nodes); pneumonic (lungs); and septicemic (blood)
- Rat fleas
- 1347 from Asia
- 1348 spread over continental Europe
- 1349 British Isles
- grandis mortalitas
- ? Half population?
- Plague still exists...

Guy de Chauliac (c. 1300–1368)

“The said mortality began for us [in Avignon] in January 1348, and lasted seven months. And it took two forms: the first lasted two months, accompanied by continuous fever and a spitting up of blood, and one died within three days. The second lasted the rest of the time, also accompanied by continuous fever and by tumors and carbuncles on the external parts, principally under the armpits and in the groin, and one died within five days. And the mortality was so contagious, especially in those who were spitting up blood, that not only did one get it from another by living together, but also by looking at each other, to the point that people died without servants and were buried without priests. The father did not visit his son, nor the son his father; charity was dead, hope crushed.

And I call the mortality great because it overtook the whole world, or nearly all of it. But it began in the East, and like shooting arrows it passed through us on its way west. And it was so great, that it hardly left a quarter of the human race.

For the mortality rendered doctors useless and put them to shame, because they did not dare visit the sick out of the fear of being infected. And when they did visit them, they could do little for them and were paid nothing. For all who got sick died, except for a few toward the end, who escaped when their buboes ripened.

Many were uncertain about the cause of this great mortality. In some places, they believed that the Jews had poisoned the world, and so they killed them. In some other areas, that it was a deformity of the poor, and they chased them out; in others, that it was the nobles, and so they [the nobles] hesitated to go out into the world. Finally, it reached the point where guards were posted in cities and towns, and they permitted no one to enter, unless he was well known. And if they found anyone with powders or unguents, they made him swallow them, fearing that these might be poisons.

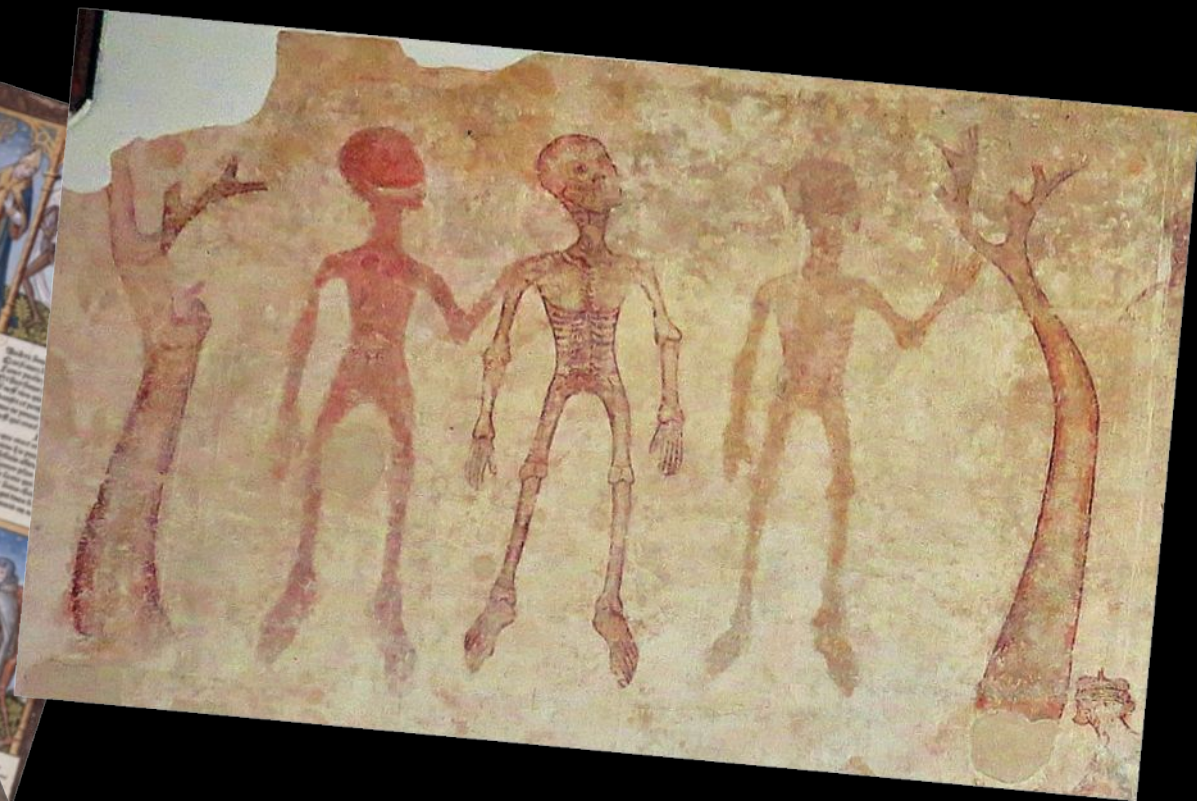
Regardless of what people might say, the truth was that the cause of this mortality was twofold...

[1) An astrological cause, the conjunction of planets affecting the air and changing bodily humours

2) A blockage in the body caused by humoral imbalance (particularly for the wicked)]

Concerning cures, there was an effort to find a prophylactic before the advent of symptoms and a cure for when symptoms had arrived. For prevention, there was nothing better than to flee the area before it was infected and to purge oneself with pills of aloe and reduce the blood through a phlebotomy, purify the air with a fire, and comfort the heart with a theriac and fruits and sweet-smelling things, to console the humours with Armenian bole, and to halt corruption with sour-tasting things. For a cure, there are phlebotomies and purgatives and electuaries and syrupy cordials. And the external tumours were ripened with figs and onions that were cooked and ground up and mixed with leavened bread dough and butter. Afterwards the swellings would open and they were healed with a treatment for ulcers. The carbuncles were cupped, scarified, and cauterized.

I, in order to avoid a bad reputation, did not dare leave, but with a continuous fear I preserved myself as best I could with the aforesaid remedies. Nonetheless, toward the end of the mortality, I fell into a continuous fever, with a swelling on the groin, and I was sick for nearly six weeks. And I was in such great danger that all of my friends believed that I would die. And the swelling ripened and healed, as I have described above, and I escaped by God's command.



What impact
did the BD
have?

The three living and the three dead



*The Three
Living and the
Three Dead*
The De Lisle
Psalter, c.1308-
1340

London, The
British Library,
Arundel MS 83,
fol.127r

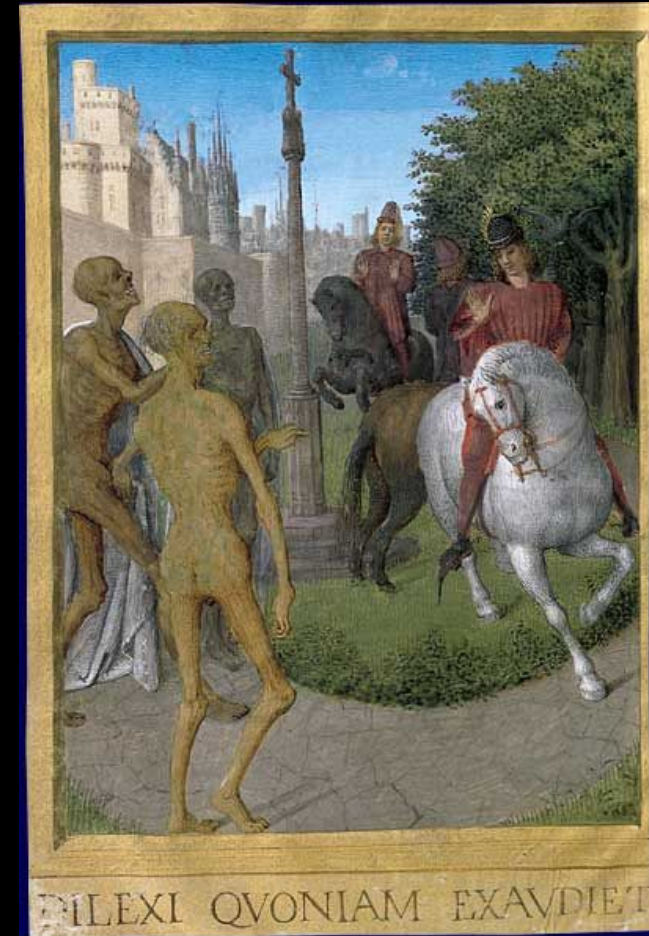
Owned by
Robert De Lisle,
the first Baron
Lisle (1288-
1344)

The Three Living and the Three Dead

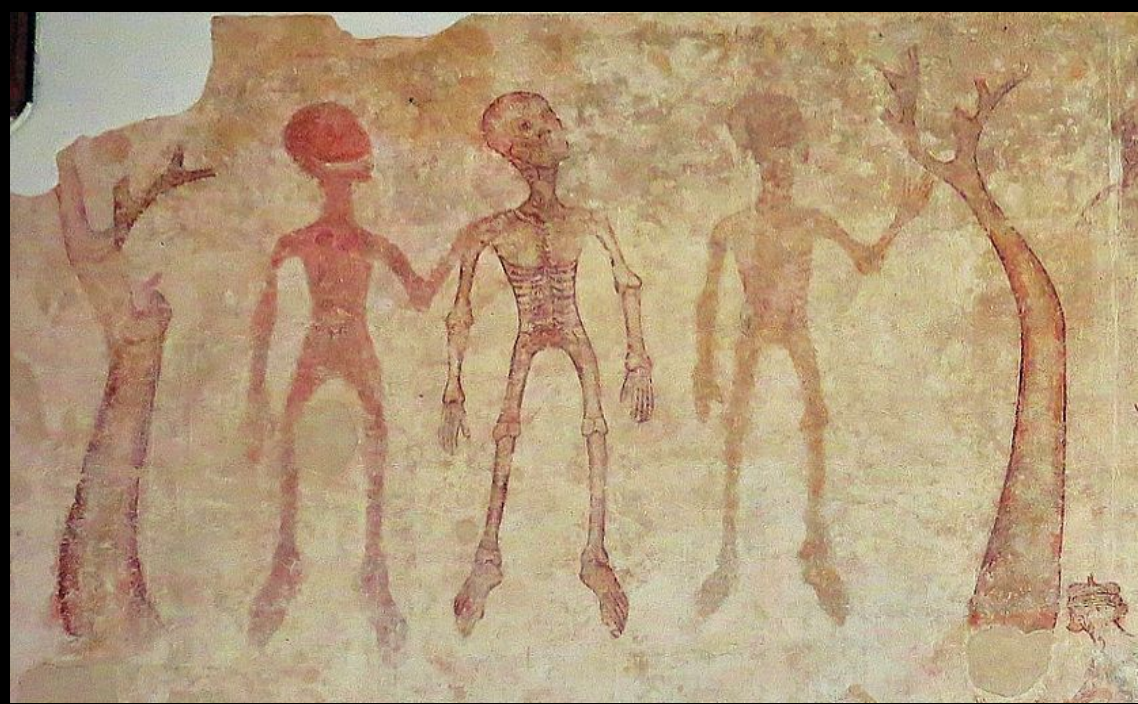
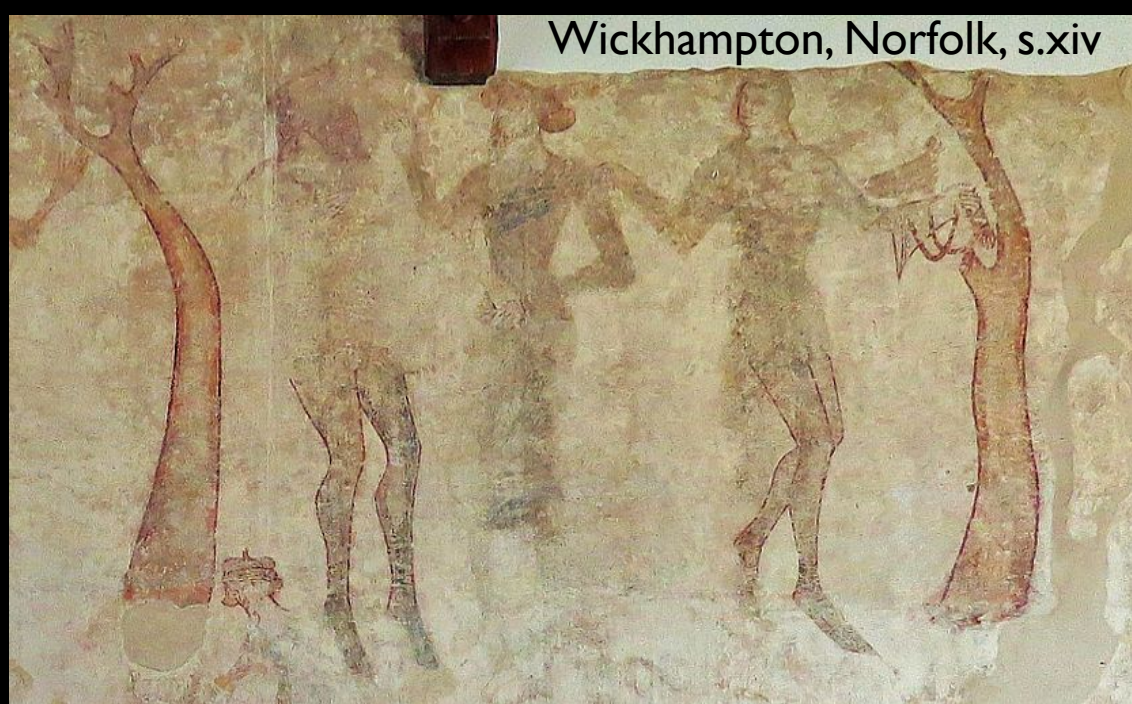
- theme emerges in 13th-century France and among the Italian Franciscans
- textual versions exist in English, French, Italian, German, and Latin
- images: murals, manuscripts, panel paintings, sculpture
- regional differences: Italian – hermit as mediator; English – living as crowned and on foot; French – living not crowned and on horseback



From the early 15th century, images of the three living and the three dead start appearing before the Office of the Dead in books of hours



Wickhampton, Norfolk, s.xiv



The Taymouth Hours, s.xiv
British Library, Yates Thompson MS 13, fols 179v-180r



The Three Living and the Three Dead

Berlin Hours of Mary of Burgundy, c.1480

Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett-SMPK, 78 B 12, fol.220v (and fol.221r)

Mary of Burgundy died in 1482 from a riding accident



Mise au tombeau - CARENNAC



Cadaver/ *transi* tomb of John FitzAlan, the 14th Earl of Arundel (d.1435) in the FitzAlan Chapel, West Sussex



Cadaver/ *transi* tomb of Alice de la Pole, née Chaucer
(d.1475), Ewelme, Oxfordshire







The Danse Macabre (the Dance of Death)

Jean Le Fèvre: *Respit de la Mort* (1376) “Je fistz de macabree la danse” [“I made/did the dance of Macabree.”]

As visual form: 1424–5: mural on the walls of the Saints Innocents cemetery in Paris

Danse Macabre print by Pierre le Rouge, 1491-1492

Surmatants (Totentanz), St. Nicholas' Church, Tallinn (s.xv^{ex}) Photo: B. Notke





Leprosy (Hansen's Disease)

- widely feared
- nerve damage, leading to lack of feeling (and bits falling off)
- deforming
- physical disease = moral disease
- incurable
- lepers' colonies



Worse than DEATH?



Saints who cured eye problems

Lucy, BVM, David, Foy,
Elizabeth of Hungary,
Thomas Becket,
Thomas Cantilupe
Martin, Bertin, Adalbert,
Raphael, Odilia, Remfroye,
Deochar, Longinus, Anthony,
Cosmos, Damian, Clare,
Valentine...