The Danse Macabre in Richard Daye's A Booke Of Christian Prayers (1581): Prescriptive Instruction To Promptly Prepare For Death

Amanda Jane Chura
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
The School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of History

We hereby approve the thesis of

Amanda Jane Chura

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

______________________         _________________________________________
Lynn A. Botelho, Ph.D.
Professor of History, Advisor

______________________           __________________________________________
Steven Schroeder, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of History

______________________        __________________________________________
Irene Kabala, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Art History

ACCEPTED

________________________________________  _____________________
Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Title: The *Danse Macabre* in Richard Daye’s *A Booke Of Christian Prayers (1581)*: Prescriptive Instruction To Promptly Prepare For Death

Author: Amanda Jane Chura

Thesis Chair: Dr. Lynn A. Botelho

Thesis Committee Members: Dr. Steven Schroeder  
Dr. Irene Kabala

This research focused on Richard Daye's 1581 publication of *A Booke of Christian Prayers*, an overtly Protestant document. Specifically, this study looked at how images were used as an educational tool in prescriptive literature. The illustrations in the *danse macabre* of *A Booke of Christian Prayers* reflected and reinforced changes to the English religious culture surrounding death and the dead. Printers utilized such images of death to teach viewers about how good Christians should live.

The *danse macabre* instructed sixteenth-century people on the importance immediate and sustained preparation in order to have a good Protestant death. A numerical analysis of the social standing, age, and gender of the *danse macabre* figures revealed that Daye printed *A Booke of Christian Prayers* for men who occupied professional and middling positions. Such imagery instructed Christians to quickly incorporate these changes into daily practice because Death could appear at anytime to anyone.