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THE *DANSE MACABRE* IN RICHARD DAYE'S *A BOOKE OF CHRISTIAN PRAYERS* (1581):
PRESCRIPTIVE INSTRUCTION TO PROMPTLY PREPARE FOR DEATH

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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

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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.