8-3-2011

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

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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

Amanda Jane Chura
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
August 2011
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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.