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Images of the Dead in the Middle Ages. The Capitals of the *Palazzo Ducale* in Venice

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ABSTRACT

Death in Middle Ages was the subject of numerous representations: different images with different communicative purposes according to the period and milieu. I want to focus attention on a single subject: two of the capitals from the lower porch of the *Palazzo Ducale* [Doge's Palace] in Venice. These capitals show the death of an old man and the death of a young boy. What kind of representation of death are we examining in relation to the historical period? Why does the artist, or artisan, represent death here? What is the message communicated to the spectator and what is the function of the representation in connection with the *Palazzo Ducale*? In that highly politicised context, the answer to these questions can only be sought in the message itself that the leaders of Venice wanted to convey to the world.

La morte nel periodo medievale è stata oggetto di numerose rappresentazioni: immagini molto differenti tra loro e portatrici di finalità comunicative diverse a seconda dell'ambito e del periodo. Si è voluto focalizzare l'attenzione su un singolo caso: due dei capitelli del loggiato inferiore di Palazzo Ducale a Venezia. Nei due capitelli viene rappresentata rispettivamente la morte di uno uomo e la morte di un fanciullo. Di fronte a quale tipo di rappresentazione della morte siamo di fronte in relazione al periodo storico preso in considerazione? Perché l'artista ha scelto di inserire anche questo tema? Qual è il messaggio che si è voluto trasmettere e che funzione hanno queste due rappresentazioni in relazione a Palazzo Ducale? In un contesto come quello di Palazzo Ducale, dalla forte connotazione politica, la risposta a questi quesiti non potrà che essere cercata nel messaggio stesso che la classe dirigente veneziana voleva trasmettere al mondo.

INTRODUCTION

Death is a human creation. If a human being thinks about death, he or she thinks not about death, but the act of dying – an act which may be painful or liberating, gentle or violent. Reason suggests this is an active and not passive action, which the human organism performs at the same time as its vital functions, for whatever reasons, stop working regularly. What comes after dying is a theological or philosophical matter, but it is no longer either the act of dying or death. Dying is peculiar to man, Death is an abstraction of human thought, an entity or a personification, to which we attribute and delegate the weight of our fears or, in some cases, the hope of what that will happen afterwards.

In the Middle Ages there are many kinds of images telling us how Death can be represented in a 'direct' way, if it assumes anthropomorphic guise, as in the case of the *Dance Macabre*, or in a 'indirect' way: when we see the effects of it, meaning a dead body, or the action of dying, meaning a dying human being.

The different ways of representing death have been explored by numerous illustrious researchers. They have used this field of sources to investigate the history of mentalities, very often looking for a key to understanding the perception of life peculiar to past epochs. As Peter Burke¹ made clear, to believe that images represent the spirit of an era implies the error of believing that a homogeneous and uniform spirit characterizes the whole of an epoch. There is no need to set such a lofty goal.

Starting from the initial suggestion, I will inquire into the functionality of a single image taken in its original context, the message that the image communicates and the formalities of communication. In other words I will be asking the following questions:

- What kind of representation of death are we examining?
- Why does the artist, or artisan, represent death?
- What is the message communicated to the spectator?
- What is the function of the representation in connection with its context?

This analysis will be conducted on some capitals from the lower colonnade of the *Palazzo Ducale* in Venice.

TEMPORALITY, FRAMEWORK AND MENTALITY

Before proceeding to analyse these few cases, it may be useful briefly to 'locate' the theme of death in the Middle Ages.

Talking about death in a historiographical perspective, in any period one might be considering, paves the way for broad-ranging and subtle analysis and discussion. In talking about this theme in relation to the medieval period one needs first of all to outline the marked differences between the medieval conception of death and our modern one.

For us 'contemporaries': "Death seems unnatural, a failure of our technological society, of our medical system or our quest for personal fulfilment. Death is the ultimate evil, the supreme indictment of our inability to control the universe or even ourselves"². Yet for all the emotional experience and trauma, "the dead slip from our consciousness. It is not that an infinite gulf separates them from the living but rather that they simply no longer exist"³. Death, then, is banished from our society.

The way of 'feeling' death is very different in the medieval period. As from the early Middle Ages, in those regions under direct Frankish political influence "death was omnipresent"⁴, not only in the sense that persons of all ages did die with a fearful incidence and rapidity but also in the sense that the dead did not separate members of the human community. Quoting Patrick Geary: "Death marked a transition, a change in status, but not an end". The dead were present among the living, not only in the early Middle Ages, but also in subsequent centuries. This 'tangible' presence was kept alive by means of liturgical commemoration⁵, the tombs and relics of saints, in dreams and visions⁶, and also by the custom of gift exchange between the Living and the Dead⁷. Tombs, for example, occupy an integral position in every church. The faithful prayed above or alongside them. The dead were not only 'physically' present, but often their likeness was represented on the tombstone, sometimes at the very moment of death, including signs of the injuries they died of⁸. This cultural phenomenon is peculiar to the medieval period, not only in comparison with the Modern Era, but even when compared with the Ancient period⁹.

One might cite numerous examples to emphasise the intimate relationship the living had with the dead. They were bound so closely that in the 13th century Death took on an anthropomorphic resemblance¹⁰. In art and the collective imagination Death is a decomposed body or a skeleton with a scythe or other weapons.

Nevertheless, Death is not omnipresent simply to exorcise an understandable fear. Death is everywhere because it is, obviously, a 'natural' event included in the life cycle. I would like to emphasise this aspect of death: it was not perceived as the end of life but a phase included in it. The *Dance Macabre* itself, as Huizinga claims, is a functional way of satirising society but, at the same time, serves as a pious exhortation¹¹. Thus in the Middle Ages the dead were not 'so dead' as to have no influence on the living community. It occurred at times that corpses of people sentenced to death¹² were exhumed to punish them again by another execution, another stake or another hanging. Death was not a sufficient reason to close a matter once opened during life¹³.

The omnipresence of death in everyday life, in the cast of people's minds, its close connection with the world of living people is exemplified by the frequency with which it is represented, in religious, political or secular scenarios. During this analysis I shall not be dwelling on a controversy which in the past virtually monopolised the debate on the perception of death. The topic of the debate centred around a presumed change in the idea of death between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance¹⁴, from an idea of death as

a mutation, a step before eternal damnation or salvation, as opposed to a modern or late medieval conception of death as the end of the human 'voyage'. This shift of perspective is generally placed after the Black Death of 1348. A more detailed description of this historiographical debate would not leave room for the central theme I have chosen to treat.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The works of art I have selected as my subject are not isolated works since they belong to an important monument. The context in which these works are placed makes them worthy of special interest. I have chosen a very well-known monument: the *Palazzo Ducale* [Doge's Palace] in Venice, and in particular, the capitals which decorate the colonnade.

The history of the *Palazzo Ducale* runs parallel with the history of Venice, a story that shows how a city became the nerve centre of political power, able to impose its economic and military domination over much of the Mediterranean.

For almost a thousand years the *Palazzo Ducale* was the residence of the Doge and the centre of the main political, legislative, administrative and judicial activities, and therefore was widely regarded as the most important symbol of the Republic. The central body of the building suffered over the years from countless events that led to the destruction of certain parts of it (as by the fires occurring in 976 and 1105), followed by works of re-building.

The structure that we admire today was built entirely by the efforts of patricians following 1297 (the year of the *Serrata del Maggior Consiglio*, when the members of the main constitutional body of the Republic voted to limit membership to the families already represented, thus forming the premises for a closed patriciate).

The Palace dates back to the 14th century¹⁵ and was completed in 1422. The decision to enlarge the hall of the *Maggior Consiglio* was taken in 1301¹⁶, due to an increase in the number of councillors. The solution chosen was quite out of the ordinary: it was decided to build the new hall onto the pre-existent structure. But, since the perimeter of the new hall would have exceeded that of the old building, the volume in excess was supported by two orders of superimposed columns. The upper portico was built slender and graceful, the lower one squat and firm. And that is still the physiognomy of the *Palazzo Ducale*, in which the heavy chambers are supported by light colonnades, the full is supported by the empty¹⁷.

A large number of historical and artistic studies have taken the *Palazzo Ducale* as their subject. Amidst the descriptions and interpretations the most trustworthy and incisive is that which compares the façade of the *Palazzo Ducale* with a forest¹⁸. From the double ranks of superimposed columns the foliage, created and represented by capitals, rises in geometrical progression creating a design which is a mixture of luxuriant nature and architectural rigour. In this tangle of stylised branches and stone, nature is the protago-

nist via the simultaneous presence of the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Carved in the marble are more than 600 figures: legislators, animals, different kinds of vegetables, emperors, ordinary men and women, saints and artisans, sins and virtues, the cycle of the seasons, scenes from everyday life. As one observes the figures carved in the capitals, the physiognomy of the whole palace with its three sculptural groups situated on the three corners of the building emerges from jumble to coherent and unitary meaning. All that seems to be incomprehensible and chaotic represents the Universe and, therefore, the creative power of God¹⁹, in which he shows Himself. Other interpretations which have sought a different sense or logic have failed²⁰.

Amid the multitude of sculptures the three groups at the three corners of the building stand out. They show Original Sin, the Drunkenness of Noah and the Judgment of Solomon. The historical-biblical positions of the three events give a clue to reading the sculptures as a whole. We glimpse another interpretation: human reason is transcended by faith. Human life, will and knowledge are nothing without Order, which comes from the word of God, the Bible and collected wise maxims.

SELECTIVITY

After briefly outlining the 'ideological context' of the iconographical apparatus, I would like to concentrate on analysing two capitals, the 13th and 15th in line, both of them positioned on the façade of the *Piazzetta* [little square] and the beginning of the *Porta della Carta*.

As we said above, the 14th century represents a crucial turning point in the perception of death and therefore in the way it was represented. The capitals taken into consideration are exactly datable between 1340 and the 1355. Consequently, our narrative method will be the result of choosing among the various options open and not adhering to the main narrative framework generally ascribed to a particular historical period.

MATERIALITY AND AUTHENTICITY

The sculptures embellishing the building designed to house the rulers of the city convey better than any other artistic work the meaning of the symbols that characterized the contemporary political language. The history of the sculptures of the *Palazzo Ducale* is interwoven with the history of religious, civic and ethical values bound up with the life and fate of Venice.

THE 15TH CAPITAL

The 15th capital has been identified as the capital of astrology. It illustrates the influence of the stars²¹ on the different ages of people.

First there is a child with a cartouche without any inscription, which might indicate the child's inability to express anything yet²². On the abacus is written *Luna dominat infanciam per annos IIII* [The moon controls infancy for four years] (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 15th capital (detail), *Infancy*.

After this there follows a child learning the alphabet (Fig. 2). Here is written: *Mercureus dominat puericiam per annos X* [Mercury controls childhood for ten years].



Fig. 2
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 15th capital (detail), *Childhood*.

On the following side there is a young boy studying mathematics. The adolescent age is dominated by Venus for seven years. This is the explanation appended to the figure (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 15th capital (detail), *Adolescence*.

The adolescent becomes a young man as shown on the fourth side. The young man is presented as a hunter with a sparrow-hawk in his hand (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 15th capital (detail), *Young manhood*.

The Sun is the planet dominating this phase, according to astrology for nineteen years. On the fifth side we can see that the young man has now become a mature man, a warrior ready to give orders to his troops. Here is written *Senectutem dominat Mars annos XV* (Mars controls adulthood for fifteen years) (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 15th capital (detail), *Maturity*.

The adult becomes a middle-aged man on the sixth side and here the man is wearing a gown and hat – he has become a doctor of science. He is sitting on a bench and reads a book. This phase of life is dominated by Jupiter and it will last until 70 years when the man becomes old with an obvious physical decline.

On the seventh side we can see a man bent double, walking with a stick: *Decrepitate dominat Saturnus usque ad mortem* [Saturn controls the decrepit man until his death] (Fig. 6).

The last side shows a man dead in bed or waiting to die with his arms positioned in a cross and dressed in a simple tunic. Here the inscription says: *Ultima est mors pena peccati* [the last (age) is Death, the punishment for original sin] (Fig. 7).

The inscriptions are taken from the last chapter of Ptolemaeus'²³ *Tetrabiblos*, where the different ages of human life were discussed bearing in mind human nature and comparing them with the different positions of the seven planets. In this text the ages are seven in number: Death belongs to the seventh age dominated by Saturn. But in the capital here analysed, we find an extra phase, the eighth age, which is a further division of the phases of human life. This representation might be thought to have had a practical explanation: the need to complete the last side of an octagonal capital²⁴. In actual fact, however, the last side, Death, adds a periodization of human life tracing back the whole



Fig. 6
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 15th capital (detail), *Old Age*.



Fig. 7
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 15th capital (detail), *Death*.

representation to Christian outlook: the stars influence man but his destiny is linked to the relationship with God and the human condition subsequent to original sin. A further observation is necessary: "Death marked a transition, a change in status, but not an end"²⁵ and the proof is that this phase occupies an entire side.

THE 13TH CAPITAL

This is the most famous and evocative capital and in consequence abundant literature and analyses have addressed it. Its fame is owed to a romantic and dramatic story and its unexpected epilogue. The first side of the capital represents a young man who carries his heart in his left hand and shows it to a young woman on a balcony.

On the second side she shows her hand as though to welcome his heart. The young man answers by folding his arms as a token of devotion. The third side represents a wedding. This scene does not show the symbols of a Christian wedding, but clearly refers to courtly ritual. She crowns the bridegroom with a garland of flowers²⁶, while he hands her a fruit, identified as a quince, the symbol of true love²⁷.

On the fourth side the couple embrace and the fifth represents the 'consummation of their marriage'²⁸ (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 13th capital (detail), *Consummation of marriage*.

Their physical and emotional closeness grows in a rising climax up to the birth of their child. At this point there is a change. The contact and the proximity between the couple is no longer direct. The contact takes place through their child, who symbolically serves as a bridge between the man and the woman. The union is sealed by the birth of their son and by the effort to raise him. Both of them turn their eyes towards the child whom they hold up lovingly.

The sixth and seventh sides are appropriately devoted to care for a child (Fig. 9, 10).



Fig. 9
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 13th capital (detail), *Couple and swaddled infant*.



Fig. 10
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 13th capital (detail), *Couple caring for their child*.

In the last scene, as a *coup de théâtre*, we see the parents crying over the dead body of their adolescent child, he too in his bed as on the last side of the fifteenth capital (Fig. 11).

Sorrow at the loss moves the two spouses apart. They are still looking at their now dead child, but their glances will no longer meet as they do so. The direction in which their eyes look now is parallel and two parallel lines do not meet. The death of their child represents the end of what had become the foundation of their union: paternal and maternal love.



Fig. 11
Doge's Palace, Venice, The 13th capital (detail), *The bereaved couple*.

These scenes are again interpreted according to Ptolomaeus' thorough reflections upon marriage, the family²⁹ and children³⁰. Astrology here divides into three parts: analysis of the astral situation of the unborn child, the astral influence on the parents, the prenatal and post-natal situation³¹. The epilogue to the story is one of the cases that astrology describes: that in which the Moon, Jupiter and Venus, bestowers of children, are aligned in a way that allows no more than one child. Furthermore, when the Sun is positioned in a female sign, weak children are forecast, which will die at a young age³². This interpretation, which is surely the most reliable, especially in relation to the fifteenth capital, suggests that this capital represents Ptolomaeus' treatise as applied to a scene from everyday life³³. Other undoubtedly less convincing interpretations take a moralising tone in the epilogue of the story. The lovers, who failed to consecrate their union by a religious service celebrated by a priest, were punished by god or, at least, dogged by misfortune³⁴. It is obvious that in this capital the communication is based on deeds: the different scenes represent a real repertory of medieval communication through action³⁵.

ANALYSIS

These are the only two capitals that do not show isolated concepts. They are linked by some logical connection. The episodes on the 13th and 15th capitals follow a chronological sequence³⁶. Both capitals show the growth of a man and the end of his life. Human death is represented twice in the ornamentation of the *Palazzo Ducale* because there are only two different outcomes to human life: physical degeneration of the human body, when one dies in one's own bed conscious of the end; or unpredictable death, the result of accident or sudden illness. The dual representation of death, despite the variation of the theme, shows homogeneity as a communicative choice. Going back to the initial suggestion, we are here faced with a representation of 'indirect' death: not a personification but the depiction of a dying old person and the depiction of the body belonging to a deceased young person.

Among the various ways of representing the theme, the sculptors of *Palazzo Ducale* chose this mode. Let us now investigate the reason for this choice. As we said in the introduction, different images, relating to the same great theme of death, correspond to different cultural and spiritual views coexisting in the same epoch. It will be interesting to understand what perception of death inspired those representations and what rules are at work inside the architectural complex of the *Palazzo Ducale*.

In the 14th century the collective imagination tends to be dominated by the representation of Death in the guise of a *Dance Macabre*³⁷: a horrifying illustration acting as a dreadful warning and, maybe, also to ward off the terror of death. This representation of death is shocking, it jolts the mind. The cruel ironic sneer of the skeletons terrifies men, sweeping them away in the syncopated rhythm of the dance. A dance which leaves no room for intimate reflection on the event which we are witnessing.

In the two capitals considered, there emerges an image of death as quiet and decorous in spite of the sorrow caused by the loss of a close relative. Death appears as a humanised event, far from the horrifying scenario of the *Dance Macabre*. The two capitals reveal a feeling of acceptance which, at least in Huizinga's³⁸ view of it, bears no relation to the *Dance Macabre* or the widespread popular imagination. In Huizinga's opinion in this kind of representation there is both a pious exhortation and satire on society, in which one also glimpses a kind of materialism unable to accept the transience of beauty. If we take not only iconographic but also literary sources, there emerges a representation where little room is left for an intimate vision of death, but a sense of regret prevails for one's own death³⁹.

Such a perception of death is extraneous to the capitals of the *Palazzo Ducale*, which use a completely different language to communicate the role and sense of death in human life. This iconographic language is closer to the Franciscan concept of death expressed in St Francis' *Canticum fratris solis*⁴⁰, than the concept expressed in the *Dance Macabre*. St Francis of Assisi, and obviously Christian doctrine, taught people to have no fear of

dying in the body, but to be afraid of a second dying, eternal damnation: which is why in the *Canticum* Death is called Sister Death, a familiar figure, not arousing dread. The *Canticum*, like all St Francis' literary output, hinges on the Bible and is based on biblical quotations⁴¹. Francis of Assisi, it has been well remarked, does not deny or condemn the fear caused by the idea of the body dying, he does not deny the pain which it causes. In fact, from the two analysed capitals, human pain shines through. But this intimate suffering has no points in common with the grisly horror and social admonishment of the dance and triumph of Death.

We should not forget that the ideological planning of the *Palazzo Ducale* is closely related with Christian theology of the Creation. The communicative language used in the works of sculpture itself owes a fundamental debt to the Bible. It is important to emphasise one more time that the Bible and the *Tetrabiblos* are the primary sources of the *Palazzo Ducale*.

If we look for representation of the 'second Death', the fear of eternal damnation, the road that leads us there and the road by which to deserve salvation, it is soon clear that this kind of image is more numerous than the representation of corporal death. Two capitals, for example, are devoted to deadly sins⁴², four to virtues⁴³ and four to virtues and deadly sins together⁴⁴. There is a marked eschatological message implicit in the *Palazzo Ducale*. Then again, the statues situated at the three corners show Original Sin, the cause of human death, the archangel Michael, who is a psychopomp in biblical tradition, and Noah, who traditionally symbolises man rescuing his own soul from damnation.

It is from this eschatological perspective that we should consider what is represented on the 13th and 15th capitals. Death, which is one of the principal events of human life, is only a small part of the whole of Creation. Human death, corporal death, is represented as an ordinary transition, a stepping-stone to reaching our last destiny: eternal salvation or, on the contrary, the second death that is eternal damnation.

For this reason the theme of corporal death is treated in an intimate and humane manner, without any need for frightful or gruesome admonishment and likewise without any undertones referring to the end of beauty or the decay of corpses. Ageing and physical decline are approached in a 'scientific' way, in accordance with Ptolomaeus' *Tetrabiblos*.

CONCLUSION

The biblical ideological framework of the *Palazzo Ducale* prevents death from being represented as the popular and grisly *Dance Macabre*. The philosophical foundation of the *Tetrabiblos* creates a representative tie for the artist, who cannot go against a 'scientific' representation of death. It is for this reason that the artist represents death as composed, seemingly and natural, but at the same time not de-humanized on account of the faithful representation in sculptural form of an astronomic essay. The stars studied

by Claudius Ptolomaeus by no means take away humanity from human feeling: they address human stories from afar but subtract nothing from human will.

There is another reason why a horror and admonishment approach would here not be possible. The *Dances Macabres* and the Triumphs of Death symbolize, among other things, the weakness of man in front of destiny. The social critique inherent in the *Dances Macabre* is directed against the futility of the glory and power which men look for on earth. Glory that will be cancelled in an instant and that will lump together poor men and emperors, weaklings and popes. But the *Palazzo Ducale* is one of most important symbols of Venice: it is the symbol of political and economic power. There would be nothing more inappropriate than to represent the futility of glory and power in such a place.

The power and glory of Venice are celebrated in an indirect way, through the celebration of the Word of God and the Universe, which is His creation.

What we are witnessing is not an innovative or an outmoded representation of death: different visions live together at the same period⁴⁵ in different social environments. The choice of this type of representation has an entirely functional purpose. In the universe of the *Palazzo Ducale* there is no place for the fear of dying: a dread which results from human frailties that have no part in the eschatological message of the Bible.

NOTES

- ¹ P. Burke, *Eyewitness. The uses of Images as a Historical Evidence*, London 2001.
- ² P.J. Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca - London 1994, p. 1.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ F. Salvestrini, G.M. Varanini, A. Zangarini (eds.), *La morte e i suoi riti tra medioevo e prima età moderna* [Death and its ritual from the middle ages to the early modern era], Florence 2008.
- ⁶ J.C. Schmitt, *Les revenants. Les vivants et les morts dans la société médiévale*, Paris 1994.
- ⁷ O.G. Oexle, *Die Gegenwart der Toten*, in H. Braet, W. Verbeke, *Death in the Middle Ages*, Louvain 1983, pp. 19-77; Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* cit., pp. 77-92.
- ⁸ P. Ariès, *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, Paris 1975, pp. 116-118, referring to the practice of death masks and the case of Isabella of Aragon.
- ⁹ P. Ariès, *L'homme devant la Mort*, Paris 1977, pp. 37-58.
- ¹⁰ C. Blum, *La folie et la mort dans l'imaginaire collectif du moyen âge et du début de la Renaissance (XIF-XV^e siècles)*, in H. Braet, W. Verbeke (eds.), *Death in the Middle Ages* cit., pp. 258-286.
- ¹¹ J. Huizinga, *L'autunno del Medioevo* or. ed. *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919) [translated as *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924) and as *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (1996)], Rome 2007, pp. 162-175.
- ¹² Ariès, *L'homme devant la Mort* cit., pp. 49-50.
- ¹³ Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, III, vv. 128ff. One also recalls the Bishop of Arezzo, Tarlati.
- ¹⁴ Spokesmen for the debate are A. Tenenti, *La vie et la mort*, Paris 1952 (who sees the 14th century as a break with the Christian pattern whereby death becomes an end point and no longer a moving on) and

- Ariès, *L'homme devant la Mort* cit. The latter rejects the antithesis between a Christian Middle Ages and a High Middle Ages/Renaissance as looking towards the present day. On such a view the Renaissance is no longer a prelude in a 'becoming', which resembles Huizinga's position.
- ¹⁵ F. Berchet, *La Sala del Maggior Consiglio nel Palazzo Ducale di Venezia*, in "Atti del R. Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti", 1999-2000, 59, pp. 949-985, at p. 951; G. Romanelli, *Palazzo Ducale: pietra e poesia*, in A. Manno, *Il poema del tempo. I capitelli di Palazzo Ducale di Venezia: storia e iconografia*, Venice 1999, pp. 9-16.
- ¹⁶ G. Tigler, *Le facciate del Palazzo, l'ispirazione dell'artista. La cultura figurativa di "Filippo Calendario"*, in Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., pp. 17-33, at p. 17.
- ¹⁷ Tigler, *Le facciate del Palazzo* cit., p. 18.
- ¹⁸ Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., pp. 39-40.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Zanotto's is still the most systematic attempt, and he complains of the difficulty of such an operation, F. Zanotto, *Il Palazzo Ducale di Venezia*, I, Venice 1840, p. 210.
- ²¹ E. Garin, *Lo zodiaco della vita. La polemica sull'astrologia dal Trecento al Cinquecento*, Rome - Bari 1982.
- ²² G. Rossi, *I capitelli del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia*, Venice 1952, p. 82.
- ²³ Ptolomaeus appears on the far side of the twentieth capital, which is dedicated to wise men.
- ²⁴ Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., p. 104.
- ²⁵ Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* cit., p. 1.
- ²⁶ Proverbs 12:4: "The perfect woman is the husband's crown".
- ²⁷ Zanotto, *Il Palazzo Ducale di Venezia* cit., p. 210.
- ²⁸ Some scholars think the scene refers to one found in the Marcian codex of Roman de Troyes. W. Wolters, *La scultura veneziana gotica*, Venice 1976; Id., *Scultura*, in U. Franzoi, T. Pignatti, W. Wolters (eds.), *Il Palazzo ducale di Venezia*, Treviso 1990, pp. 117-224.
- ²⁹ Claudius Ptolomaeus, *Tetrabiblos*, IV/5.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, IV/6.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, III/4.
- ³² *Ibid.*, IV/6; Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., p. 97.
- ³³ Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., p. 97.
- ³⁴ Tigler, *Le facciate del Palazzo, l'ispirazione dell'artista* cit., p. 25.
- ³⁵ Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., p. 94.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Immagini della danza macabre nella cultura occidentale dal Medioevo al Novecento*, Como 1995.
- ³⁸ Huizinga, *L'autunno del Medioevo* cit., pp. 162-175.
- ³⁹ R. Gigliucci, *Lo spettacolo della morte. Estetica e ideologia del macabro nella letteratura medievale*, Anzio 1994.
- ⁴⁰ Sora nostra morte corporale/da la quale nullu homo vivente po' skappare/Guai a quelli, ke morranno ne le peccata mortali Beati quelli ke troverà ne le tue santissime volutati/ka la morte seconda nol farrà male. Francesco d'Assisi, *Canticum fratris solis*, in E. Menestò, S. Brufani, G. Cremascol, E. Paoli, L. Pellegrini, Stanislaw da Campangola (eds.), *Fontes Francescani*, Assisi 1995, p. 40.
- ⁴¹ E. Menestò, *Gli scritti di Francesco d'Assisi*, in *Frate Francesco d'Assisi*, Atti del XXI congresso internazionale della società internazionale di Studi Francescani, Assisi 14-16 ottobre 1993, Spoleto 1994, p. 173;

G. Barone, *I mendicanti e la morte*, in F. Salvestrini, G.M. Varanini, A. Zangarini (eds.), *La morte e i suoi riti tra medioevo e prima età moderna*, Firenze, 2008, pp. 51-64.

⁴² Capitals 7 and 27, the descriptions are in Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., pp. 85, 134.

⁴³ The 8th, 11th, 22nd and 28th capitals, the descriptions are in Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., pp. 86, 90, 126-127, 138-141.

⁴⁴ Capitals 4, 9, 25, 30, the descriptions are in Manno, *Il poema del tempo* cit., pp. 81, 87, 130-132, 143.

⁴⁵ Burke, *Eyewitness. The uses of Images as a Historical Evidence* cit.

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