Cosmic over or Athanor from Annibal Barlet, *Le Vray Cours de Physique*, Paris, 1653.

Cover: Crucified Christ, ca. 1300, walrus ivory with traces of paint and gilding, 7 9/16 x 2 1/16 x 1 3/8 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA. Photo Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
ATHANOR XXXVIII

MIA HAVER
◊ Indices in Ivory: Inspiring Affective Piety with a Walrus Ivory Christ

SONIA DIXON
◊ Reexamining Syncretism in Late Antique Iconography of a Vault Mosaic

ANGELICA VERDUCI
◊ Sight, Sound, and Silence at the Oratorio of San Bernardino in Clusone

HOYON MEPHOKEE
◊ At the Center of the Globe: Empiricism and Empire in Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux’s Fontaine des Quatres-Parties-du-monde

JORDAN HILLMAN
◊ Embodying Violence, Manipulating Space: The Irony of Valloton’s Police States

Günther Stamm Prize for Excellence

Mia Hafer was awarded the Günther Stamm Prize for Excellence for “Indices in Ivory: Aspiring Affective Piety with a Walrus Ivory Christ” presented at the 2021 Art History Graduate Student Symposium.

ATHANOR XXXVIII

CAITLIN MIMS HAYLEE GLASEL
Editor in Chief Assistant Editor

PROJECT SUPPORT
This issue of Athanor is made possible with the support of Dean James Frazier, graduate students and faculty in the Department of Art History, and the Florida State University Libraries.
Sight, Sound, and Silence at the Oratorio of San Bernardino in Clusone
Angelica Verduci

At the top of a hill in the medieval town of Clusone (Bergamo, northern Italy), a steep staircase leads into the porch of the seventeenth-century Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta. Moving towards the left, the beholder is led to the quiet courtyard of the fourteenth-century Oratorio of San Bernardino, only to be suddenly overwhelmed by a spellbinding mural painting, which is depicted on the eastern outer façade of the edifice (Figures 1 and 2). From the top down, a gigantic skeleton, royally attired, embodies Death, who stages its triumph on an open tomb. Written scrolls flutter in the air and announce that Death is the harbinger of a universal fate to which everyone is subdued. On Death’s sides, two smaller skeletons point a bow and a rifle at a mixed crowd of people, some in distress and some already deceased. Below, a long procession of skeletons invites their living counterparts to a deadly dance. Above the viewer’s eye level, a fragmentary depiction of the Hellmouth is still discernible on the left, while a group of men, hooded and garbed in white, appears at the bottom far right.

Executed between 1484 and 1485, this Triumph of Death and Dance of Death fresco is the creation of a local artist known as Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, who painted these macabre scenes at the request of the Battuti or disciplini Bianchi of Santa Maria Maddalena of Clusone. This lay congregation once made use of the Oratorio of San Bernardino as their oratory or scola, a place of gathering and prayers where they regularly practiced voluntary and ritual self-flagellation as an act of penitence, aimed both to simulate the Passion of Christ and to expiate sins. The disciplina—or flogging—was accompanied by prayers and recitation of laude, which were vernacular songs in praise of the Virgin Mary, Christ, or the saints. Some, like the poem “Io son per nome chiamata morte” (I am called death by name), consisted of exhortations to a moral life. This lauda, structured as a dialogue between the personification of Death and a disciplina, was meant to elicit meditation on Death’s ubiquitous and equalizing power that overcomes the vanities of earthly life. The Bianchi of Clusone likely performed this song during their devotional rituals, as they had some of its verses integrated into the outside wall painting of their scola. Ferdinando Neri is the scholar who has discovered this connection between the lauda “Io sono per


5 Frugoni and Facchinetti, Senza misericordia, 180. The confraternity of the disciplini in Clusone—also called Bianchi or Battuti—was inspired by the mendicant movement of the flagellanti (flagellants), founded by the ascetic Raniero Fasani (d. 1281) in Perugia in 1260. In the area of Clusone and Bergamo, Venturino de Apibus (1304–1346) was the preacher who gave an institutional shape to the movement of the disciplini, whose regola or statuto was codified in Latin in 1336. This set of rules established the principal social missions to be carried out by the confratelli (lay brothers)—including assistance for the poor, the redistribution of goods, the visit and cure of the sick, and the attendance of funerals. The disciplini were internally divided into sects, distinguishable by the color of their robes. The Bianchi, such as those in Clusone, adopted a white tunic as a uniform, with hood and sleeves embellished by a red cross. This garment displayed a wide opening at the back, which was meant to facilitate self-flagellation. See Daniel Ethan Bornstein, The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Carlo Fornari, “Disciplini: una lunga storia di impiego religioso, artistico, sociale,” Storia del mondo 45 (2007): http://www.storiadeldomondo.com/45/fornari.disceiplini.pdf; Frugoni and Facchinetti, Senza misericordia, 39; L. K. Little, Libertà, carità, fraternità: Confraternite laiche a Bergamo nell’età del Comune (Bergamo, 1988); Ellen Schiferl, “Corporate Identity and Equality: Confraternity Members in Italian Paintings, c. 1340–1510,” Notes in the History of Art 6, no. 2 (1989): 12; Zanchi, Il Teatrum Mortis, 11, note 12.

6 Lauda (plural laude) and disciplino (plural disciplini).
nome chiamata morte” and its painted verses in the fresco. Recently, Chiara Frugoni has reiterated this lauda-fresco relationship, also briefly mentioning that the disciplini might have gathered in front of the Triumph of Death and Dance of Death mural to read and recite “Io sono per nome chiamata morte.”

Building on these observations, my contribution in this article is to specifically explore the performative ways in which the Bianchi could have interacted with the images on the façade of their oratory while reciting the lauda “Io sono per nome chiamata morte” aloud. My in-depth analysis of several passages from this vernacular poem confirms that the narrative in the fresco was modeled on the content of this text.

I argue that, by incorporating and engaging with images that foreground the senses of sight and hearing, the iconography of the Clusone fresco becomes a multi-sensory meditation on “Io son per nome chiamata morte.” In particular, I posit that the conversation between Death and the disciplino, as conveyed in this lauda, is primarily envisioned in the representation of Mors triumphans standing on the uncovered sarcophagus at the top of the fresco. Death in triumph not only defiantly faces its onlookers—the Bianchi—by establishing eye contact with them but it also opens its jaw in a sign of speech. The words pronounced by Death, reported on two of the four scrolls at the top of the Clusone painting, correspond to those voiced by the personification of Death in “Io son per nome chiamata morte.” I thus suggest that these verses inscribed in the fresco would have functioned as a memory prompt for each disciplino, who, in turn, would have recalled and recited aloud the other lines from the same lauda, thus activating a dialogue with Death.

By the time the confratelli (lay brothers) of Clusone commissioned their macabre mural, “Io son per nome chiamata morte” was already circulating with some regional dialect variations within Italy. It first spread orally and was later transcribed into collections of laude named laudari. Today, we can still read the full text of this vernacular song in MA66, a laudario dated to the early sixteenth century and preserved at the Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai in Bergamo. “Io son per nome chiamata morte” is a lauda pro defunctis. This means that it was conceived to be performed as a contrasto, a dialogue between two allegorical figures—Death and a living sinner—to be sung during gatherings and funerary rituals of confraternities like the Bianchi. Overall, the whole contrasto is organized into three major thematic sections: a verbal exchange between Death and the sinner, whose role is played by the disciplino (vv. 1–120); a long monologue spoken by Death (vv. 121–189); and a speech addressed by the disciplino to his other lay brothers (vv. 190–218). These 218 verses are also divided into forty-four groups of four lines, called quarantine, which stand out on the pages of MA66 by means of bolded capital letters. These visual markers were intended to instruct the reader about the shift to a new quarta, thus facilitating the process of memorization. Similarly, an earlier and shorter version of “Io son per nome chiamata morte” is contained in Leggende agiografiche, a fifteenth-century manuscript used to memorize poems for recitation. The dialogue is made up of 116 lines arranged in twenty-nine quarantine, each one flagged by a red rubric that instructs the reader on which verses are to be recited by la morte (Death) or by lo pecatore (the sinner).

A striking connection between the text of “Io son per nome chiamata morte” in MA66 and the images of the Clusone fresco hints that this vernacular poem was part of the repertory of such laude recited by the Bianchi during burial rites. In fact, the lay brothers had the exact four opening verses and the twelfth quarta of “Io son per nome chiamata morte” depicted on the scroll held by Death in its right hand and on the one at its far left. In this order, they report:

E[lo] sono p[er] nome chiamata morte feri
sco a chi / tocchà la sorte. No[n] è homo
chosi forte che da / mi no po schampare.

I am called Death by name I hurt those / whose fate has been chosen. There is no man so strong who / can escape from me.

Chi è fundato in la iustitiae / E lo alto Dio
don disch[aro tiene] / La morte a lui non ne
vi[en con dolore] / pochyce in vita eterna [lo
mena assai meliore].

Who is grounded in justice / And obeys God who is above / to him Death does not come as a pain / as he will be sent in a bet-

13 Quarta (plural quarte). Frugoni and Facchinetti, Senza misericordia, 93.
14 Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, Antonio Suardi, Leggende agiografiche, 1492-1493, Cassaforse 3.03, ff.108r-111v.) https://www.bdl.serviziri
li/vufind/Record/BDL-OGCCETTO-2391.
15 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
The inclusion of these verses from “Io son per nome chiamata morte” in the fresco suggests that this text was well-known and possibly performed by the flagellants of Clusone. Indeed, the recitation of a lauda such as this one perfectly aligns with the context of funerary offices fulfilled by the disciplini within the outside space of their Oratorio of San Bernardino. As specified in the congregation’s regola (rule) or statuto (statute), not only was each devotional ritual accompanied by flogging and recitation of laude, but the disciplini as a group had to take charge of burials and celebrations of the mass in honor of their deceased brothers. The scola was built on the edges of the cemetery that once surrounded the church of Santa Maria Assunta. Thus, the macabre mural on the façade once looked out on the tombs of the confraternity members. In the liminal space of the courtyard, inhabited both by the living and the silent dead, the flagellants of Clusone saw and probably even talked to Death. While standing on top of the graves, they carried out their funerary practices, maybe simultaneously reciting that dialogue contained in “Io son per nome chiamata morte,” in front of the imposing figure of Death painted on the external façade of their oratory.

When delivering this constrosto aloud, the disciplini’s sight would have been guided through the fresco—from the top down—where the major passages from the poem were both “readable” as images and verbally summarized in the full set of four scrolls depicted on Death’s sides (Figures 3, 4, and 5). From left to right, these read:

**Scroll I:** Ognjia omo more e questo m[ondo lass]a chi / ofende a Dio amaram[ent]e passa 1484

Every man dies and leaves this world who / offends God bitterly passes away 1484


I am called Death by name / I hurt those / whose fate has been chosen. There is no man so strong who / can escape from me.

**Scroll III:** E[o] sono la morte piena de equaleza sole voi / ve volio e non vostra richeza. E digna sono / da portar corona p[er]chê signorezi ognjia p[er]sона.

I am Death, full of equality I want only you / and not your wealth. And I am worthy / to wear a crown because I am the ruler of everyone.

**Scroll IV:** Chi è fundato in la iust[itiae] / E lo alto Dio non discha[ro tiene] / La morte a lui non ne vijen con dolore / poiche in vita eterna [lo mena assai meliore].

Who is grounded in justice / And obeys God who is above / to him Death does not come as a pain / as he will be sent in a better place.

Overall, the message carried by these vernacular lines is straightforward. Death evenly assaults, subjugates, and triumphs over everyone who, after dying, is sent to Hell or Heaven in accordance with bad or good deeds. The four scrolls inscribed on the mural painting functioned as captions to the themes represented on the eastern wall of the Oratorio of San Bernardino, but also serve as visual references for each disciplino: they guided his gaze throughout the recitation of the lauda and helped him easily reconstruct his dialogue with Death. In the following pages, a selection and translation of relevant lines from the three sections of “Io son per nome chiamata morte” will show how painted images in the fresco correspond to the spoken words from this text, creating remarkable references to sight and sound conveyed both in the fresco and in the lauda itself.

The first part of the vernacular poem reports the lively conversation between Death and the disciplino (vv. 1–120). Death introduces itself and utters that nobody can escape from it (vv. 1–4: “Io son per nome chiamata morte / ferisco a chi tocha la sorte / non è homo si forte / che da mi possa scampare”). Furthermore, it announces: “I am founded on

---

16 Zanchi, Il Theatrum Mortis, 10–11. On the regola of the disciplini Bianchi see also Carlo Agazzi, “Una gloriosa confraternita bergamasca, i Disciplini di Santa Maria Maddalena,” Bergomum, Bollettino della civica biblioteca, studi di storia dell’arte XXVIII (1934), no. 1 and no. 3: 15-38 and 201–232. The regola of the congregation from 1336 is recorded on a parchment manuscript in Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, X14, BCAM, AB 37.


18 On similar interactions between flagellants and images of Triumph of Death and Dance of Death see Chen, Flagellant Confraternities, 85; and Fiorella Cichi and Liliana De Venuto, Il movimento dei Battuti e le Danze Macabre della Val Rendena (Caltiano: Mantrini, 1993). Mara Nerbano has written in length on the lauda pro delunctis and funerary rituals carried out by the disciplini in their devotional spaces. In particular, the scholar has interestingly pointed out that some confraternities of disciplini in Perugia (Umbria) articulated their funerary rituals in a very performative way, using costumes and objects appropriate to the theme conveyed in the laude pro delunctis. For instance, archival documents of the inventories of the confraternities of disciplini of San Domenico and San Agostino include skeletons, skulls, sicles, and black mantels of Death among those items owned by the disciplini. We do not have any object or costume of Death that might have belonged to the Bianchi of Clusone. However, Nerbano’s research seems to strengthen the possibility that even in Clusone, the lauda “Io sono per nome chiamata morte,” a contrasto between Death and the living, might have been performed by the disciplini, who might have used some similar objects and costumes such as those owned by their confratelli, or who might have simply looked at that majestic image of Death painted on the fresco as the other actor of the dialogue. See Mara Nerbano, “Confratemitte disciplinate e spazi della devozione,” in Brotherhood and Boundaries-Fraternità e barriere, eds. Stefania Pastore, Andriano Prosperi, and Nicholas Terpstra (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 39.

19 This is also the same text reported in scroll II in the fresco at Clusone.
justice / no gold no silver no gifts / will take me away from
the path towards truth” (vv. 25–28: “In la justicia ho fatto mio
fundamento / né oro né argento né nullo presente / non me
porrà far fare partimento / da la via de la veritate.”) When start-
ing to recite the first verses of the lauda, the attention of the
disciplini would have been captured by the majestic image of
Mors triumphans visualized at the top of the fresco along the
central axis of the composition (Figure 6). 20 Death is at-
tired in its finest regal outfit; it wears a sumptuous gold crown;
the ossified shoulders are concealed by a luxurious damasked
mantel, embellished with pearls and lined in green silk; and
a precious brooch secures the edges of the cloak in proximity
to the thorax. I believe that the choice of representing Death
with its gaping mouth and facing the viewer advocates the intention of the Bianchi to imagine that those opening lines they were reciting actually came directly out from the mouth
of Death, who was beginning the dialogue with them. Death’s
words are faithfully translated into the images of the fresco.
Around the open tomb, a bishop, a pope, and a Venetian doge
offer cups and trays brimful of golden and silver coins in vain. A king and a Jew offer a crown and a ring, respective-
ly. However, no bartering between Death and the men is al-
lowed. Death cannot be bribed; rather, it scorns the jewels
and money uselessly gifted by the wealthy people gathered
at its feet. The deadly ruler is unconcerned with the imploring
gazes and gestures of the multitude kneeling around it. Addi-
tionally, this victorious and regal skeleton has turned a deaf
ear to its crowd’s unsuccessful prayers and pleas; instead, it
has cruelly reaped several victims, piled all around the coffin.

Likewise, there is no room for a dialogue between the
triumphant Death and the three horsemen depicted on the
upper left side of the mural painting (Figure 7). The representa-
tion of these three knights escaping from Death is an adap-
tation of the Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead
imagery: 21 This morbid meeting, inspired by a late medieval
tale, narrates the story of three young men—sometimes cast
as kings and sometimes as aristocrats—who, during a hunt,
bump into three corpses affected by different stages of decay.
These dead bodies—conceived as former noblemen them-
seves—start a conversation with the three living to inform
them that life is fleeting, that the human body will be affect-
ed by decomposition, and that wealth is ultimately useless. 22
Sometimes this moral message is reported on a scroll held by
a hermit who stands between the two groups, as in the four-
teenth-century fresco from the Abbey of Santa Maria of Vez-
zolano near Asti (Figure 8). 23 This mural painting shows the
three noble horsemen in a moment of panic: one turns his back
to the viewer and looks up to the falcon that has escaped
from his arm; the second knight pulls back and acts as he is
about to move his fingers towards his nose to plug it; the third
man hides his face in his hands. Their distraught gestures are
dictated by the scary vision of three emaciated cadavers; two
of them stand inside an open grave, whilst one is moving out
of it to walk towards the three living. In fact, these cadavers
reveal themselves not to punish, physically touch, or attack
the living; rather, to advise them. Indeed, their encounter aims
at a didactic outcome; the manifestation of the three decayed
corpses is designed to prompt the living to think about the
caducity of life and vanity of luxuries and richness. This gue-
some meeting specifically creates a space for meditation on
death, its effects, and its victory over time. The hermit, who
holds a scroll and points towards the three putreifying bodies,
is the mediator to this appointment, the only actor of the scene
That speaks while the living and the dead are supposed to lis-
ten. In the Clusone scene, though, the hermit is replaced by an
empty area, a space filled with silence, a void which denotes
the absence of any fruitful talk between the three horsemen
and the three skeletons—here replacing the three cadavers. 24
In fact, Death—the triplicated skeleton at the top of the sar-
cophagus—only “speaks” with the Three Living through a
physical attack, by firing fatal bolts. From the right, an arrow
is plunged in the chest of the blond horseman, whose body is
dumped on the back of his steed. The second knight looks up
at another bolt that is about to hit his dead companion’s fal-
con. The third man, horrified, flies on his horse, which rears
in terror.

In front of these visions of carnage and deadly danger,
the disciplino replies: “Your appearance makes me tremble…
You are so cruel as you kill everyone in the world / you drag
down powerless and powerful ones / there is no man so happy
that you will ever forgive” (vv. 7–8: “Riguardo il tuo aspetto

20 The Triumph of Death in late medieval Italian wall painting is a woeful-
ly understudied topic. The most helpful resources on this subject are Liliane
Brion-Guerry, Le thème du “Triomphe de la mort” dans la peinture italienne
(Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1950); and Pierroberto Scaramella,
“The Italy of Triumphs and of Contrasts,” in Humana Fragilitas: The Themes
of Death in Europe from the 13th Century to the 18th Century, eds. Pierroberto
Scaramella and Alberto Tenenti (Clusone, 2002), 25–98.
a Clusone,” 18.

22 For further information of the Legend of the Three Living and the Three
Dead in late medieval art see Christian Kiening, “Le double décomposé: ren-
contre avec des vivants et des morts à la fin du Moyen Âge,” Annales
and the Three Dead in Italian Art,” in Mixed Metaphors: The Danse Macabre
in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, eds. Sophie Oosterwijk and Stefanie
Knoll (Cambridge, 2011), 155–68; Chiara Settis Frugoni, “Il tema dell’in-
contro dei tre vivi e dei tre morti nella tradizione medievale italiana,” Atti
dell’Accademia dei Lincei. Memorie. Classe di scienze morali, storiche e fi-
losoﬁche CCCXVI (1967): 145–251; and Vi de nous sommes, morts nous serons:
la rencontre des trois morts et des trois vifs dans la peinture murale en France,
complied by the Groupe de recherches sur les peintures murales (Vendôme:
23 On the role of the hermit see Piccat, “Mixed Encounters,” 159; and Settis
Frugoni, “Il tema dell’incontro,” 168.
24 On violence in the encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead
of Between the Three Dead and the Three Living,” in Beholding Violence in
Medieval and Early Modern Europe, eds. Allie Terry-Fritsch and Erin Felicia
Labbie (Routledge, 2012), 85–104.
/ Tuto me fai tremare”; vv. 21–24: “Tu sei crudele che spogli il mondo / picholi e grandi tu meni al fundo / non è homo si io-cundo / a chi tu vogli perdonare.”7) Death is brutal as it entrusts the massacre to the scavvy emissaries set on its sides (Figure 9). One is a skeletal archer who has already reaped two preys—a man in red with an arrow stuck in his throat and the horseman of the Three Living and the Three Dead encounter, mortally wounded in his chest. This dreadful executioner is insatiable; three further bolts are ready to be shot from the bow. Its companion is the skinny sniper who bears on its shoulder a kind of musket—a weapon popular in Clusone at the time the fresco was painted.25 It is ready to fire towards a populous group of cardinals, archbishops, and monks. The sorrowful lay brother also confesses to Death that “the world is just a swindle/ a smelting carrion that smells as nothing else can smell…” (vv. 113–114: “Ora cognosco che l’omo da ti fuzire. / Tutte le cose io vezo morire / e nulla lassi perseverate.”) Death responds to its listener that even though nobody can get away from death, men can live in different places after life: heaven or hell. Death replies using the same message reported in scroll IV, stating that those that are grounded in justice and obedience will be sent to heaven (vv. 45–48: “Chi è fundato / se di stare in festa / alora lo vedi cadere in terra morto. / Io son / tu me dichi il vero / como poria mai l’omo da ti fuzire. / Tute le cosse io vezo morire / e nulla lassi perseverate.”) Death echoes in the figures of a pope and an emperor, trampled by Death. Their faces are pale and gaunt, and their bodies only deceptively intact. Snakes slither out from within these two corpses, to join the toads and scorpions that colonize the edgem of the tomb.

After witnessing these hideous demises, the disciplino, puzzled, asks the ruthless sovereign: “I beg you to tell me the truth / how a man can escape from you / I see everything dying / and you do not spare anything” (vv. 37–40: “Io ti prego che tu me dichi il vero / como poria mai l’omo da ti fuzire. / Tute le cosse io vezo morire / e nulla lassi perseverate.”) Death responds to its listener that even though nobody can get away from death, men can live in different places after life: heaven or hell. Death often mentions heaven as the destination for the righteous and describes it as the realm in which the just will “hear an angelic chant” (v. 55: “odendo lo angelico canto.”) A depiction of heaven as a place where one can “hear an angelic chant” might have been translated into this scene of the Bianchi and the Virgin, thus creating a visual contrast with images of sounds represented on the opposite pictorial segment of hell (Figure 12). There, the celestial hymns are replaced by curses and shouts from the naked and chained female allegories of three of the capital sins. From left to right, Superbia (Pride) is likely swearing against the demon who is pushing her inside the Hellmouth with a sharpened pitchfork. Avarizia (Avarice) covers her eyes and yells desperately into the flames with her companion Ira (Anger), who looks up to the sky to address her vain prayers.

25 Frugoni and Facchinetti, Senza misericordia, 75.
26 When he thinks about being in celebration / then you see him falling down dead/ I am the one who wounded him/ but indeed he has killed himself on his own/ Because of his sins/ you see him go to Hell.
27 Frugoni and Facchinetti, Senza misericordia, 84. This painting of Mary of Mercy has been dated to around 1470 and has been attributed to Giacomo Busca, the same artist of the Triumph of Death and Dance of Death of the Clusone fresco, also responsible for the Passion cycle depicted inside the Church of Santa Maria annexed to the Oratorio of San Bernardino.
28 Frugoni and Facchinetti, Senza misericordia, 40.
30 Even though the drapery of the Mary of Mercy depicted inside the Oratorio of San Bernardino features a much brighter red, it could be possible that the fragment of drapery in the lower right portion of the fresco might have undergone alteration and discoloring, turning the original bright red into a darker purple tone. See Terraroli, “Il ciclo dei temi macabri a Clusone,” 16.
aloud.

So far, throughout the recitation of the dialogue between the disciplino and Death, the images and the painted texts, in conjunction with the words spoken, intend to guide the disciplino’s gaze all around the fresco. It is worth noting that the second part of the lauda stresses how Death further invites the lay brother to carefully look at what is represented on the painting. In the long monologue spoken by Death (vv. 121–189), each quartina begins with the word “Vedi” which can be literally translated as “You, look [at this].” For instance, Death cries: “You, look at many popes and emperors / dukes, marquis, and great lords...you, look at that one who has placed hope only in earthly things and who relies only on his power...you, look at that one who lives in fortress / castles, gold and beauty: / death comes for him and shoots arrows towards him / God knows where that one will be sent to live after life” (vv. 125–140: “Vedi molti papi e imperadori / duchi, marchesi e grandi signori...Vedi colui che nel mondo ha posto speranza / e che se confida nella sua posanza...Vedi colui che se confida in forza / in chastelli, in oro et in bellezza / vene la morte e si lo sagitta / Dio sa dove va quella anima ad habitar.”) Through this monologue, Death wants its beholder to see its slaughter and potent attack once again. The disciplino’s eyes are thus redirected one more time to the details of Mors triumphans’ numerous reaped victims at the top of the composition. By using the second singular person of the imperative mode, Death demands that each single lay brother listens to its words and carefully looks at these words made into images. Death, by insistently calling out its listener, wants to make sure that he can firmly memorize and retain these images in his memory.

While looking at the middle section of the fresco, the disciplino also notices himself participating in a long and grim parade of smiling skeletons, who grab their upset living counterparts by arms and hands (Figure 13). This is a dance of death, a gruesome scene based on the idea that death is universal and unites everyone, no matter their social status and age. This intimate physical encounter between the living and the dead is the meeting of the individual with his own double. Images like these were popular in fifteenth-century Europe and were known in the Italian peninsula, especially through prints. A few painted examples of this macabre iconography are attested in northern Italy and some are connected to the movement of the disciplini. Usually, this morbid dance involves the major exponents of both ecclesiastical and secular ranks. Yet, the danse macabre in Clusone is unique not only because it unfolds a laymen-only procession, but also because it is the only extant instance of this imagery which includes a disciplino. Beginning from the left, we glimpse a group of women squeezed tightly together inside a space defined by an arched door. Right before this entrance is a beautiful young lady, carried arm in arm by two skeletons. She wears an elegant damask dress and holds a portable mirror to admire her reflection. What she stares at is not her pretty face, rather it is a skeletal appearance, a prefiguration of what her face will look like when she is dead. This woman is actually an allegorical representation of Vanitas. Placed at the beginning of the dance of death and nearby the disciplino, Vanitas reminds the Bianchi of that same message announced in the lauda “Io son per nome chiamata morte”: earthly life, physical appearance, and richness are useless, ephemeral, and vain before Death. Furthermore, this warning seems to be reiterated by the skeleton standing behind the disciplino (Figure 14). This skeleton—another replication of the completely stripped of flesh skeletal Mors triumphans at the top of the fresco—is looming over the hooded flagellant, as it is about to whisper into his uncovered ear that Death is inevitable and comes for everyone, for the Bianchi too.

This depiction of a flagellant in the Dance register functions as a memento mori for the lay congregation of San Bernardino and it ultimately creates a connection to the third and last part of the lauda “Io son per nome chiamata morte” (vv. 190–218), in which a confratello gives a passionate piece of advice to his other brothers: “You, who are reading and listening ... / read and listen [to this], as what you are reading and listening can be good for you / ... this lauda is sacred / and is sung to God. / However, I beg you, as you are sinners as me / that you will always pray God / in order to be forgiven


34 Fifteenth-century frescos of the Dance of Death from northern Italy include those at San Lazzaro in Como (early fifteenth century, destroyed), San Bartolomeo in Cassiglio, San Silvestro in Iseo, San Martino in Saluzzo, San Peyre in Macra, Oratorio dei Bianchi, Monegheria (Teglio). Later examples from the first half of the sixteenth century include Santa Maria in Binda in Nosate, Santo Stefano in Carisolo, and San Vigilio in Pinzolo.

35 Giacomo Scandella, “Danza Macabra di Clusone,” 170. A detailed description of each couple of the Dance of Death goes beyond the purpose of this research. For a comprehensive analysis of this dance see Frugoni and Facchinetti, Senza misericordia, 103–132.
by Him for any bad deeds committed in His respect / [pray to God] in order to be saved for good deeds / [do this] as we have the opportunity to meditate on Death” (vv. 206–218: “Tu che lezi e chi ascolti... / leze e ascolta che ‘l te poria zovare / ...Questa laude è tuta sancta / la qual è a Dio e gloria si canta. / Però vi prego per mi peccatore / che vogliate sempre Dio pregare / che me perdoni ogni offesa a lui facta / che’l mi conceda gratia de ben fare / a ciò che possiamo la morte contemplare.”) These last verses of the lauda strengthen the relationship of images to the senses of sight and sound, which are encapsulated in both the fresco and the poem “Io son per nome chiamata morte.” This vernacular song, translated and manifested into images within the fresco, was clearly meant to be read in the painted texts reported on the mural, to be listened to and sung, but also to be contemplated. This latter verb originates from the Latin term contemplare and it means “looking carefully, gazing hard at.” The Clusone fresco, thus, functioned as a painted lauda, a multi-sensory meditation of the lauda, a place of memory where the flagellants could have recalled multiple times the message encompassed in the lauda, imprinted in their mind through the observation of those verses depicted and recited too.

Today, the courtyard of the Oratorio of San Bernardino, once enlivened by the sound of voices, prayers, chants, and scourges of the disciplini Bianchi, is now a silent space. The macabre fresco, despite being touched by various and careless damages throughout the centuries, remains visible on the outer façade of the oratory and still retains its function. It invites the onlookers to get close, to scrutinize the images of the fresco, to read the text of those scrolls ruffling in the air next to Death, to visualize and to reenact that encounter the flagellants of Clusone frequently had with Death.

Case Western Reserve University
Figure 1. (above) Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, view from the courtyard, 1350, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Angelica Verduci.

Figure 3. (below) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, Scroll I (detail of Triumph of Death and Dance of Death), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Domenico Verduci.
Figure 2. Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, *Triumph of Death and Dance of Death*, 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Domenico Verduci.
Figure 4. (above) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, Scroll II (detail of Triumph of Death and Dance of Death), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Domenico Verduci.

Figure 5. (below) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, Scrolls III and IV (detail of Triumph of Death and Dance of Death), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Domenico Verduci.
Figure 6. (above) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, *Death in Triumph* (detail of *Triumph of Death and Dance of Death*), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Angelica Verduci.

Figure 7. (below) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, *The Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead* (detail of *Triumph of Death and Dance of Death*), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Angelica Verduci.
Figure 8. (above) The Encounter of the Three Living and the Three Dead, second half of the XIV century, fresco, Cloister of the Abbey of Santa Maria of Vezzolano near Asti, Italy. Photo credit: https://commons.wikimedia.org

Figure 9. (below) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, Death in Triumph with its Skeletal Emissaries (detail of Triumph of Death and Dance of Death), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Angelica Verduci.
Figure 10. Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, *Mary of Mercy*, ca. 1470-1471, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, interior, now Museo della basilica, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Angelica Verduci.
Figure 11. (above) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, *Group of Disciplini* (detail of *Triumph of Death and Dance of Death*), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Angelica Verduci.

Figure 13. (below) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, *The Dance of Death* (detail of *Triumph of Death and Dance of Death*), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Domenico Verduci.
Figure 12. (left) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, *The Hellmouth, Superbia, Avaritia, and Ira* (detail of *Triumph of Death and Dance of Death*), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Angelica Verduci.

Figure 14. (right) Giacomo Borlone de Buschis, *Vanitas and a disciplino* (detail of *Triumph of Death and Dance of Death*), 1484-1485, fresco, Oratorio dei Disciplini di San Bernardino, eastern outer façade, Clusone, Italy. Photo credit: Angelica Verduci.