Books and Objects Supporting Quotidian Devotion. Conclusions and Prospects for Investigating Daily Religious Practices during the 'Long Fifteenth Century'

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GÉRALDINE VEYSSEYRE

Books and Objects Supporting Quotidian Devotion

*Conclusions and Prospects for Investigating Daily Religious Practices during the 'Long Fifteenth Century'**

Studying Christianity in late medieval Europe is a multifaceted task: here, during this period, the Christian faith was so deep-rooted that it underlay every single aspect of human activity — politics, society, education, culture, and even the humblest routines of daily life. The present collective volume has its focus on the latter, namely on the concrete impact that Christianity — Catholic and Reformed — had on the daily occupations of diverse late medieval Europeans. Although this topic has already received scholarly attention, the present collection of essays refreshes our consideration of its central theme by adopting wide boundaries, not only in terms of chronology, but also in terms of space. It is not the first study endeavouring to bridge the traditional academic gap between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries: previous

* I am happy to thank the editors of this volume for having entrusted to me the delightful mission of reading it in advance and of writing conclusions for it. I am especially grateful to Ian Johnson for having inserted into the first draft of my prose a generous provision of idiomatic English expressions, and for having worked at the clarification and contextualization of certain points that have been extended, glossed, and elaborated through his agency.

Géraldine Veysseyre • is tenured Lecturer at the Sorbonne University (Paris). Trained in codicology and philology, she specializes in chronicles and spiritual literature in French. Her current research focuses on religious texts that proved especially popular not only in France but also more widely in Europe during the Late Middle Ages — and in times afterwards: namely the *Golden Legend*, Pseudo-Bonaventuran translations of the *Meditationes vitae Christi* and of the *Stimulus Amoris*, and allegorical pilgrimage texts composed by Guillaume de Deguileville. Having edited (and continuing to edit) some of these late medieval works in Middle French, she pays special attention to the authorial role of scribes and its effects on the manuscript traditions of such texts. Recently, issues raised by the initiatives shown by medieval scribes have led her to examine corresponding rewritings in early prints in order to assess the evolutions observable during the technical and intellectual shift from scriptorium to printing press.

Religious Practices and Everyday Life in the Long Fifteenth Century (1350–1570): Interpreting Changes and Changes of Interpretation, ed. by Ian Johnson and Ana Maria S. A. Rodrigues, New Communities of Interpretation, 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), pp. 377–402
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publications have brought together both periods.[1] Recently, a few studies and essays have forged an expression, namely the 'long fifteenth century', which conveniently covers various endeavours to bridge the late Middle Ages and early modern times.[2] Following on from these, this collective volume contributes to the current academic endeavour — no longer scanty — that does its best to compensate for centuries of cleavage between medievalists and specialists of the early modern period. Its wide geographical focus, however, is more of a novelty, especially in being combined with a large timeframe, as it chooses to encompass the whole of western Christendom, from Mediterranean countries (Italy, Spain, and Portugal) to northern Europe, and from England to Slavic, Baltic, and Balkan territories (Bohemia, Poland, Lithuania, and Serbia).

The lofty ambitions of this collective study can also be identified in its concern with religious movements. One of its utmost assets is the attention it pays to the shifting borders of western Christendom through studies of regions where, owing to conquest or cohabitation, different religions interacted, be they Christianity and Islam;[3] or Christianity, Islam and Judaism (as in the

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1 See, for instance, Collinson, 'The Late Medieval Church and Its Reformation'; Goudriaan, 'Geert Grote' or Goudriaan, 'The Church and the Market'. For any thorough idea of the recent bibliography dealing with the history of Christianity and Christian culture and bringing together the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, this list would have to be expanded exponentially.

2 e.g. Cooper and Mapstone, eds, *The Long Fifteenth Century*. Ghosh, in 'Wyclif, Arundel', seems to consider the 'long fifteenth century' as a given and natural framework, inasmuch as the formulation appears only in the title of the paper, and he does not dwell thereafter either on its boundaries or on the period it actually covers. Sabrina Corbellini's research often bridges the late Middle Ages and early modern times (see, for instance, Corbellini, 'Mapping Spiritual Life'; or Corbellini and Hoogvliet, 'Artisans and Religious Reading', each of which deals with both the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries). Corbellini, 'Reading, Writing, and Collecting', considers the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, and Corbellini and others, 'Challenging the Paradigms', embracing a time-span from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, has ended up making the 'long fifteenth century', as she defines it, a period covering the years 1350–1570 — the main target of the COST Action that she initiated and directed. The Action's collective goal has been 'to develop and communicate a better calibrated and nuanced understanding of religious and cultural change in the "long fifteenth century"' (see the official 'Memorandum of Understanding', which served as a source of inspiration and of collective tuning for the COST Action 'New Communities of Interpretation: Contexts, Strategies and Processes of Religious Transformation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe', n° IS1301, 2014–2017). Delineating such a large period and naming it 'the long fifteenth century' not only makes sense for historians of religion in Western Christendom, it also applies to the history of science (see French, 'Introduction: The "Long Fifteenth Century" of Medical History'), and, in some significant ways, to the history of illustrations (Veysseyre, 'Le livre illustré du "long XVe siècle"'), to English literature. For this, see Woodcock, 'England in the Long Fifteenth Century', who comments on the expression, quoting Cooper and Mapstone, eds, *The Long Fifteenth Century*, p. 510.

3 Abramović and Dajč, 'The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity', deals not only with the Balkan peninsula, but also with the islands of Crete and Cyprus, thereby defining the Balkans in the sixteenth century as a 'the boundaries, or rather, [point] of contact between the Islamic and Christian world' (p. 324).

Iberian peninsula);[4] or Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy; or even, in different combinations in different times and places, Catholicism, Utraquism, Wycliffism, Lutheranism, Erasmianism, not forgetting other kinds of reform movement sooner or later considered unorthodox by the Roman Church.

This book's spectrum is also wide in terms of the social layers examined: the implication of one's faith in one's daily schedule is studied among clerics (monks, friars, nuns, priests, or canons) and laypeople, and among a wide range of believers whose culture varied from the most sophisticated theologians to the illiterate, with a special emphasis on all of the Christians who, somewhere between these two extremes, could read the vernacular proficiently and gain access to a glimpse or more of what the specialists in late medieval English religious literary culture name 'vernacular theology',[5] or at least of prayer books translated and designed for their specific use.[6]

Addressing such an ample topic entails a twofold risk: being sketchy and being inconsistent — two shortcomings which this collection of essays avoids, thanks to the multifaceted links, more or less patent, interconnecting the individual outputs of this collective research. Some of these bridges between different linguistic areas, between the Middle Ages and early modern times, or between divergent beliefs, stem spontaneously from the facts under consideration. This is particularly obvious where geography is concerned. From the early Middle Ages onwards, the Christian faith, in concert with a directive, going back to the Carolingian period, to restore scholarly Latin, fostered the cultural unity of western Christendom, at least as far as learned elites were concerned. Later on, international relationships among Christian territories were consolidated by monastic orders establishing international networks whose interconnections prompted national and linguistic borders to be crossed frequently, whether through various modes of institutional transfer or the movement of individuals. Such dynamics were amply developed in the thirteenth century through the emergence of the mendicant orders and the gradual establishment of a European network of universities allowing students to take a *peregrinatio academica*,[7] to say nothing of the transnational links constantly maintained by popular pilgrimages or the regular movement of people, documents, and other objects to and from the papal residence in

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4 Abramović and Dajč, 'The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity', p. 324; Samardžić, '*De praeparatione ad mortem*', p. 306.

5 The term, though not invented by Watson, gained particular prominence in the wake of his 1995 article, 'Censorship and Cultural Change'. Watson's views have been challenged ever since, for example, by Minnis and Brewer, eds, *Crux and Controversy*; Gillespie, 'Vernacular Books'; Johnson, 'Vernacular Valorizing'; Gillespie, 'Vernacular Theology'; and Johnson, 'Vernacular Theology / Theological Vernacular'.

6 See, for example, Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', pp. 162–63.

7 An example of this is provided in the present volume by the *peregrinationes academice* of the Lithuanian Abraham Culvensis, who 'studied at the Universities of Crakow, Louvain, Wittenberg, and Siena, emerging from the last of these as a Doctor of Jurisprudence' (Stančiene, 'The Reformation and the First Book', p. 208).

Rome (or, for a shorter period, Avignon), which functioned as the centre of a transnational domain held together by papal jurisdiction and authority.[8] In such a context, prayer beads, whose origin is probably Islamic, did not spread across western Christendom by accident: the rosary, for instance, was promoted by three successive international orders: first by the Carthusians in Trier, then by the Dominicans with Alain de la Roche, and eventually by other religious orders.[9]

As far as Church history is concerned, the coherence of western Christendom is a given fact, and the space delineated in the present book naturally appears as relevant. It allows the different chapters not only to bring together people or communities actually in touch with each other, thanks to their spatial vicinity or their belonging to the same networks (for instance the same religious order,[10] or the same intellectual milieu), but also to compare groups of people or establishments whose tantalizing resemblances to each other were never fostered by any kind of contact, even indirect, between them. Such is the case in the essay fittingly bringing together not only the Poor Clares of Barcelona and the Brigittine nuns of Syon Abbey (England), but also, more pertinently, their use of devotional books and the role that these books were made to play in efforts to build collective memories for either monastery.[11] Both communities of sisters celebrated their offices and said their prayers far away from each other, in female monasteries with different origins: the first goes as far back as 1236, whereas the latter was founded by Henry V in 1415;[12] the first, moreover, was Franciscan until the Observant reform and then Benedictine, whereas the second was Birgittine. Nevertheless, there were striking similarities in their use of liturgical manuscripts, which in both cases interwove 'liturgical and devotional content with self-referencing texts',[13] namely memorial texts helping to cultivate the memory of deceased people for their importance to the community. In both monasteries, at least some of the nuns were encouraged to develop skills allowing them to use and produce books, and

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8 The important role of the papacy at the periphery of Western Christendom in southern Hungary before it was disrupted by the Lutheran Reform and the Ottoman conquest, is clearly shown in Rokai, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in Everyday Religious Life in Southern Hungary', pp. 355–56. The importance of the papacy is also proved by the disarray caused by the schism (see for, instance, the introduction of Samardžić, '*De praeparatione ad mortem*', p. 305).

9 Saczyńska-Vercamer, 'Change and Continuity in Lay Devotion', pp. 110–11.

10 For example, the Canonries of Marbach (Alsace) and Roudnice (Bohemia), whose statutes share too much substance for their overlap to be merely coincidental (Ebersonová, 'Religious Practices of the Canons Regular', pp. 30–31).

11 Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', pp. 54 and 62.

12 Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', pp. 51–53.

13 Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', p. 64.

even texts.[14] The proficiency they demonstrate in doing so makes them comparable with the Dominican nuns of Aveiro (Portugal) whose house, founded in 1461 — even later than Syon Abbey —, was a major centre of the Reform movement. In consequence, a proportion of their residents not only studied Latin in order to celebrate the liturgy in the best conditions, but also had plenty of opportunities to read and write, enjoying quotidian contacts with books and diverse documents (accounts, reports).[15] Again, though this community was not in direct contact with either the Birgittines of Syon or the Franciscan nuns of Barcelona, they were comparable with them in many ways: the overlaps of their daily life span three different orders whose residents lived in three distinct linguistic areas.

Beyond this case study, the present collection of essays allows its readers to gain access to plenty of fresh and enlightening examples serving to nourish their appreciation of the cohesion of western Christendom. First of all, it provides fresh illustrations of the natural tendency of orders to foster uniformity, at least to a certain extent. The Obedient movement and the general reform it promoted gave new impetus to this trend in the regions this book considers. These include not only the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, but also Spain.[16] Adéla Ebersonova's case study on the Canons Regular of St Augustine exemplifies this phenomenon from another point of view. This order positioned its members somewhere between the secular and the regular clergy, and its initial rule was elusive and abstract enough to allow each congregation, down to each canonry, to cultivate certain specificities in daily life.[17] The statutes extant for Bohemia attest to this, at least until the middle of the fourteenth century. After that, the authority bestowed by the Observant movement on the Latin statutes of Roudnice and the members of its canonry made them so influential that they became mandatory in all the houses of the order, not only in Bohemia but also in Moravia. They were subsequently adopted in a wider region including Poland, Slovakia, Germany, and Austria. These statutes, which became even more important than the original rule of the order, were far more prescriptive and restrictive than the original rule, not least because they dealt with more concrete realities. Under their stipulations, the daily life of all the canons living in this large area without doubt became more standardized and less flexible. In that the *Consuetudines Rudnicenses* were

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14 Such intellectual skills were deeply rooted in the Birgittine nuns of Syon Abbey (individually and collectively), as shown by the continuous and multi-handed updating of their Martyrology (London, BL, MS Additional 22285), which went on even after they were exiled from England by the Reformation (Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', p. 13). Even this brutal change of scenery does not seem to have undermined the nuns' intellectual aspirations and baggage.

15 See Moiteiro, 'Literacy, Books, and the Community', pp. 87–88.

16 See Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', p. 52.

17 Ebersonová, 'Religious Practices of the Canons Regular', pp. 28–29.

widely disseminated and enjoyed unopposed authority, they make the particulars of everyday life easier and more reliable to imagine for modern historians than would otherwise be the case.

The noticeable unity of western Christendom was also an outcome of the long-lasting effects of the Fourth Lateran Council. Although this important milestone predates the beginning of the 'long fifteenth century' as defined here by more than two centuries, some of its effects still influenced Christian daily life in the later Middle Ages and early modern times. For instance, the fear of the Purgatory still inspired supplications sent to the Holy See in fifteenth-century Hungary.[18] It also seems that the importance given to confession and contrition in 1215 had both fast and slow effects. The emphasis put by Lateran IV on personal responsibility for one's salvation kept on developing for the whole of the long fifteenth century, and maybe even after that, as shown by the shifts observed by Joost Robbe in the *Artes moriendi* between 1403 and 1475.[19]

Another well-known feature brought together a wide-reaching majority of late medieval Europeans: their common and acute awareness of human mortality. It prompted their regular use of clerical guidance already available from the earlier Middle Ages to those about to cross the mortal divide. It steadily and spectacularly increased their demand for rituals, texts, books, and objects enabling not only dying individuals but also members of the family and close friends assisting them, to perform actions, ask questions, and pronounce prayers that would prove as efficacious as possible, especially in the event of an unexpected death occurring before the sacraments could be administered to the dying by the clergy. Consequently, *Artes moriendi* books became bestsellers over the 'long fifteenth century', enjoying spectacular Europe-wide success. To the *Artes moriendi* should be added the wide dissemination of works including chapters or sections dealing with death — catechisms like Brother Laurent's *Somme le roi*,[20] spiritual treatises like the *Horologium Sapientiae* by Heinrich Seuse,[21] and prayer books.[22] Considering the importance of mortality in the literature and material life of the late Middle Ages, devoting a whole section of this collective monograph to the concrete ways in which late medieval Christians prepared for their

18 Rokai, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in Everyday Religious Life in Southern Hungary', pp. 358–59.

19 See the conclusions to 'The Kingdom of Heaven', pp. 236–37.

20 Quoted in Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 243.

21 Heinrich Seuse's *Horologium Sapientiae* and its European translations are listed in José Van Aelst, Steven Rozenski and Réjane Gay-Canton, 'Henry Suso (*c.* 1295–1366): a brief introduction to his life and works', published in 2012 on the website of the research project *Old Pious Vernacular Successes* (ERC Starting Grant n° 263274). See http://www.opvs.fr, accessed 30 August 2021.

22 With the exception of Bohemian prayer books in the vernacular, in which 'the Office of the Dead appears only rarely' (Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', p. 168).

'Death and [...] Afterlife' is not disproportionate. The theme of how to handle death, moreover, coursing as it does through so many essays in this book, contributes to the interconnectedness of the collection as a whole. In late medieval literature, the way death is apprehended by Christians in *Artes moriendi* (e.g. preparing for one's death, funeral rituals, and so on) is so ubiquitous that even this one dedicated section is insufficient to gather all of its occurrences. Accordingly, contributions in more than one other section of this book cover different aspects of death.[23]

One notorious fact is illustrated afresh in the 'Preparing for Death and the Afterlife' section of the present volume, namely the constant (almost obsessive) awareness of one's own death during the 'long fifteenth century':[24] *Moriens*, the protagonist of the *Artes moriendi*, seems to have come to terms with the allegorical character Everyman in terms of readers' potential identification. At that time, the collective and individual anxiety of Christians contemplating their own passing was sharpened by some of their spiritual guides, which fostered the vivid imagining of the corporeal and spiritual consequences of death. Their way of dealing with the subject is not a pure novelty, but their resort to concrete and even sometimes crude images contrasts with the abstract discourse employed by earlier catechisms and elementary treatises approaching this matter. Their customary abstraction is illustrated, for instance, by one of the European bestsellers of the time, the *Somme le roi*, which circulated widely not only in manuscript form, but also in early prints, especially in England.[25] This religious and moral manual was composed in 1279 by a certain Brother Laurent, Dominican confessor of Philip III the Bold, King of France at the time. It spread not only in France, among the clergy as well as the laity, but also in England, where, in addition to the French manuscripts that had crossed the Channel, it was translated into English. In the Netherlands

23 The ritual of funerals stands out as one of those for which Balkan communities recently converted to Islam shunned Crypto-Christianity (see Abramović and Dajč, 'The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity', p. 326). By contrast, on the subject of Christian monastic funerals, see Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', pp. 65–66, for instance, referring to the books used by the Franciscan Poor Clares of Barcelona when one of the nuns was about to die [pp. 59–60]: a mention that proves that the habit of using *Artes moriendi* or substitutes for them was not exclusively a lay custom, but also one prevailing among religious communities. The rituals surrounding the deathbed or sickbed of the nuns of Aveiro (Portugal) are also hinted at in Moiteiro, who mentions Passion narratives being read aloud to the bedridden (Moiteiro, 'Literacy, Books, and the Community', p. 90).

24 As far as England is concerned, Delphine Mercuzot describes it as an 'excruciating anxiety about death' ('Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 244; quoting Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*). This finds its counterpart in sixteenth-century Spain with Charles V and his contemporaries, for whom death, and especially the emperor's own trespass, is described as 'a complex obsession' (Samardžić, '*De praeparatione ad mortem*', p. 310).

25 See Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 243, especially footnote 9.

the work was translated into Dutch, and at least one Italian translation of this manual survives.

In order to promote virtue, its author starts with the following reminder:

> Tu doiz savoir que ceste vie n'est fors que mort. Que morz est un trespas, ce set chascuns. […]
> Ceste vie tant seulement
> N'est fors un trespassement,
> Voire voir un trespas mout briés.[26]
>
> (You should be aware that earthly life is nothing but death. Everybody is aware that dying consists in crossing a threshold. […]
> Our mundane life consists in nothing
> But crossing the earth,
> Nay truly crossing it very quickly.)

The content of this statement is a *memento mori* prioritizing moral teaching. Just as in Caxton's print of one of the English translations of the *Somme*, 'it hardly deals with death at all and is more concerned with the art of living'.[27] Indeed, mortality makes only the mildest of impressions on the reader of this work: no effort is made to embody either death or its corrupting consequences on the mortal human body. Earthly life and the continuity of the human lifetime with death are approached in terms of the speed with which time passes and with a tame play on the words *trespas* and *trespasser*, both of which mean either 'to cross a threshold' or, in a narrower and metaphorical sense, 'to die'. Other authors and illustrators choosing to deal with death in the later Middle Ages were more likely to seek out their readers' imaginations, and, as a consequence, to portray death far more impressively.[28] Did these compelling *memento mori* help more spectacularly than intellectual admonitions did to promote morality and good behaviour? Authors and painters of the time seem to have thought so, considering the frequent use of *Artes moriendi* — books or texts — and other narratives or legendary models staging death, for instance the Legend of the Three Living and the Three Dead, in sermons, paintings (murals or manuscript illuminations),[29] and other didactic tools. The use of this theme, together with the images and texts connected with it, was so pervasive that it gradually became part of everybody's daily life. All around Europe at this time, whether they took the form of objects, images, performances, texts, or something else, *memento mori* reminders addressing Christians' reason or emotions were

26 Laurent d'Orléans, *La Somme le roi*, ed. by Brayer and Leurquin-Labie.

27 O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, p. 18; quoted in Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 243, footnote 9.

28 See, for instance, Rywiková, 'Death Multiplied', p. 287.

29 See Rywiková, 'Death Multiplied', pp. 273–76.

commonplace and on everybody's mind.[30] This is attested, for example, by the growing dimensions of charnel houses built adjacent to churches not only as ossuaries but as places for celebrating the liturgy.[31]

The collective fixation on death, combined with an increasing emphasis on personal responsibility for one's own salvation,[32] resulted in the emergence and development of devotional activities and spiritual practices. Their origins may be traceable as far back as the thirteenth century and Lateran IV, but they flourished much later, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, pervading laypeople's domestic space just as friars occupied the public space of city streets, squares, and yards. The daily schedule of more and more laypeople seems to have included, on an individual level, a variety of spiritual activities: founding and attending masses for souls in Purgatory;[33] uttering personal prayers (perhaps while manipulating prayer beads, a rosary, or using a prayer book); worshipping saints (assisted perhaps by hagiographical texts or portraits of personally favoured saints); invoking the Virgin Mary; and, even more importantly and significantly, adoring Christ, ruminating and sharing his humility and the suffering he endured throughout his Passion. Such active spiritual engagement paved the way for contemplation. By doing so, women's timetables could meet, or at least could come closer to, the standards appointed for housewives by the French, Spanish, and Italian clerics who, in the treatises that they wrote for them, advised women to spare as much time as possible for contemplation, ignoring almost completely the material duties and social obligations that made their life different from that of nuns.[34]

In her study of such treatises, whose contents she compares with that of sermons, Geneviève Hasenohr reports a striking disparity, in terms of flexibility, between the way clerics deal with men and women.[35] Only three categories of women are distinguished, namely virgins, spouses, and widows — categories not updated since the Church Fathers and not taking into consideration any of the differences existing between the daily schedule

30 In Spain, poetry also treated issues of 'actively coping with dying and death', as did satirical literature in the fifteenth century, and drama in the sixteenth (Samardžić, '*De praeparatione ad mortem*', p. 310).

31 Rywiková, 'Death Multiplied', p. 282.

32 As proved, among other arguments, by the analysis provided by Joost Robbe of the way Gerson's *Ars moriendi* (1403) is rewritten in the *Speculum artis bene moriendi* (second quarter of the fifteenth century), and even more clearly in the adaptation of the latter in the slightly later *Picture ars moriendi* (third quarter of the fifteenth century). See Robbe, 'The Kingdom of Heaven', respectively pp. 223–26 and 226–32.

33 Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 244.

34 Hasenohr, 'La vie quotidienne de la femme vue par l'Église'; reprinted and updated recently in Hasenohr, *Textes de dévotion*, ed. by Hubert and others, especially pp. 634 and 640–41. On the help provided by prayer books (especially Hours and Missals) for laypeople aiming at giving their daily existence a contemplative or quasi-monastic flavour, see Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', pp. 245–46.

35 Hasenohr, 'La vie quotidienne de la femme vue par l'Église', pp. 632–34.

of peasants, bourgeois women, and members of the high aristocracy. By contrast, as far as men were concerned, clerical authors of prescriptive treatises observed the social distinctions fostered since Lateran IV by collections of *sermones ad status*: hence their efforts to adapt their teaching and their requirements to the social and worldly obligations that men were not permitted to skip.

The present volume does not allow us to ascertain the stability and consistency of the disparities between the ways in which women and men were considered, but it confirms that the authors of religious texts and books took into account the fact that their recipients may have had to share their time between devotion and other activities, due to professional or social obligations — sometimes even taking into account the professional skills their recipients had acquired and the technical vocabulary that they employed while exerting them.[36] The present collection of essays offers novel and enlightening examples of this pliability, which seems to increase during the long fifteenth century. The most striking example is probably the contents of the prayer book offered to George of Poděbrady at Christmas 1466 by his wife, Queen Joanna of Rožmitál. Ever since it was copied, it contained a set of short prayers attributed to St Jerome (Jerome's Psalter) and designed specifically, according to its prologue, for the 'sick, the pilgrims, and the soldiers', namely those who could not afford to pray the whole sequence of psalms or Marian Hours. These prayers were complemented, not long after this lavish book was offered to its recipient, by the short prayer *Before the Battle* (fol. 1^r), which directly echoes the urgent needs of a king judged heretical by the pope, deposed from his throne, and as a consequence defending himself against a crusade raised against him and his subjects by the Church.[37] The short prayer *Before the Battle* could have been replaced by the part of *Artes moriendi* in which their reader is provided with the instructions to follow in case of a sudden seizure;[38] nevertheless, it seems that the military threat prompts its victims to resort to expedients different from those turned to by people hit by disease or old age. Anyway, in both cases, prayers provided by memory or books are the best insurance against any menace. Over time, ready-made sets of prayers were prepared for all kinds of circumstances, just as collections of *sermones ad status* were prepared for any social class. In consequence, two converse trends coexisted during the long fifteenth century: on the one hand, specialized books whose contents were designed or customized according to place, religion, social status, and even gender, mushroomed, fostering the emergence of multiple 'sub-communities of interpretation'. On the other

36 See the introduction to Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', pp. 176–77 and 188–89. In a different way, the *Picture ars moriendi* takes into account the ideal of the late medieval nobility in transforming *Dying* into a 'spiritual knight' (Robbe, 'The Kingdom of Heaven', pp. 236–36).

37 Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', p. 154.

38 Robbe, 'The Kingdom of Heaven', p. 231.

hand, thanks to ever-rising literacy, the community of readers grew bigger and bigger, especially in proportion to the total population. This increasing Christian readership gained, more and more easily, access to a common religious culture acquired from texts impossible to avoid. Indeed, they often obtained from books even more than they did from sermons, performances, or images.

In a period when the use of vernacular languages significantly challenged the exclusivity of Latin in the religious field, this collection makes it obvious that the infrastructure of a Europe-wide common culture was strong enough to allow texts to circulate from one linguistic area to the next almost as swiftly and consistently as theological treatises in Latin circulated in the vast networks of European universities, religious orders, and the Church hierarchy.

In addition to this, the present volume helps us realize that the new faiths parting from Catholicism also created their own international networks and *peregrinationes*, sometimes reusing well-established links. Indeed, supporters of the Reform in Siena had a positive influence on the Lithuanian pioneering Reformist Abraham Culvensis, who planned to translate the Bible into Lithuanian, collaborating with Stanislaus Rapagelanus. Both of these wished to emulate Luther's German translation published in 1534. As a consequence, Lutheranism influenced the early production of printers in Lithuania. The first printers who were active there worked at disseminating Lutheran doctrine through the medium of the vernacular book. The contents of the first book published in Lithuania and in the Lithuanian language, whose ambitions were pitched particularly high, were no accident.[39] Its print dissemination not only reflected, at a larger level, the influence on Lithuania of countries where Protestantism first appeared, but also enlarged and shaped a community ideologically akin to those of the Lutherans of western Europe.

In consequence, it seems that theological debates and the emergence of reformist movements judged heretical by the Catholic Church, far from undoing the interconnectedness of western Christendom, created new networks within its space, which challenged anterior connections (such as the links between Lithuania and the papacy), but also replaced them by new, well-organized, and even institutionalized networks, some of which were connected to temporal powers. For instance, in Lithuania, the Reform was promoted by Albrecht, the Duke of Prussia, an official supporter of Martin Luther. Even where Catholicism maintained its pre-eminence as the sole officially recognized faith (as in England or, most of the time, in Bohemia, with the exception of the reign of George of Poděbrady [1458–1471]), overlaps and mutual influence could emerge between reformist theologians of different countries, not even necessarily neighbours, as was the case with the English

39 Stančiene, 'The Reformation and the First Book', pp. 210–11.

John Wyclif and the Bohemian John Hus,[40] both of whom were convicted in 1415 by the Council of Constance as two sides of the same coin.[41]

In terms of chronology, examining the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a whole has never been unusual,[42] and it has also become less exceptional to bridge together the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially since the dawning of debates not only on the traditional periodization separating the Middle Ages and Renaissance but also on the very concepts and terminology of 'Renaissance', 'Middle Ages', and 'Reform'.[43] Nevertheless, to encompass a time-span as large as the present collection does — from 1350 to 1570 — is distinctive, especially in the context of dealing with such a large geographic area.[44] Broadening the chronological focus of the study to such a degree that its core, the fifteenth century, is not only 'long' but in effect multiplied by more than two, allows the reader of the present volume to appreciate the evolution, transformations, and maturation of a wealth of interesting and significant materials and themes over an extensive period. Such is the case with prayer beads and the rosary: two studies in this book enable us to follow them from their origins until, promoted by the Dominicans (particularly in Italy and in Germany),[45] they were completely implanted not just in daily Catholic routine but even in the textual culture of Catholic Italy. The two chapters on this topic also enhance a more general understanding of the progressive extension and standardization of the use of prayer beads and the rosary across the Catholic countries of early modern Europe.

A further topic fitting for study over a long run, in this instance bridging the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is provided by the case of books that preserved (usually by recording deaths) the memory not just of individuals

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40 On the influence of Wycliff's writings in Bohemia, and especially on the Hussites, see for instance Hudson, 'From Oxford to Prague', Hudson, 'The Survival of Wyclif's Works'; Herold, 'Zum Prager Philosophischen Wyclifismus'; Kras, 'Recepcja Pism Johna Wiclifa' (Reception of the Writings of John Wyclif); and Herold, 'The Spiritual Background'. For comparisons between the opinions and agencies of both theologians, see for instance Wilks, 'Reformatio Regni'. The other way round, the — more anecdotal — visit of a Hussite to Scotland is documented in the years 1430 (Vyšný, 'A Hussite in Scotland').

41 About Wyclif's conviction, see Tatnall, 'The Condemnation of John Wycliff', and Ghosh, 'Wyclif, Arundel'. About Jan Hus's trial, see Miethke, 'Die Prozesse in Konstanz'; Fudge, 'O Cursed Judas'; Provvidente, 'Hus's Trial in Constance'.

42 e.g. Verger, 'Different Values and Authorities', a study that focuses on the shifts discernible in mentalities between 1300 and 1500.

43 Literature on the topic is quoted in the introduction to Sebők, 'Traditions and Transitions', pp. 335–36.

44 Some of the facts under consideration do not recede until the middle of the twentieth century — for instance, the practices of 'Crypto-Christianity' analysed by Abramović and Dajč ('The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity', p. 325), some of which had roots in a very ancient paganism (p. 333).

45 On Italy, see Ardissino, 'A Daily Devotion', pp. 129 and 132; on Germany, see Martin, 'Behind the Scene'.

important to a monastery but also of the less noteworthy individual religious.[46] Another subject benefiting from examination over an extensive time-span is the literary tradition providing guidance to Christians on how to die well. The wide dissemination of *Artes moriendi* literature is discernible from the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. 1403 saw the appearance of Gerson's bilingual *Opus tripartitum* in Latin and in Middle French:[47] one could not measure their impact without being able to observe their distribution in both manuscript and print. An insight into both is possible, however, thanks to the complementary studies by Joost Robbe and Delphine Mercuzot. Caxton's prints are among the best illustrations of the continuity between manuscript and print culture, not only for the *Artes moriendi*, but also for other religious — and even profane — prints. With implications beyond the *Artes moriendi*, the choices that William Caxton made disclose another thought-provoking leitmotif of this collection of essays: that most changes followed a path that was anything but straightforward and linear, especially when it came to religious texts and practices. So, although vivid and impressive images flourished in the tradition of the *Artes moriendi*,[48] Caxton, ever the 'sharp businessman',[49] chose, for his own good reasons, to publish two successive *Artes moriendi* devoid of any images.[50]

Case studies examining people (individuals or communities), books, objects, or texts that stand out against mainstream developments are conspicuous. By taking into account quite a few of these documented exceptions, this book avoids oversimplification of the big picture. On the contrary, it offers a nuanced overview (especially in terms of chronology and periodization) of the 'slow transition and coexisting traditions' characterizing the late Middle Ages and early modern times.[51]

Indubitably, such a formula of 'slow transition and coexisting traditions' could serve well as a sub-title for several chapters in this book. Nevertheless, it is used with particular relevance in Marcell Sebők's study of the county of Szepes in Hungary (nowadays Spiš in Slovakia) during the sixteenth century. In addition to this, his essay conjoins two further issues that keep emerging and re-emerging throughout this book: firstly, stability and change, and secondly, centre and periphery. Accordingly, Sebők demonstrates that in peripheral

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46 On the 'construction of collective memory in the monastic communities of Europe' during the late Middle Ages and early modern times (a Europewide phenomenon deserving scholarly attention), see Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', p. 71.

47 Robbe, 'The Kingdom of Heaven'.

48 The block books mentioned and defined by Joost Robbe ('The Kingdom of Heaven') provide ample illustration of the phenomenon.

49 Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 248.

50 Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 247, where reasons for this choice are examined.

51 Sebők, 'Traditions and Transitions', p. 339 (concerning diverse regional factors fostering a *vis inertiae*) and p. 350.

areas of Christianity like the county of Szepes, knowledge and practices did not only travel from the centre to the margins, but they also negotiated other dynamics and circumstances, namely 'interactions and, often, synchronicity'.[52]

The interconnectedness of the studies in this book is not only the result of observing and elucidating converging and interrelated phenomena, its coherent thematic remit offers opportunities for different authors to deal with common objects: rosaries are the central object of Erminia Ardissino's paper; they also belong to Monica Saczyńska-Vercamer's study, and they are touched upon in the study by Blanca Garí and her colleagues of the monastery of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara in Barcelona.[53] Other specific or more general topics are echoed from chapter to chapter: for instance, the practice (or disapproval) of indulgences;[54] the emergence and agency of confraternities;[55] the issue of how to cater for any given Christian's reason or affective disposition, and whether to do so by excluding one of the pair or by choosing to combine them in whatever proportions were deemed suitable;[56] the complex joins between individuals and communities;[57] or the interface between religious teaching

52 Sebők, 'Traditions and Transitions, p. 336.

53 Ardissino, 'A Daily Devotion'; Saczyńska-Vercamer, 'Change and Continuity in Lay Devotion'; Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context'.

54 See, as prime examples in this collection, Rokai, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in Everyday Religious Life in Southern Hungary'; Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', p. 169, and Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 244.

55 Important in Italy according to Ardissino, 'A Daily Devotion', and evidenced in Poland (Saczyńska-Vercamer, 'Change and Continuity in Lay Devotion', p. 105).

56 This issue has already been addressed in the existing bibliography. For instance, with regard to English religious literature of the late Middle Ages, see Gillespie, 'Vernacular Theology': 'pathways that mimic the more affective, devotional, and intuitive features of the meditative and psychologically catalytic "monastic" spirituality reflected in the religious prose that appeared in the vernacular in such rich abundance in the years after 1380, and continued to enrich it throughout the fifteenth century'. In the present collection of essays this issue is examined anew, for instance, by Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 248, who observes a shift in *Artes moriendi* rhetorics between fifteenth-century treatises 'encouraging readers to think about salvation in a very affective way' and sixteenth-century *Artes*, who prioritize their intellects. In late medieval England, the pressures to avoid the reproval of the official Church by finding the right balance between trusting reason too much and trusting too much one's own spiritual powers made for an interestingly fraught landscape. On one side, Reginald Pecock conflated the law of reason with the 'law of nature', prioritizing it above Scripture itself (see Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', pp. 179–sqq and p. 193). On the other side, some Lollards gained notoriety for allegedly claiming that their humility and charity gave them, in effect, the full understanding of Holy Writ. Later, the choice made by Erasmus to cultivate reason under the double influence of the Renaissance and the Reformation, which 'alike legitimized a rational belief in improvement through learning' (Samardžić, '*De praeparatione ad mortem*', p. 308), was dangerous enough for him to be summoned by the Spanish Inquisition (1527) (p. 307).

57 Mutations of Crypto-Christianity at individual and group levels are observed in the Balkans (Abramović and Dajč, 'The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity').

and morals[58] (for several works are on the border between religious treatises and *miroirs des princes*).[59] In addition to this, the more crucial issues of the *Devotio moderna*, of the Observant movement, of the use of the vernacular in the religious field, of the devotion to Christ's passion, and several other leitmotifs of late medieval Christianity either underlie or come up to the surface, in different combinations and in diverse proportions, throughout the whole of the volume.

Such thematic overlaps would remain superficial, perhaps even artificial, if the bonds between and amongst individual essays were not founded as a matter of priority on a harmonized methodology aiming to tackle collectively a knot of entangled issues. This does not mean that disciplinary tools have been merged or that the most specific of them have been given up. On the contrary, the field of expertise of each author is apparent and well defined: philosophy and sociology underlie Dalia Stančiene's study of early modern Lithuania;[60] art history provides Jan Dienstbier and Daniela Riwyková with the suitable implements for examining illuminations and mural paintings;[61] philology provides Ebersonová and Robbe with their major premises,[62] as it does for Delphine Mercuzot, who combines literary scholarship with expertise in the history of early prints.[63] Each author, then, employs specific skills in dealing with well-defined issues, which are highlighted in the introduction to the present volume. One crucial focus is the emergence of 'new communities of interpretation' among the European societies of the time, in which literate, illiterate, and moderately literate people acted and interacted more than before, especially in the religious field.[64] The example of the London parishes, to which freshly graduated Oxford theologians were sent, from the fifteenth century onwards,[65] in order to answer as adequately as possible the growing spiritual demands of merchants and other members of the urban bourgeoisie, is characteristic of this evolution.[66] Whatever the initial or enduring gaps of knowledge that may have existed between average Christians and clerks appointed to their parish or to their monastery (especially where nuns were concerned), both parties had enough to share in terms of common practices

58 For instance, in the sermons delivered by qualified priests in the parishes of London (Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', p. 185).

59 e.g. Brother Laurent's *Somme le roi*, and the *Institutio Principis Christiani* by Erasmus (Samardžić, '*De praeparatione ad mortem*', p. 307).

60 'The Reformation and the First Books', pp. 201–14.

61 Respectively in 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', pp. 151–73, and 'Multiplication of Death', pp. 273–304.

62 Respectively in 'Religious Practices of Regular Canons', pp. 23–48, and 'The Kingdom of Heaven', pp. 217–39.

63 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 241–72.

64 See, for instance, Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', p. 189.

65 Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', p. 185.

66 Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', p. 185.

and daily life — uttering the same prayers, reading the same books,[67] some of which, written for helping modest priests in their pastoral activities, ended up in laypeople's hands[68] — or the other way round.[69] Through such processes they became specific communities, delineated by idiosyncrasies which could go as far as estranging them from some of the official orders issued by the Church authorities.[70]

Such a degree of tolerance seems to have been possible as long as daily practices and rituals were concerned, without any dogmatic debate being engaged.[71] It became more problematic when it came to dissenting over concepts, as shown by the condemnation of Jan Hus and the difficulties faced by his followers, among whom was one of their defenders, King George of Bohemia. For all the tensions between them, Utraquists had a lot in common with Catholics, as they worshipped saints and the Virgin, believed in the power of the sacraments, and refused to allow the clergy to marry.[72] Such substantial overlaps provided King George with the opportunity to appoint a Catholic chaplain and to live peacefully with a Catholic wife.[73] Despite all this, the Hussites' ideas concerning indulgences or Purgatory exposed George to papal retribution. Even 'rejecting, deconstructing, and repackaging […] common doctrinal formats' — as Reginald Pecock did — seems to have entailed tangible risks, as is proved by the latter's final disgrace.[74]

During the period under consideration, the engagement of laypeople in religious activities and the improvement of their cultural proficiency allowed some flexibility when it came to the boundaries between clerical and non-clerical attendance to the devotions of individuals or groups. As we have

67 Some devotional volumes obviously went, on a regular basis, through the doorways separating nunneries from the chaplains, friars, or monks with whom they were associated: such is the case of the Diurnal used for celebrating the liturgy of the hours by the Franciscan nuns of Sant Antoni i Santa Clara (Barcelona) as well as by the monks and chaplains administrating sacraments to them (Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', p. 55).

68 e.g. Gerson's bilingual *Ars moriendi*, issued in 1403 (Robbe, 'The Kingdom of Heaven', p. 219); or Caxton's *Quattuor Sermones*, re-edited more than once (Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 241).

69 This happened for the French *Somme le roi* (Leurquin-Labie, 'La Somme Le Roi': de la commande royale').

70 The example of local priests and missionaries living and serving in the Balkans among Crypto-Christians is typical. Aware of the local specificities and giving priority to their flock's welfare, they proved flexible in tolerating Chrypto-Christian practices hiding behind an Islamic facade, whereas the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and its envoys reprehended what they considered unacceptable cowardice (Abramović and Dajč, 'The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity', p. 331).

71 Abramović and Dajč, 'The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity', pp. 331–32.

72 Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', p. 153.

73 On the details of their *modus vivendi* with regard to the daily practice of religion and their children's education, see Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', p. 152.

74 Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', p. 177.

seen, it became possible to pass away with the assistance of qualified and pious friends, should no priest be available at the crucial moment.[75] And before that, during one's lifetime, praying individually or collectively may have happened with or without a cleric present. In some of these cases, what was once part of a liturgical celebration became somewhat disconnected and took on a life of its own. Such was the case with the success of the rosary, exemplifying the evolving flexibility of practices in Catholic countries.[76]

In a collection of studies dedicated to 'daily life', the reader may be surprised to discover the overwhelming importance given to books in preference to other objects — and not only books in their 'materiality' or 'spatiality',[77] but with regard to their contents (texts and paratexts plus decoration and images) — although, of course, other items such as prayer beads,[78] 'paintings and sculptures, vestments, liturgical implements',[79] portable altars,[80] crucifixes, vessels containing holy water,[81] moribund candles,[82] or 'baked bread […] circular in shape, with a hole in the middle and grooves imitating the sign of cross',[83] etc. are not omitted.

Are books crucial and ubiquitous enough, at that time, to account for the importance conferred on them by the present study? An answer in the affirmative seems to be the case, at a moment when a theologian trained in Oxford could portray the human soul as the receptacle of a 'book of the judgement (*doom*) of reason', and as 'inward scripture' introduced therein by God himself.[84] The study by Jan Dienstbier of the prayer book of the Utraquist King George of Poděbrady (who reigned in Bohemia from 1458 to 1471) offers additional grounds for us to think so. Indeed, it shows that in the high aristocracy of his time, a prayer book was something very personal: in the case of the prayer book offered to George by his wife, a portrait of him was included in it, representing his 'real likeness', along with other more expected depictions such as that of the

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75 Even in Gerson's *Ars moriendi*, which advocates more than others the importance of the sacraments, most of the steps intended to ensure *Dying*'s spiritual welfare and salvation are facultative, the minimum being the utterance of a prayer to Jesus Christ and the meditation on his Passion (Robbe, 'The Kingdom of Heaven', p. 221). With the exception of extreme unction, such devotions can be performed without the assistance of the clergy.

76 See Saczyńska-Vercamer, 'Change and Continuity in Lay Devotion', and Ardissino, 'A Daily Devotion'.

77 Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', p. 50.

78 On the different types of prayer beads that are known of (with strings or bands; with even or uneven beads; etc.), see Saczyńska-Vercamer, 'Change and Continuity in Lay Devotion', and Ardissino, 'A Daily Devotion' respectively pp. 101–28 and 129–50.

79 Moiteiro, 'Literacy, Books, and the Community', p. 92.

80 As defined in Rokai, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in Everyday Religious Life in Southern Hungary', pp. 368: 'a table that the believer […] would have constructed with a built-in relic'.

81 Which are distinguished from other negatively connoted 'earthly possessions'. See Robbe, 'The Kingdom of Heaven', respectively pp. 220 and 221.

82 Samardžić, '*De praeparatione ad mortem*', p. 313.

83 Abramović and Dajč, 'The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity', p. 332.

84 Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', p. 393.

Virgin Mary.[85] Moreover, the textual content of the book was carefully designed to accommodate the king's moderate Utraquism and busy working life.[86] In addition to this, like a fetish or at least as a vitally important possession, this prayer book accompanied its owner almost everywhere, even to the edge of the battlefield.[87] Similarly, the handling and deathbed use of an *Ars moriendi* book/text is evidenced in the case of Charles V of Spain († 1558), whose last years and final moments were deeply influenced by Erasmus's *De praeparatione ad mortem*.[88] During the same period, the case of the rosary, studied by Erminia Ardissino, underlines the fact that in sixteenth-century Italy religious books were unavoidable. Even the concrete materiality of the rosary was tightly connected, at each stage of its development, with a whole field of handwritten texts and early prints, especially in Renaissance Italy, where books/texts offered guidance on how to use the rosary's different beads, and then reflect on, or play piously with, their content and usage.[89] Books also had primacy in the *Artes moriendi* tradition examined by Joost Robbe: the texts under consideration were made available in Latin and in the vernacular, reproduced in manuscripts (in the various forms of large miscellanies or pamphlets in which the text circulated autonomously, as deluxe codices or humble copies) or in prints (such as typographical or block books,[90] using Flemish bastard letters or 'new Parisian black letters').[91] This means that they appealed in an extraordinary way to a late medieval and early modern readership, becoming, with prayer books, a cultural overlap shared by an extra-wide range of Christians, transformed through its agency and mediation into a 'community of interpretation' of *Artes moriendi* literature. The spate of *Artes moriendi* manuscripts and prints produced and distributed during the 'long fifteenth century' also confirms that some books were ubiquitous, in diverse formats, in a vast number of homes, monastic cells, or even pockets — perhaps in similar or even larger numbers than crucifixes, bare crosses, images, or prayer beads. Such is the case of Hours and Missals, produced and sold on a large scale by Caxton and others: these were numerous enough to 'add a saintly dimension, and an almost monastic rhythm, to everyday life'.[92] Translations of Sacred Scripture into the vernacular would play their own role in this trend.[93]

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85 Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', p. 162.

86 Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', respectively pp. 170 and 167.

87 See supra.

88 Samardžić, '*De praeparatione ad mortem*', p. 311.

89 Ardissino, 'A Daily Devotion'.

90 Robbe, 'The Kingdom of Heaven', p. 218.

91 Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 256.

92 Mercuzot, 'Caxton and the Reception of the *Artes moriendi*', p. 241.

93 The most striking case of the volume is probably the New Testament printed in the Slavonic language in Cyrillic type that was an object of trade between Protestants from Croatia and Slovenia, and Islamized Slavic soldiers stationed on the border between the Ottoman Empire, on the one side, and Hungary and Croatia on the other (Abramović and Dajč, 'The Phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity', pp. 329–30).

This collective volume helps us measure how deeply the dynamic production of religious books, not only vernacular, but also far cheaper, changed the way average Christians (as far as such a reality as an 'average Christian' ever existed) could gain access to all kinds of religious knowledge: theology, doctrine, prayers, Sacred Scripture, spiritual or mystical treatises, and so on. Of course, precious prayer books, and especially liturgical manuscripts, went on being chained in the sacred spaces of monasteries,[94] and theological authorities, especially Sacred Scripture and its important commentaries, remained tied to university desks; but unpretentious codices also circulated more and more freely outside religious enclosures and clerical houses, from the shops of merchants to the homes of laypeople, or from parents to children, either during their lifetime or via legacies. Legacies also brought many manuscripts, bequeathed by laypeople, into religious communities. Being handled by several members of a household, being read aloud during family meals, they provided the daily life of laypeople with at least part of the spiritual and contemplative devotion which seems to have been expected especially of women, and among them mothers, according to several manuals and written advice prepared by clerics for their guidance.

The multiple effects of this general shift in religious culture, as well as the particularities of its most quotidian and most concrete impacts, may be observed at various levels and locations in the present volume. One of the things this book does, then, is to explore how social interactions, especially between the clergy and the laity, evolve, with the Church and its agents having to take positions, either encouraging the use of books or restricting such use; or using the emerging texts and books as didactic tools enabling clerics, as learned leaders, to provide the laity with more substantial knowledge; or, at the other end of the spectrum, banning to a greater or lesser degree, such texts and/or the actual processes of textual production.

Reginald Pecock's writings, both in Latin and in the vernacular, as analysed by Ian Johnson, exemplify both sides of this alternative.[95] On the one hand, this scholarly bishop's option was to trust merchants', lawyers', and other urban workers' wits and to take advantage of the appeal religious books had for them in order to provide them with the best education possible.[96] On the other hand, some of his scholarly counterparts, who then ruled the English Church, proved very hostile to his initiative: in 1457–1458 Pecock was demoted, his works were burnt, and the effects of this disgrace lasted as long as his life did (he died *c.* 1461). Such a sentence is typical of the refractoriness of part of the clergy in England at a time when heresy was still a threat. Nevertheless, Pecock and his censors both belonged to the same 'community of interpretation': as scholars trained in Oxford, they shared a

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94 See Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', pp. 56–57.

95 Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock'.

96 Reginald Pecock even trusts their awareness of their own intellectual limits (Johnson, 'The "Goostly Chaffare" of Reginald Pecock', p. 185).

common background and the same religious culture, as well as the same goal of fighting and fixing heresy.

This volume feeds generously its reader's curiosity with an impressive wealth of data that one single researcher would never have been able to gather or interpret. Such an achievement gives sense and legitimacy to our being urged — sometimes artificially, if insistently — to perform 'interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research' and to collaborate with scholars coming from other horizons and different fields of expertise. This official requirement has obviously been met with no little success across the teams of the COST Action 'New Communities of Interpretation: Contexts, Strategies and Processes of Religious Transformation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe' (IS1301).

For all this, one does not feel like having crossed any finishing line on reaching the last page of the present volume: in itself, this book is not — nor does it pretend to be — exhaustive on any of the issues it addresses. Rather than providing an ultimate and satisfying synthesis about 'Religious Practices and Everyday Life' (whatever the meaning one chooses for the conjunction *and*), it arouses one's curiosity, and hence paves the way for future research. Specialists of the religious history and texts of a defined region or linguistic area will hardly frown reprovingly if their field happens not to have been studied in this collection of essays. Should it happen, however, their initial frown will give way to a studious frown, for this book is a treasure chest pointing to unreclaimed topics and issues.[97] Its principal achievement is that it provides a wide range of cleverly deciphered case studies that, from now on, other specialists will be able to compare with their own material. By shedding light on linguistic and geographic areas in which few foreign specialists are able to navigate per se, especially while dealing with periods when the vernacular had become dominant enough even to take centrestage in religious literature, this book provides us with groundwork to be completed and extended in diverse and converging directions by diverse and converging scholars.

For instance, considering the scarcity of studies about the rosary in late medieval France, specialists in this period and subject area will want to know more about its use as an object, about the rosary handbooks that might have been available there, and about its eventual influence over poetry, music, and even drama,[98] in order to compare this area with Italy, Germany, Spain, or

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97 Even its minute zones of shade pave the way for further investigations. For instance, the question remains open as to why the canonry of Roudnice would have been in touch with that of Marbach (Alsace) and its congregation, St Ruf, during the period immediately predating the writing of the *Consuetudines Rudnicenses* (see supra p. 380, footnote 10). This remains to be explored, and might be of special interest to scholars specializing in the French and German Augustinian Canons.

98 In Italy, some motets were inspired by the rosary (Hatter, 'Reflecting on the Rosary'). In the Low Countries, the rosary is numbered among the sources of at least one drama: Everaert's *Tspel van Maria Hoedeken* ('*Play of Mary's Chaplet*'). See Hüsken, 'Van Incommen En Begheert Men Scat Noch Goet'.

the Low Countries, about which more research has been published.[99] Those specializing in other countries, for instance England, will conceivably feel the same comparativist curiosity.[100]

Other subjects merit further attention and wider investigation: firstly, the comparative study of different (and the same) religious orders in different countries,[101] and also the comparison of family record books which emerged in parallel during the same period at different moments and in different places.[102] No general study of this topic is available, even though, for an earlier period (namely from the eighth to the thirteenth century), the collective volume *Medieval Memory*, edited by Elisabeth Van Houts (and especially her introduction), provides a useful background.[103] Apart from these two issues and themes, a host of topics, whether studied in depth or merely hinted at in the present collection of essays, will inspire specialists in the Christian cultures of the long fifteenth century.[104]

Indeed, as a portable library available to current scholarship, this collection of essays will, one hopes, create among its readers a 'new community of interpretation', more inclusive than the COST Action it stems from, by gathering and mobilizing academic interlocutors whom it will conceivably help to develop and challenge both long-standing and more recent published research in their own field of expertise.

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99 See supra; on Germany, see also Jäger, 'Das Rosenkranzgebet'; Winston, 'Tracing the Origins of the Rosary'; and Winston-Allen, 'Exempla in German Rosary Handbooks'; see too Saffrey, 'La fondation de la Confrérie du Rosaire à Cologne'. With regard to Spain, see Miralpeix Mestres, 'L'hipotètic Llibre Del Rosari de La Reina Joana'. With regard to the Netherlands, see van Asperen, 'Praying, Threading, and Adorning'.

100 A very uncommon set of prayer beads discovered in Chevington chapel (Northumberland) has been recently examined (Stallibrass, 'Taphonomy or Transfiguration'). For the rosary of Henry II, discovered by archaeologists during late twentieth-century excavations, see Bluer, 'Excavations at Abbots Lane, Southwark'. English rosaries were otherwise scarce and remain little studied.

101 As suggested by Carrillo-Rangel, Gari, and Jornet-Benito, 'The Devotional Book in Context', p. 69–71. See supra.

102 A rich bibliography dealing with the dawning of family record books already exists. The case of Italy, with its *ricordanze*, is probably the best known (Ciapelli, 'Family Memory'; Cazalé Bérard and Klapisch-Zuber, 'Mémoire de doi et des autres'; Mordenti, 'Les Livres de famille en Italie', etc.). On other areas, see, for instance, Bergeron-Foote, 'Personnaliser un Livre d'Heures', which discusses Montreal, Bibliothèque de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, MS 3, in which a record of the births of Pierre's children is written; Tricard, 'Bourgeois casaniers et noble voyageur'. Numerous references could be added here. Nevertheless, these studies do not compare the documents in question, nor the memory that they may have fostered, with similar attempts made in monasteries during the same period.

103 Van Houts, 'Introduction: Medieval Memories'.

104 At least one more issue has tickled my own curiosity: the tantalizing difference between Bohemia and Northern-Western Europe in terms of standardization of prayer books in the vernacular. Central Europe seems to present us with a centrifugal tradition (Dienstbier, 'The Prayer Book of George of Poděbrady', pp. 167–68).

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