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Reading, Writing, and Collecting

Corbellini, S.

Published in:
Church history and religious culture

DOI:
10.1163/18712428-13930203

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2013

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):
Corbellini, S. (2013). Reading, Writing, and Collecting: Cultural Dynamics and Italian Vernacular Bible Translations. *Church history and religious culture*, *93*(2), 189 - 216. https://doi.org/10.1163/18712428-13930203

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CHRC 93 (2013) 189–216

Church History
and
Religious Culture
brill.com/chrc

Reading, Writing, and Collecting: Cultural Dynamics and Italian Vernacular Bible Translations

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Abstract

The contribution focuses on the dissemination of vernacular Bible translations in late medieval Italy. After a short description of the *status quaestionis* in the research of vernacular Bible in Italy, the contribution will illustrate which processes of cultural transmission and translation contributed to the diffusion of the biblical texts. The essay will also evaluate the role played by lay people in reading and writing activities connected to the biblical text and in the 'domestication' of biblical knowledge: the use of biblical manuscripts and early prints in domestic, private, and semi-private space. Far from being passive recipients, lay people were involved in every stage of the dissemination of the Holy Writ: as dedicatees of the translations, as scribes, as collectors, as distributors, and as readers.

Keywords

Bible translations; medieval Italy; manuscript studies; history of reading; medieval libraries

On 1 October 1399 in Padua, the Venetian *miles* Jacopo Gradenigo completed the neat copy of his own rhymed Venetian translation of a Gospel harmony.[1] In order

[1] Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78.C.18 (olim Hamilton 247), fol. 79r ("Expletum Padue de Mccclxxxxviiij die primo mensis octubris per me Iacobum Gradonico militem venetum"). Jacopo Gradenigo's Gospel harmony has been edited by Francesca Gambino, *Gli quatro Evangelii concordati in uno* [Collezione di opere inedite o rare, vol. 153] (Bologna, 1999). In a Gospel harmony the episodes narrated by the four Gospels are transfused in chronological order, eliminating duplications and contradictions. For a general introduction to Gospel harmonies (*Quattuor Unum* or *Diatessaron*), see Francesca Gambino, 'Un Diatessaron in terzine dantesche di fine Trecento,' in *La scrittura infinita. Bibbia e poesia in età medievale e umanistica*, ed. Francesco Stella (Florence, 2001), 537–580; Ulrich B. Schmid, 'In Search of Tatian's Diatessaron in the West,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003), 176–199; William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: its Creation, Dissemination, Significance and History in Scholarship* (Leiden-New York, 1994), pp. 35–83. In the years 1999–2008 a research project on Latin and

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to attest his authorship of the text and of the manuscript, Jacopo let the Paduan illuminator add his portrait on the first folium of the parchment manuscript. Dressed in the purple robe of the Venetian nobility, he kneels in front of the symbols of the four evangelists and greets them with the words: 'These four have written of the deeds of Christ in the world and of his miracles.' In the upper space of the page, Jacopo Gradenigo once more reveals his name and underpins his identity as maker of the text in a sonnet in which he indicates the sources of his composition (the four evangelists), his specific contribution (the harmonisation of the four Gospel narratives), the importance and the goal of his enterprise (to strengthen his and his readers' faith), and the way to 'discover' his name (which is formed as in an acrostic by the first letters of each verse of the sonnet).[2]

As research conducted by Francesca Gambino has demonstrated, Gradenigo's text shows the combination of two important elements in his cultural background: his own interest for religious literature, testified by the writing of a Gospel harmony (10,686 verses) drawing from vernacular prose translations of the *Quattuor Unum* and the Vulgate, and his admiration for Dante Alighieri, hence the choice to write in tercets imitating the rhyme structure of Dante's *Comedy* and to divide the narration into 44 chapters, indicated as *canto*. This literary predilection and his interests become even clearer if we take into consideration other textual enterprises of this fourteenth-century Venetian patrician and politician, living between Venice, Padua, Ravenna, and the Venetian trading colonies on the Adriatic coast. Gradenigo in fact copied two manuscripts: Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 276, containing a poem on the peace between Pope Alexander III and Frederick Barbarossa and Rimini, Biblioteca Gambalunga, MS 1162, containing Dante's *Comedia*.[3] His textual activities went even further than the transcription of Dante's texts as he added to the text summaries, comments, and explanations drawing from and re-elaborating other comments circulating in fourteenth-century Italy.[4] Next to his scribal activities, he also authored

vernacular Gospel harmonies, funded by NWO and directed by prof. dr. August den Hollander, was conducted at the VU University Amsterdam. In the framework of the research, the author of this article has worked on Italian Gospel harmonies.

2) Gambino, *Gli quatro Evangelii* (see above, n. 1), pp. xxiv–xxv, describes the portrait and the sonnet. See also Francesca Gambino, 'Il codice 78.C.18 del Kupferstichkabinett di Berlino,' *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* (1998), 31–44, in particular 32–34. As further signature of his own work, Jacopo Gradenigo also added his coat of arms on fol. 1. It is known that the manuscript was kept in the Gradenigo family at least until the eighteenth century, when a short poem and a new coat of arms of the Gradenigo were added on fol. 81^r.

3) The manuscript was copied for the Venetian Filippo Sanudo, member of an important Venetian family and book collector. The relevance of the Sanudo's book collection for the circulation of religious literature will be discussed in the second part of this article.

4) Gambino, *Gli quatro Evangelii* (see above, n. 1), pp. xxix–xxxi.

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nine rhymed prayers inspired by liturgical moments of the Mass (copied by an unknown scribe in Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Conventi Soppressi 122) and two sonnets (Padua, Biblioteca del Seminario, MS 59).[5] This short overview of Jacopo's activities testifies to the possibilities and opportunities non-professional scribes and writers had to dedicate themselves to literary activities and, most importantly, to their confidence in discussing and commenting high-profile literary and religious texts. Jacopo shows no anxiety in his engagement in the retelling of the Gospels; he presents himself as the author of the text that is the result, as he writes, of 'his contemplation and study of the text of the Gospels, line by line, page by page' and that is meant to 'enflame' the faith of the writer and the reader.[6] Jacopo Gradenigo presents himself in his manuscripts as a layman, with a specific social and political position (wearing, for example, the robe of Venetian patricians), but also with enough intellectual understanding in the fields of both worldly and religious literature in order to 'instruct' his readers, members of his family, and of his Venetian inner circle, and to share with them the reading experience of biblical, religious, and worldly texts in the vernacular.

By presenting himself as an agent in the process of transmission of religious knowledge in the vernacular in late medieval Italy, Jacopo incarnates one of the specific features of the social history of Italian Bible translations: the strong evidence of the participation of laypeople in the spread, distribution, and dissemination of vernacular Bible manuscripts. Through text-related activities such as reading, writing, and collecting, they actively engaged in a process of knowledge exchange concerning biblical texts in the vernacular with lay and religious alike. Using the example of Jacopo Gradenigo as a connecting thread, this contribution will illustrate—after a description of the *status quaestionis* in the research of medieval vernacular Bible in Italy—which processes of cultural transmission and translation contributed to the translation and diffusion of the vernacular Bible. The essay will also evaluate the role played by laypeople in reading and writing

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5) According to Barbara Vanin, Jacopo Gradenigo and his family also possibly owned a fourteenth-century manuscript containing a Gospel harmony (Venice, Museo Correr, MS Cicogna 954). See Barbara Vanin, *I manoscritti medievali in lingua volgare della biblioteca del Museo Correr di Venezia* (Venice, 2010). Tesi di dottorato di ricerca in italianistica e filologia classic-medievale (Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia). Consulted online, http://hdl.handle.net/10579/939.

6) Gambino, 'Il codice 78.C.18 del Kupferstichkabinett di Berlino' (see above, n. 2), 54; Gambino, *Gli quatro Evangelii* (see above, n. 1), p. 3: "I'ò contemplato sì gli evangelisti/A foglio a foglio e scorti a riga a riga,/Ch'io n'ò temuto affanno né fadiga,/O'più de laude el meo bel dir acquisti [...] O quanto questo a rimenbrar me çova,/Narando una opra de tamanti affair/In la qual fé se acende e prova."

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activities connected to the biblical text and in the 'domestication' of biblical knowledge: the use of biblical manuscripts and early prints in domestic, private, and semi-private space.

The Medieval Bible in the Vernacular: A *status quaestionis*

As the Italian philologist Lino Leonardi states in his recent overview of Italian vernacular Bible translations, 'the medieval history of the Bible in the Italian remains a complicated task [...] and [in spite of the recent systematic research on the manuscripts] it is not possible to draw up a fully coherent picture of the translation tradition.'[7] The translation tradition started in the thirteenth century, grew vigorously in the fourteenth century, produced hundreds of manuscripts in the fifteenth century and culminated in the complete printed version by the Camaldolese monk Nicolò Malerbi (printed for the first time in Venice in 1471).

The tradition is characterised by two peculiarities: the scarcity of information about the identity of the translators (with the exception of translators of specific books) and the continuous process of variations and revisions of the translated texts (showing the fundamental *mouvance* of the translated text), notwithstanding the persisting 'underlying continuity [...], so that for some books of the Old and New Testament the first translation of the thirteenth or fourteenth century was copied and reused for some 200 years, until it became the basis of the earliest printed versions.'[8] As is characteristic for medieval Italian literature, the vernacular Bible tradition started at the turn of the thirteenth century with 'horizontal translations' from the French of glossed texts, where the text is explicated for the use of the non-professional users of the Holy Writ, and continued then in the fourteenth century with several translations from the Vulgate.

The need to add glosses and explications to the translated text is made clear by Dominican Domenico Cavalca, translator of the Acts of the Apostles (translated before 1342):

> As I wish at the request of some devout people to translate in common and clear vernacular the devout book of the Acts of the Apostles, [...] I would like to make clear that, as

7) Lino Leonardi, 'The Bible in Italian,' in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible. From 600 to 1450*, ed. Richard Marsden and E. Ann Matter (Cambridge, Eng. 2012), 268–287, there 268. See also *La Bibbia in Italiano tra Medioevo e Rinascimento—La Bible Italienne au Moyen Âge et la Renaissance*, ed. Lino Leonardi (Florence, 1998), with previous bibliography. The first overview of Italian Bible translation was written by Samuel Berger, 'La Bible italienne au moyen âge,' *Romania* 22 (1894), 358–431.

8) Leonardi, 'The Bible in Italian' (see above, n. 7), 268.

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> the words in Latin cannot be studied and translated into the vernacular because of their complexity and of the multiplicity of meaning and significance of the Holy Writ, I will change in a few places the order of the words in order to better and more clearly explain in the vernacular the words and the meaning of St. Luke and of the above-mentioned book. I will add a few words, in order to better explain some passages from the book.[9]

In spite of the difficulties in translating the biblical Latin into the vernacular and the need to add glosses in order to convey the meaning of the text, Domenico Cavalca accepts the translation challenge in order to satisfy the needs and the request of a group of devout people (probably the members of a confraternity linked to the Cavalca's Domenican convent) to have a clear and accessible translation of the Acts of the Apostles.

These 'unlearned devout,' either lay members of confraternities, religious women, or the anonymous reading public of the first printed translations, are the first and foremost addressees of Italian vernacular Bible translations. To this group of readers, the *non-docti* (the unlearned), Nicolò Malerbi addresses his complete translation of the Bible. After having stressed in his preface the importance of reading the Scriptures in order to learn the *scientia del bene vivere* (the science of how to live a morally fulfilling life) and to distinguish between vice and virtues, he states that his task is to grant access to this treasure to non-Latinate readers without any distinction for age and gender.[10] The action of making the text of the Bible accessible to non-Latinate and non-professional readers is never taken for granted: the importance of the process of translation is explained and 'defended' in prologues and introductory chapters, without however implying that the access should be restricted or somehow 'controlled' by clerical authorities.

In the prologue to his translation of the Gospels with the comments by Simone da Cascia, the Austin friar Giovanni da Salerno declares:

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9) "Volendo, a petizione e per divozione di certe persone, recare a volgare comune e chiaro lo divoto libro degli Atti degli Apostoli, [...] io dò a intendere che, perché le parole scritte in gramatica non si possono ivestigare e recarle in volgare, per la profondità delle sentenzie loro, e per la molteplice significazione e intenzione delle parole della santa Ischrittura, muto in certi, ma per pochi luoghi l'ordine delle parole, per meglio e più chiaramente esprimere in volgare la sentenzia e lo 'ntendimento di santo Luca, e delle parole del detto libro. Alcuna parola pongo da me, per meglio isporre alcuna parola del detto libro," cited by Lino Leonardi, '"A volerla bene volgarizzare ...": teorie della traduzione biblica in Italia (con appunti sull' 'Apocalisse'),' *Studi Medievali* 37 (1996), 171–201, there 182.

10) The translation by Malerbi is edited by Edoardo Barbieri, *Le Bibbie italiane del Quattrocento e del Cinquecento. Storia e bibliografia ragionata delle edizioni in lingua italiana dal 1471 al 1600* (Milan, 1991).

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> As I saw some daughters in Christ of my [spiritual] father Simone da Cascia hungry for reading and having the words of the Gospels as he [Simone] preached and wrote down for me in Latin, I felt compelled to translate some of his 'expositions' [...] I know there will be people expressing a negative judgment on this decision, especially as it was done at the request of women [...] But these people probably do not know or they do not take in any consideration that in some regions the complete Bible has been translated as well as books of Saints and Church Fathers. And St. Jerome translated texts from one language to another as consolation for some of his spiritual daughters.[11]

The translators invite, however, the scribes and the readers to be careful in the copying of the text and to 'preserve the language literally (*a littera*) according to what [they] find written.' This was a 'preliminary agreement' between translator, scribes, and users, which was often broken, however, as there was a 'frequent tendency to rework and improve the previous translations.'[12]

As Leonardi describes, an analysis of the manuscripts shows that until the middle of the fourteenth century, the vernacular Bible tradition was essentially limited to Tuscany, and is represented by attestations of single books, such as translation of the Proverbs and the Ecclesiastes, some early witnesses of Cavalca's translation of the Acts of the Apostles, as well as a group of New Testament books (Matthew, Epistles, and Apocalypse). The second half of the century is characterised by the appearance of the first two complete New Testament volumes and of three 'complete' Old Testament manuscripts (one of which, Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, MS F.III.4, was owned by the Sienese confraternity of Santa Maria della Scala).[13]

Over the course of the fifteenth century, increasing evidence of the spread of complete Bibles and a more varied geographical provenance of manuscripts can be attested, next to the diffusion of single or groups of books, which can be considered a peculiarity of Italian vernacular Bibles. Around the 1470s a complete

11) "Vedendo alcune persone figliuole in Cristo del mio padre frate Simone da Cascia (...) affamate e desiderose di leggere e avere continuamente alcune parole del vangelio secondo ch'egli le predicò e lasso a me iscritte per lettera, fuii costretto (...) a volgarizzare alcune esposizioni (...). Sono alcune persone, a le quali non pare ben fatto ch'io abbia fatto questo, e spezialmente a petizione di femmine (...) Ma questi cotali persone non pare che sappiano overo non pensano che in alcune contrade è volgarizzata tutta la Bibbia e di molti santi e dottori. E santo Geronimo molte scritture traslatò da una lingua all'altra per consolazione d'alcune sue figliole." The text is cited by Leonardi, ' "A volerla bene volgarizzare ..." ' (see above, n. 9), 188–189.

12) Leonardi, 'The Bible in Italian' (see above, n. 7), 271.

13) On the use of vernacular Bible manuscripts in the confraternal context, see Sabrina Corbellini, 'The Plea for Lay Bibles in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Tuscany. The Role of Confraternities,' in *Faith's Boundaries. Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. Stefania Pastore, Nicholas Terpstra, and Armando Prosperi (Turnhout, 2013), 87–112.

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manuscript Bible was copied for Lucrezia Tornabuoni, mother of Lorenzo the Magnificent (Lyon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 1367–1368), and two manuscripts were prepared for the Biblioteca Aragonese in Naples. One of these was copied by Nicolò di Nardo, likely the only Dominican scribe in the whole Italian vernacular Bible tradition, and commissioned by the nobleman Angilberto del Balzo (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS It 3–4). From a philological point of view, a continuous process of 'revision and retranslation' can be attested—for both the Old and New Testament—as well as the circulation of partial translations in different re-combinations. As far as the New Testament is concerned, however, the early existence of a 'comprehensive process of compilation' can be demonstrated. Several partial translations were thus combined in order to create a more or less complete version of the New Testament.[14]

Although the whole biblical text has been translated (at different moments and by several anonymous translators), the Italian tradition nevertheless reveals a stronger interest in specific books of the Bible. Generally speaking, the emphasis in the transmission lies on the New Testament (and in particular on the Gospels, both in the traditional sequence of the four evangelists, as a Gospel harmony and in the paraliturgical form of a lectionary). As far as the Old Testament is concerned, the book of Genesis; the hagiographical narratives of Tobit, Judith, and Job; Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; and the book of Psalms are all characterised by early translations and a significant dissemination.

The stress on philological aspects in the excellent overview presented by Leonardi gives less attention to three groups of manuscripts, which constitute a large part of the corpus of Italian vernacular Bible manuscripts and which bear the clearest traces of the presence and the influence of the lay readers, both as scribes and owners of the manuscripts: a) the Gospel harmonies (such as the one written by Jacopo Gradenigo),[15] b) the vernacular lectionaries, and c) the so-called *zibaldoni*, personal miscellanies containing passages from the Scriptures in combination with didactic and religious literature in the vernacular.[16]

As mentioned at the beginning of this contribution, a Gospel harmony or *diatessaron* (translated from Latin and Greek: 'one made of four') is the title given

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14) Leonardi, 'The Bible in Italian' (see above, n. 7), 277–283.

15) For a more detailed discussion of Italian Gospel harmonies, see Sabrina Corbellini, 'Retelling the Bible in Medieval Italy. The Case of the Italian Gospel Harmonies,' in *Retelling the Bible. Literary, Historical, and Social Contexts*, ed. Lucie Dolezalova and Tamas Visi (Frankfurt am Main, 2011), 213–228.

16) See for a recent discussion of these two groups of manuscripts, Sabrina Corbellini, 'Vernacular Bible Manuscripts in Late Medieval Italy: Cultural Appropriation and Textual Transformation,' in *Form and Function of the Medieval Bible*, ed. Laura Light and Eyal Poleg (Leiden 2013), 261–281.

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to a text in which the episodes narrated by the four Gospels are consolidated in chronological order, eliminating duplications and contradictions. The *Diatessaron*, written around 172 CE and attributed to the early Christian writer Tatian, was first written in Syriac and translated into Greek and Latin and, subsequently, into several vernacular languages. A crucial document in the spreading of Tatian's *Diatessaron* in the West is played by the so-called Codex Fuldensis (Fulda: Landesbibliothek, MS Bonif. 1), a manuscript approved on 12 April 547 by Victor, Bishop of Capua. The manuscript includes the entire New Testament, except for a Gospel harmony, which replaces the four canonical Gospels and thus somehow functions as a full-fledged substitute for them.[17] The corpus of Italian Gospel harmonies counts 33 manuscripts containing a complete or partial text, copied in Northern Italy (in particular in Tuscany and in the Veneto region) from the second half of the fourteenth century to the end of the fifteenth century, with a concentration in the first half of the fifteenth century.[18] In spite of their differences, the manuscripts show common palaeographical and codicological features. The majority of the manuscripts (65%) are written on paper and characterised by the essentiality of decoration and illumination combined with the use of *mercantesca*, or mercantile writing, a form of cursive writing used in the first instance by Italian merchants and artisans for the writing of personal and professional documents (letters, books of accounts and administration), and in a successive phase of development for the copying of books in the vernacular for personal use or for circulation within restricted groups of users. These results are corroborated by the presence—in a third of the corpus—of specific marks of ownership or references to the name of the scribe (or both), all referring to laypeople: the above-mentioned Jacopo Gradenigo, but also an artisan (Andrea di Sano *batteloro*; Grosseto, Biblioteca Chelliana, MS 5), a member of a Florentine confraternity (Pagolo di Piero del Persa; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS

[17] Schmid, 'In Search of Tatian's Diatessaron' (see above, n. 1), 177.

[18] The corpus of Italian Gospel harmonies is represented by the following manuscripts: Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, MS I.V.9; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Pal.Lat. 56, MS Barb.Lat. 3971, MS Vat.Lat. 7654, MS Ferrajoli 706, MS Vaticani Latini 4840; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.VIII.50, MS II.X.39, MS Palatino 73, MS Conventi Soppressi I.IV.9, MS II.I.202, MS II.II.506, MS II.IV.56; MS Magliab. XXXVI. 49; Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana MS 1334, MS 2335, MS 1304, MS 1356, MS 1749, MS 1354; Modena, Biblioteca Estense, MS Campori 0.3.22, MS X.6.29; Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Pluteo 27.12, MS Pluteo 27.14, MS Pluteo 27.8, MS Acquisti e Doni 320; Grosseto, Biblioteca Chelliana MS 5; Venice, Museo Correr, MS Fondo Cicogna 954; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canoniciani Italiani 63; Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 3892; Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78.C.18; Prato, Archivio di Stato, MS Spedali 2607; Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS It. I 69.

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Palatino 73), a notary (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1356), and members of the Florentine patriciate (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Pluteo 27.14). There is also evidence of the circulation of these manuscripts between members of the same family and of their inclusion in a manuscript lending system:

> Francesco di Bernardo owns this book. If you find it give it back after reading, then I will be able to lend it to someone else. Francesco di Bernardo Bandolini owned this book and at present the owner is Girolamo di Giambattista Bandolini. The one who buys it is kindly invited to take it back [to the present owner] who would like to buy it again.[19]

A further relevant feature of the Italian Gospel harmonies is the presence of liturgical instructions or liturgical tables, which offer the user the possibility of choosing a selective form of reading of the text according to the liturgical calendar, transforming the Gospel harmonies into paraliturgical aids to be used in connection with or as a substitute for Latin liturgical readings during the celebration of the Mass. The strong paraliturgical function of Italian Bible translation is substantiated by the presence of vernacular lectionaries (twenty manuscripts) and by the addition of liturgical instructions and tables to manuscripts containing the Gospels and the Epistles, as well as the text of the Gospels commented by the Augustinian friar Simone da Cascia (in the translation of Giovanni da Salerno).[20]

The reason for the success of the Gospel harmonies among the late medieval Italian laity has not been fully investigated, but possible motives can be suggested. As explained in a long prologue to the text copied in a group of seven Tuscan manuscripts, the presence of four canonical Gospels, each narrating a version of Christ's life, could be experienced as problematic for the 'inexperienced' reader.[21] In order to offer to the readers a chronological narration of the Christ's life, but at the same time use the writings of the four evangelists, the anonymous author had decided to undertake the 'the daunting task' of harmonising and writing a concordance of the writing of the evangelists, reducing four books to

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19) Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Acquisti e Doni 320, fol. I^v: "Questo libro è di Francesco di Bernardo […] tu che l'achatti prieghoti quando l'ai le[…] me lo rendi acciò che io posso prestare a un altro; Questo libro fu di Francesco di Bernardo Bandolini e al presente è pervenuto nelle mani di Girolomano di Giovanbattista Bandolini, pertanto chi l'achatterà sia chontento di renderllo a fine che lo possa achattare un'altra volta e di tanto pregho ciascheduno."

20) On this paraliturgical feature of Italian manuscripts, see Corbellini, 'Vernacular Bible Manuscripts in Late Medieval History' (see above, n. 16).

21) Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliab. XXXVI. 49, MS Palatino 73; Modena, Biblioteca Estense, MS Campori 0.3.22; Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Pluteo 27.8; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Ferrajoli 706, MS Vaticani lat. 4840, MS Palatini lat. 56.

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one.[22] The positive aspects of having one chronological narrative could be seen in combination with the use of a text with both a 'sacred' and 'canonical' value, which allowed for the full experience of the process of identification between the reader and the events narrated in Christ's life. This process was reinforced by the combination of the Gospel harmony with the *Epistula Lentuli*, an apocryphal text in which a physical description of Christ is given, and which has the specific function of helping the reader in his visualisation of the narrative.[23] This process of identification is, for example, described in the early fifteenth-century treatise *Giardino dell'orazione* (Garden of Prayer), wrongly attributed to Nicholas of Osimo and probably written by a member of a Venetian community of canons regular. The manual is clearly written for a lay readership, as explained in the prologue:

> I wrote this manual in the vernacular for unlearned and simple souls, that is for men and women with a basic level of literacy and who are not familiar with Latin and scientific books, but who are longing for a fulfilling spiritual life.[24]

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22) In the prologue, a specific reference to Augustine as author of the Gospel harmony can be found. The mention of Augustine is probably a reference to *De consensu evangelistarum* or *De Concordia evangelistarum* (about 400), a treatise in which the Church Father discusses the interrelation between the four Gospels. Augustine's text cannot be identified as a Gospel harmony but as a treatise on the agreement of the Gospels, where he discusses the differences between the Gospels and attempts to find an explanation for the incongruence between the four different versions of the Life of Christ: 'And although each of the evangelists may appear to have kept a certain order of narration proper to himself, yet each individual evangelist proves to have chosen to write *not* as if he was ignorant of the other writer, that is, his predecessor. And if any evangelist leaves out material included in another evangelist, he cannot be said to have done so out of ignorance.' The text of Augustine is edited by F. Weihrich, ed., *Sancti Aureli Augustini De consensu evangelistarum. Libri quattuor* (Leipzig, 1904). The cited passage is from Book 1, ii, 4. For the translation of the text, see Henk Jan de Jonge, 'Augustine on the Interrelation of the Gospels,' in *The Four Gospels*, ed. F. van Segbroeck et al. (Leuven, 1992), 2409–2417.

23) The description is particularly detailed: 'His hair has the colour of ripe hazelnut. It falls straight almost to the level of his ears. It curls thickly and is rather more luxuriant, and this hangs down to his shoulders. In front his hair is parted into two, with the parting in the centre in the Nazarene manner. His forehead is wide, smooth and serene, and his face is without wrinkles or any marks. It is graced by a slightly reddish tinge, a faint colour. His nose and mouth are faultless. His beard is thick and like a young man's first beard, of the same colour as his hair; it is not particularly long and is parted in the middle. His aspect is simple and mature. His eyes are brilliant, mobile, clear, splendid [...] He is broad in chest and upstanding [...] He is the most beautiful of the children of men.' The text is translated by Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, 1993), p. 103.

24) Stanislao da Campagnola, 'Il "Giardino di Orazione" e altri scritti di un anonimo del Quattrocento. Un'errata attribuzione a Niccolò da Osimo,' *Collectanea Franciscana* 41 (1971),

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Pivotal to the learning process through prayer and meditation is the imitation of Christ. According to the author of the *Garden of Prayer*, his readers should exert themselves to learn the Life of Christ by heart and to fix it in their memory from its very beginning to his Ascension, as it is narrated in the Gospels, and form before their eyes a clear image of Christ, finding their inspiration in the text of the *Epistola Lentuli*.[25]

A further important aspect of Italian vernacular biblical texts is the relative high number—especially when compared to the European situation—of manuscripts copied by non-professional scribes. This practical and material contribution of laypeople to the dissemination of vernacular Bibles can be detected even in one of the oldest manuscripts. Around the middle of the fourteenth century the Florentine citizen Gozzo di Nuccino Gozzi copied a manuscript containing the Old Testament (from the book of Genesis to Ecclesiastes) in a neat *mercantesca*. Gozzo not only started his copy with a prayer to the Virgin and to the patron of Florence (John the Baptist) and write his name and where he lived and wrote ("della citta di firenze"), but he also added a table of contents in which each Old Testament book is briefly described and summarised, possibly in order to facilitate a selective readership of the text.[26] In the case of Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Acquisti e Doni 785 (a compilation of books of the Old and New Testament) a collaboration between seven non-professional scribes can be assumed, in a kind of vernacular pecia-system. This work practice is made clear at the end of each codicological unit (set of quires copied by the same scribe), as each scribe indicates that his writing task is completed and that another scribe has received the following set of quires to copy.

These non-professional scribes are moreover very keen in reclaiming ownership of their manuscript by explicitly mentioning their name, place of living, profession, and the date of composition of the manuscript. The scribe of Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1356 (penitential psalms and Gospel harmony) concluded his writing activities on 10 February 1372 and 'signed' his manuscript with his name (Laino di Bartolomeo Laini), his profession (as notary involved in the business transactions of the Spini, a Florentine merchant family), and his place of residence (San Miniato). The scribe of Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana,

5–59, there 27–28. For a more detailed discussion of vernacular literature with instructions for religious reading and meditation, see Sabrina Corbellini, 'Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit and Awakening the Passion: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Late Medieval Europe,' in *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation: Books, Scholars and Readers in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bruce Gordon & Matthew McLean (Leiden, 2012), 15–39.

25) Stanislao da Campagnola, 'Il "Giardino di Orazione"' (see above, n. 24), 47.

26) Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Conv. Soppr. C III 626, fol. 1r.

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MS 1298 (Gospels with the commentary of Simone da Cascia) noted his name ([…] del Buono), the date (10 November 1410), and a very specific description of his place of residence (Florence, quarter of Santo Spirito, parish of St. Niccolò, neighbourhood (*gonfalone*) of SS Scala).[27] The same accuracy in the registration of authorship and ownership characterises the colophon of Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.II.445, (partly) copied by 'Zanobi di Pagolo d'Agnolo Perini of the parish of San Lorenzo, neighbourhood of Lion d'Oro in the quarter of St. John the Baptist in Florence.'[28] At the end of his miscellany containing extracts from Gospels, Taddeo di Bartolomeo Riccobaldi from Volterra (Pescia, Biblioteca comunale 'Carlo Magnani,' MS 1.C.5) supplemented his ownership mark with a lending formula:

> This book is of Taddeo di Bartolomeo Riccobaldi and his sons from Volterra. It will be good and praiseworthy for the one who will borrow the book to give it back after reading and keeping it for a while. The one who will keep the book for more than three months without asking permission and without notifying one of the family will be considered a thief and a sinner.[29]

The owners of Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1644 (containing a translation of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes) add to the translation their personal feelings toward the importance of the Holy Writ:

> This book is owned by Bartolomeo di Giovanni Apolloni […] in our days God's laws are not kept in high esteem and I would like to comfort every good Christian and invite him to remember the words which the prophet David spoke when he was at the court of Saul […] This book is owned by Santi di Giovanni di Marco Ghanberegli and deals with the most beautiful works of body and soul.[30]

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27) Fol. 340v: "Iscritto per mano […] del Buono […] del popolo di San Nicholò del quartiere di Santo Ispirito, del ghonfalone della schala di Firenze, chompiuto a dì X di novenbre 1410."

28) Fol. 41v: "Questo libro è di Zanobi di Pagholo d'Angnolo Perini del popolo di sallorenzo ghonfalone del lione ad oro quartiere di san giouanni batista di firenze el quale scrisse cholla sua propria mano ed ebbelo fatto adi xv di maggio 1409."

29) Fol. 238v: "Questo libro si è di Taddeo di Bartholomeo e de' figliuoli Richobaldi da Volterra. E chi l'arà in prestanca farà bene e di suo honore a rendelo, letto ch' egli l'avesse o tenuto un peçço, echi lo tenesse […]re mesi un su sença licentia e ch' egli lo non lo notifichassa a qualchuno di chasa si intenda di tenerlo di furto e abbine el pecchato sopra l'anima sua s'egli non lo rende. Amen."

30) Fol. 107v: "Questo libro è di bartolomeo di Gio[vanni] Ba[tist]a Apolloni il quale al parer di detto e da … gran sustanze e ridursi a uno santo uiuere ma oggi le leggie dello altissino idio sono pocho aprezate e conforto ciaschuno buon Cristiano che cholla mente eleuata addio si richordi delle parole che disse il grazioso profeta dauit quando egli era in corte del re saul […]"; fol. 109v: "YHS. Questo libro si è di Santi di Giovanni di Marco Ghanberegli el quale tratta di piue belle opere della anima e del corpo."

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Moreover in these manuscripts, the biblical texts (or selected portions of them) were often part of personal miscellanies, containing passages from the Scriptures in combination with moralising and didactic literature. A good illustration of these peculiarities of Italian manuscripts is Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1251. As far as biblical translations are concerned, the manuscript contains a complete lectionary (fols. 2^{v}–87^{v}; introduced by a table, fols. 1^{r}–2^{r}). To this main text, three shorter texts were added: the prophecy of St. Bridget (fols. 100^{r}–102^{r}), the prophecy of Jacopone da Todi (fols. 103^{r}–104^{r}), and a series of short prayers. The scribe (and first owner) reveals his name, Niccolò di Giovanni Davanzati, several times in the manuscript. At end of the lectionary (fol. 87^{v}), he states that he concluded his writing activities on 18 February 1472 at five in the afternoon in his castle of Figline Valdarno, and on the flyleaf he writes his own mark of ownership ('this book belongs to Niccolò di Giovanni Davanzati'). A third note by Niccolò reveals that he had been working on the manuscript for a long period of time, as on fol. 96^{v} he notes that he had been writing 'on the 30th of March 1505 at three in the night as a spiritual exercise in remembrance of the Passion.'

The Florentine merchant Romigo d'Ardingo dei Ricci was even more keen on manifesting his authorship of the manuscript (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1655), compiled in the month of June 1399 and containing a transcription of the book Genesis (fols. 7^{v}–43^{r}), Proverbs by Seneca (fols. 45^{r}–56^{v}), John of Wales' treatise on the four cardinal virtues (Italian vernacular; fols. 58^{r}–64^{r}), the *Griseldis* by Giovanni Boccaccio (fols. 66^{r}–72^{r}), Martin of Braga's *Formula vitae honestae* (translation in Italian vernacular; fols. 75^{r}–78^{r}), an Italian translation of the *Vindicta Salvatoris* (fols. 80^{r}–90^{v}), a poem on the Doomsday (fols. 92^{r}–94^{r}), and psalm XXIV (fol. 96^{r}). As a matter of fact, Romigo wrote his name on fol. 43^{r} (indicating also the end date of this first copying exercise, 1 June 1399), fol. 56^{v} (dated 10 June 1399), fol. 64^{r} (14 June 1399), fol. 72^{v}, and fol. 78^{v}.

The manuscript owned by the surgeon Francesco Bosso (Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 1737) takes the concept of miscellany and re-combination of texts to an extreme. Francesco copied in his manuscript, besides the penitential psalms in prose translation (fols. 6^{r}–12^{v}), an excerpt from the Gospels on prayer (fols. 42^{v}–43^{r}), the first chapter from the Gospel of John (fols. 43^{r-v}), and no less than 31 rhymed and prose texts of religious instruction, ranging from an explanation of the Ten Commandments to a description of the 'Seven Churches' of Rome. Interestingly enough, Francesco combined this collection of vernacular religious texts with more practical subjects linked to his personal expertise, such as medical texts on remedies for eye diseases and on spectacles. This combination of professional and religious elements also characterises the manuscript first owned by the *maestro d'abaco* (master of abacus or arithmetic) Francesco di Donato Michelozzi and successively by other members of his

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family.[31] The miscellany, written between 1481 and 1508, contains a treatise on arithmetic intermingled with a list of fasting days, excerpts of the Psalms, and prayers to be used during the Holy Week as a form of meditation on the Passion of Christ.[32]

Collecting Religious Knowledge

Two seminal issues can be raised by considering the dissemination of vernacular Bible manuscripts in late medieval Italy in the light of the research paradigms discussed in the Introduction to this thematic issue. It is in the first place striking to notice to what extent laypeople, even non-professionals, were involved in the process of the production and distribution of biblical material. In the second instance, it should be emphasised how unmistakeably biblical texts were 'domesticated': assimilated into the domestic and private lives and activities of scribes and owners, who were copying and reading them in their own homes as part of a spiritual exercise, for intellectual pleasure, or in order to build up a personal library which could be shared by members of the same family or the same professional, political, and social network.

This second aspect, which has already emerged in the presentation of the case of Jacopo Gradenigo, is fundamental for a better understanding of the circulation of vernacular Bible translations in late medieval Italy. It was far from uncommon for merchants, artisans, and notaries, accustomed to writing in their personal lives, to engage in copying activities of biblical manuscripts. An analysis of colophons and ownership marks reveals the presence of these non-professional scribes, such as barbers (Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 12.II.4; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.II.447), dyers (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Palatino 126), wool makers (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale

[31] About the teaching of the abacus in late medieval Florence, see Robert Black, *Education and Society in Florentine Tuscany. Teachers, Pupils and Schools, c. 1250–1500* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 52–54.

[32] Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Palatino 724. Francesco di Donato Michelozzi stated explicitly that the manuscript was meant to remain in the possession of the family, fol. I^r: "Questo libro si è di Francesco di Donato Michelozi il quale à scripto di sua propria mano più tempo fa e notifichasi a ciascheduna persona a chi e'capitassi alle mani per via straordinaria che si deba rendere al detto Francesco o ssua redi altrimenti si notifichalarà l' opera dell anima sua en non si dia ad intendere a chi l' avessi chel detto Francesco o ssua redi" (This book belongs to Francesco di Donato Michelozzi and it has been written by himself some time ago. And it should be clear to everyone who should happen to have this book in his hands that he is supposed to give it back to Francesco or to his heirs).

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Centrale, Magl. XXI.155), and even convicted prisoners (e.g. Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.II.17 and Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS It. 3).[33] In some cases, these non-professional scribes explicitly mention in their colophons that the writing activities have taken place as a form of pastime, "per piacere" as Frosino di Lodovico di Cece da Verrazzano notes at the end of his transcription of a vernacular lectionary, completed on 21 July 1481 in Pisa.[34]

The writing activities of these amateur scribes were often connected to the creation of small personal or family libraries, such as the one described in the inventories of the so-called Florentine *Magistrato de' Pupilli*, the government agency that inventoried and processed the estates of deceased citizens for the protection of their minor heirs.[35] A more detailed analysis of the inventories for the years 1429–1430 (30 items) clearly demonstrates the existence of these personal libraries, as well as the presence of vernacular Bible translations: fifteen inventories contain one of more vernacular Bibles. According to these inventories, the wool maker Federigho Folchi owned at his death in 1430 a small library with a 'bound book of the Gospels'; 'a bound book on religious subjects'; 'a book with

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[33] One of the most famous non-professional scribes working from the Florentine prison, Le Stinche, is Andrea de' Medici. Andrea de' Medici, born in 1444, practiced his scribal activities between 1468 and 1473 while he was incarcerated for debt. He copied Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.IV.70, containing a translation of the Psalms as well two manuscripts containing Dante's *Convivio*, and a manuscript with the transcription of Armanno Armanni's *Fiorita*. For more on this scribe and the practice of prison transcription, see Beatrice Arduini, 'Dante in Prison,' *Romance Philology* 64 (2010), 23–38. For a more general discussion of the role played by amateur-scribes in the diffusion of religious literature in late medieval Italy, see Sabrina Corbellini and Margriet Hoogvliet, 'Artisans and Religious Reading in Late Medieval Italy and Northern France (c. 1400–c. 1520),' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (2013, in print).

[34] Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Asburnham 519: "Qui finiscie il libro di tutty e vangeli epistole e lectione chessidichano alla messa del nostro signiore Yhesu christo sechondo la chorte di Roma scritto per me Finosino di Lodouicho da cieccie da uerazano del mese di luglio 1481 chompiessi di scriuuere questo di xxj di luglio 1481 addio sia gloria Scrissilo ne lo palazotto di Pisa essendo la chastellano per piacere." Frosino di Lodovico finished a copy of Boccaccio's *Teseida* some days later (27 July 1481). Some ten years earlier Frosino had also copied a manuscript containing works by Boccaccio, Leonardo Bruni, and Leonardo Frescobaldi (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Conv. Soppr. C.VI.1870).

[35] The inventories have been studied by Christian Bec, *Les livres des Florentins (1413–1608)* (Florence, 1984) and Armando F. Verde, *Libri fra le pareti domestiche. Una necessaria appendice a 'Lo Studio Fiorentino' 1473–1503* (Pistoia, 1987). The books by Bec and Verde have in turn been studied and inventoried by Giovanni Fiesole and Elena Somigli, *Ricabim. Repertorio di Inventari e Cataloghi di Biblioteche Medievali. Repertory of Inventories and Catalogues of Medieval Libraries*. 1. Toscana (Florence, 2009).

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poems by Dante'; 'two big volumes of the Bible'; 'a Psalter'; '17 books bound in wood with sermons and other things'; and 'several other unbound books with sermons and legends.'[36] Messer Matteo Castellani owned a 'vernacular Bible in parchment'; 'a book of Our Lady'; a legal book; books with the works of Cicero, Statius, and Prosperus (it is not clear if these books were in Latin or in the vernacular); and parchment quires containing a chronicle.[37] A third inventoried estate, belonging to Jachopo di Filippo Ghuidetti, contained two 'books of the Gospels in parchment' as well as a book with the 'Exposition of the Gospels in parchment and bound in wood.'[38] The Gospels are also owned by Giovanni di Lando de la Malvagia, Giovanni di Taddeo, and Nanni di Simone Pechori. The Book of Revelation and the Epistles of Paul are mentioned once (Filippo d' Arigho Arighucci), and the Book of Psalms four times (Filippo d' Arigho Arighucci; Simone di Bartolo; Giovanni di Giovanni; Giovanni di Taddeo). A complete Bible was owned by Salvestro di Franciescho di Neretti and Gabriello di messer Bartolomeo Panciatichi.[39] The most complete library described in the years 1429–1430, the one owned by surgeon Giovanni di ser Pietro Ciantellini (62 books), contained the entire range of Italian vernacular Bible translations: Psalters (6), books of Gospels (6), the Epistles (2), and a complete Bible.[40]

This capillary dissemination of vernacular Bible translations in circles of non-professional users of the Holy Writ is corroborated by the study of commercial correspondence attesting the active search for and the importance of vernacular Bible manuscripts. For example, one of the most famous merchants of the Italian Middle Ages, Francesco Datini, wrote from his hometown Prato to his business partner Boninsegna di Matteo in Avignon (1395):

> As I told you before, I have made up my mind and I am willing to do what I have already articulated: I am not planning to start any other enterprise and to make any other effort than to dedicate more time to God than I have done in the past. And for this reason I am buying books in the vernacular, in order to read them when I will retire from business

[36] For the inventory of Federigho's books, see Bec, *Les livres* (see above, n. 35), pp. 167, 178.
[37] Ibid., pp. 166, 179. The Castellani were an important Florentine family; they probably owned many more books than those listed in the inventories of the *Magistrato*. In a reconstruction of the Castellani family library in which the list in the inventories is completed with information from other sources, Giovanni Ciappelli lists 22 manuscripts, including a complete vernacular Bible and a vernacular Old Testament. See Giovanni Ciappelli, 'Libri e letture a Firenze nel XV secolo. Le Ricordanze e la ricostruzione delle biblioteche private,' *Rinascimento* 29 (1989), 267–291.
[38] Bec, *Les livres* (see above, n. 35), pp. 166–167.
[39] The inventory explicitly mentions that the manuscript had been copied by Ghabriello himself. Ibid., pp. 167–172.
[40] Ibid., pp. 169–171.

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> activities. As these books should help me to get nearer to God, they all contain virtuous texts: as a matter of fact, they are all Gospels, Epistles, sayings and lives of the Saints and other good and honest things. And further the sayings of the philosophers and other honourable writers who praised the virtues and criticised the vices, such as Solomon, Plato, Virgil, Titus Livius, and Boethius, and other worthy men from Rome and from other nations.[41]

And Francesco had indeed organised a network of friends and business partners who had the task of finding the books he longed to read. His beloved friend and advisor, for example, the notary Lapo Mazzei, wrote several letters about his efforts to find vernacular religious manuscripts:

> I have been looking for a very long time and finally I have found a good scribe, a good and trustworthy person, outside the Stinche [the Florentine prison]. And Monday he will start the transcription of your book [a manuscript of the *Lives of the Saints*]. And I have bought one of St. Jerome, i.e. his vernacular Letters [...] (12 July 1394). As I have no chance to meet you, I will send you a letter. I herewith send you the book, beautiful and rich in content, of the Epistles of St. Paul.- The book of St. Jerome: that book is not paid for yet and belongs to the one who is now copying the other.- The book of the Gospels.- The book of Don Giovanni for monna Francesca [Francesco's sister in law].- The booklet of Iacopone da Todi, for you and for her.- The book of Boethius, which will be ready today.- The book of the *Lives of the Saints*, a huge book but it will be finished.[42]

Several inventories also disclose the presence of vernacular Bibles and other religious manuscripts in Francesco's household. When Francesco left his house in

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41) "Chome di sopra vi dicho, io sono al tutto disposto di fare quello vi dicho: e a questo volglo atendere e niuna altra chosa fare a mio podere, salvo ch'i òe animo d'achostarmi a Dio melgl(i)o non ò fatto per lo pasato, in p(i)úe modi. E per detta chagione chonpero molti libri in volghare, per legiergli quando mi rincrescierà i fatti della merchatantia. E per fare quello che debo inverso Idio, sono tutti libri che parlano di chose vertudiose: cioè sono tutt'i Vangeli, epistole, il detto, e la vita di tutt'i Santi e molte altre belle chose e buone. Apreso quello disono molti valenti filosofi e altri valenti uomeni, che lodarono le vertù e biasimarono vizî, chome è Salamone, Aristotile, P(l)atone, Vergilio e Titto Liv(i)o e Boezio e molti altri valenti uomani e d'ongni nazione." Cited by Simona Brambilla, 'Libro di dio e dell' anima certamente. Franscesco Datini fra spiritualità e commercio librario,' in *L' Antiche e le moderne carte. Studi in memoria di Giuseppe Billanovich*, ed. Antonio Manfredi and Carla Maria Monti (Rome-Padova, 2007), 189–246, there 192–193.

42) "Tanto ho cerco, che ho trovato un bello scrittore, buona persona e fedele, fuor delle Stinche: e lunidí si comincia il libro vostro. E uno ve n'ho comperato di San Girolamo, cioè sue Epistole volgari, di grande effetto. [...] Poi che non vi posso vedere, faremo con lettera. Mandovi il libro, ricco e bello, delle Pistole di San Paolo.- El libro de' Vangeli.- El libro di Don Giovanni, de' avere monna Francesca.- El bello libretto di Frate Iacopo da Todi, dovete aver voi o ella.- El libro del Boezio fia fatto a questi dí; è bellissimo.- El libro della Vita de' Santi, grande, tuttavia si fa," cited by Brambilla, 'Libro di Dio' (see above, n. 41), 207–208.

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Florence heading towards Bologna, he left a casket with manuscripts behind with among its contents 'a book of the Life of the Saints, bound in wood and covered with red leather'; 'a chronicle of Matteo Villani [...] bound in wood with red leather'; 'a book of the Gospels with a parchment cover'; 'a small book with the Epistles [*sic*] of St. James, bound in wood with red leather'; as well as a 'Psalter.' In his house of Prato, Francesco had a manuscript of the Gospels and a Bible was kept in his workshop, together with his account books and his financial records.[43]

It is important to mention that the presence of books in the household is not exclusively a Florentine phenomenon. A recent extensive analysis of books, booksellers, and readers in late medieval Venice has revealed similar patterns of dissemination of vernacular Bible translations. As early as 1356, the testament of the Venetian patrician Marco Cappello registers the bequeathal of an "exposicion de li vangelli" (exposition of the Gospels) to Marco's daughter Elisabetta.[44] Forty years later (1396), the testament of the patrician and merchant Lodovico Bembo registers the presence in his house of an Evangeliary and a lectionary, together with a Book of Hours, a manuscript with the Lives of the Holy Fathers and a book on vices and virtues. Interestingly enough, the notary notes that the lectionary and the book on vices and virtues had been written by Bembo himself ("scripti de propria man").[45] The inventory of the library of the patrician Pietro Correr (1406) shows a more diversified presence of vernacular Bibles: an Evangeliary with the Sunday Gospels, a selection of books of the Old Testament, the Gospel of Luke, a 'book of the Bible,' a 'part of the Bible' (probably the first or second part of a Bible in two volumes), and two New Testaments, as well at least two apocryphal books (one about Christ's childhood and the other on the Apostles). The Evangeliary and the 'books of the Bible' would be sold to other Venetian patricians, ser Giorgio Lauredano and ser Dardi Foscareno, respectively.[46]

Venetian records offer even more possibilities for reconstructing the circulation of religious books and vernacular Bible translations. The merchant Guglielmo Querini used to lend his books to his friends and business partners in Venice. In order to keep track of his volumes, he made a note of the loans in

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43) Ibid., 195–197.

44) Anselm Fremmer, *Venezianische Buchkultur. Bücher, Buchhändler und Leser in der Frührenaissance* (Cologne, 2001), pp. 336–337.

45) Ibid., pp. 356–357.

46) Ibid., pp. 362–364. For other inventories containing vernacular Bibles, see Ibid., pp. 324, 329, 330, 332, 336–339, 342, 345, 350, 356, 361, 362, 375–376, 385–387, 395–396, 399, 401–404, 420–421, 431, 433, 437–438, 444, 449–450. For other sources of book ownership in Venice and references to vernacular Bibles, see Marino Zorzi, 'Dal manoscritto al libro,' in *Storia di Venezia dalle origine alla caduta della Serenissa, vol. 4: Il Rinascimento: Politica e Cultura*, ed. Ugo Tucci and Alberto Tenenti (Rome, 1996), 817–958. About the circulation of second-hand Bibles, see Corbellini, 'Vernacular Bible Manuscripts in Late Medieval Italy.'

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one of his account books among his everyday expenses: the loan of each book was entered as a debit and its return as a credit.[47] In his administration, he mentions his Bible twice: on 29 November 1438 his Bible, written in Gothic script and bound in red leather, was loaned to Giovanni Negro, who returned it on 13 December of the same year. Giovanni had asked to borrow Guglielmo's Bible in order to compare the contents with his own Bible written in humanistic script. Three years later, Gugliemo gave his Bible to Giovanni Costa da Capodistria to sell it for him. However, Giovanni returned the Bible two days later, unsold. Gugliemo also owned a manuscript with the *Lives of the Saints* and a breviary, which were lent to local priest.[48] The fifteenth-century patrician Francesco Giustiniani also kept a record of his library and of his loans in a small memorandum book, in which he kept track of household expenditures and of repairs to his property as well. Two of his annotations mention a vernacular Bible translation: in 1445 he borrowed a Bible from his nephew Francesco, which Francesco in turn had on loan from Andrea da Molin and in 1450 he bequeathed his mother's books (a manuscript with the life of St. Bernard, a manuscript with hagiographical material, and a lectionary for Lent) to the female convent of St. Andrea della Zirada in Venice.[49]

Following the same practice, Lorenzo Sanudo registered that he had in 1455 lent his *levangelista cum epistolis et apocalypsis* (a book of the Gospels with the Epistles and the Apocalypse) to Rosin dala Badia (the same book was lent two years later to his family member Francesco Sanudo) and his books of the Gospels to ser Alessandro Contareno.[50] As Lowry vividly describes, Lorenzo was 'a man of affairs,' who served the Venetian Republic in a number of posts before his death as ambassador to the Holy See in 1474. He was not a graduate, but a non-specialist, a secular reader interested in a variety of books, themes, and authors. Following his account book, where commercial transactions are also registered, the lending of religious books (Bibles, Gospels, a book on the Corpus Christi, St. Augustine's *Soliloquia*, hagiographical literature, all probably in the vernacular) went

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47) Susan Connell, 'Books and their owners in Venice, 1345–1480,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 35 (1972), 163–186, there 172–173. Guglielmo Querini is described by Connell as 'a typical example of a Venetian noble and a merchant of modest means.'

48) Connell, 'Books and their owners in Venice' (see above, n. 47), 173. The Bible is not mentioned in Querini's testament written in 1468. He probably succeeded in selling the book between 1441 and 1468. On book-networks, see Sabrina Corbellini, 'Beyond Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy: a Focus on Fifteenth-Century Reading Techniques,' in *Cultures of Religious Reading in the Late Middle Ages Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit and Awakening the Passion*, ed. Sabrina Corbellini (Turnhout, 2013), 33–53.

49) Connell, 'Books and their owners in Venice' (see above, n. 47), 174.

50) Fremmer, *Venezianische Buchkultur* (see above, n. 44), pp. 419–421.

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hand in hand with books on astrology, Tuscan literature (Boccaccio), and books by Cicero and Aristotle. The systematic registration of loans allows some conclusions to be drawn about the Lorenzo's inner circle of book exchange: in the first instance his family (his brother Francesco, his son Marco, his nephew Marco), then other Venetian patricians, politicians, civil servants, religious individuals, and bookmen (scribes, illuminators, binders) in a mixture of political, social, religious, and mercantile networks along which religious and worldly books were circulating, exchanged, copied, and produced. Indeed, Lorenzo even registers expenses for the copying, binding, and the illumination of manuscript books in his account books, and sometimes gives very accurate details about the letters and the colours to be used for the production of a manuscript. Lorenzo is also active in his domestic scriptorium, as he copied ("de mia man") the Epistles of St. Jerome, as well a *Virzilio* (Virgil), and a manuscript with the works of Lactantius.[51]

The most accomplished and best organised of these non-professional book brokers is beyond any doubt Gerolamo Molin, who between 1450 and 1458 registers, in alphabetical order, the names of those to whom he has lent his books, and includes the books that he has borrowed from other private libraries (47 manuscripts in total). In his *Alphabetum librorum mutuatorum Hieronimi Moline*, he lists the name of the borrower, the title of the book, the date, and additional information about the transaction (place, witnesses, intermediaries). The borrowers listed under A on the first folium can convey a good overview of people involved in this book exchange: a student of philosophy (Antonius de Cellis), borrowing a manuscript with works by Walter Burley; a glass blower (Angelus Baroerius), using a manuscript on the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great; an apothecary (Antonius de Sperata), requesting another manuscript with texts by Walter Burley; and a cousin (Antonius Molinus), borrowing a manuscript with the glosses on the Epistles of Paul. Geronimo had moreover two Bibles, which were lent to Petrus Molin, one of the assiduous visitors to Geronimo's library.[52]

These students, family members, and two artisans—a glass blower and an apothecary, gravitating around Gerolamo's library and participating in an

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51) On writing and copying activities by Lorenzo Sanudo, see Martin Lowry, *Nicholas Jenson and the Rise of Venetian Publishing in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), pp. 35–37.

52) Fremmer, *Venezianische Buchkultur* (see above, n. 44), pp. 421 and 429. The two Bibles were also mentioned in the probate inventory drawn up in 1486 at Geronimo's death: "Item una bibia in carta membrana [...] Item una altra bibia in membrana in forma pichola." On the circle of readers around Gerolamo Molin, see Donatella Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda, 'Les livres et les amis de Gerolamo Molin (1450–1458),' *La Bibliofilia* 93-3 (1991), 117–176.

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intensive book exchange clearly reveal just how extended private networks could be and how far they could reach. These data, and in particular the references to the lending, borrowing, and copying of books offer moreover the possibility of bridging the gap between book ownership and book readership: books named on these lists, inventories, and registers were not only items for display and symbols of social position and wealth, but were actively used, read, and exchanged between lay members of late medieval urban society willing to include religious elements in their personal and daily life. This extensive circulation of vernacular Bible translations was made possible by a seminal transformation, which should be stressed once more: the transformation of the Book into a book, into a material object copied, illuminated, sold, and bought by laypeople, and thus integrated into social and commercial networks, which included scholars, merchants, and artisans.

The wide availability of vernacular religious books, which has become evident in the analysis of book ownership, can also be traced in the documents registering the selling of books. A unique source is the ledger of Venetian bookseller Francesco de' Madii, in which the bookseller listed sales and exchanges or deals with colleagues and agents. Francesco's accounts cover 45 months, from 17 May 1484 to 23 January 1488, and list the author or title, price of the book, and in some cases the name of the printer and customer as well.[53] Books were not only sold, but also exchanged. On 12 June 1484, the patrician Alvise Capello came by to exchange eleven of his existing books for five new ones. He brought in devotional literature and literary works, such as the Gospels in the Italian vernacular, as well as worldly Italian literature, such as works by Petrarch and Boccaccio, and exchanged his books for similar titles. As Lowry notes, Alvise's tastes were typical for readers of Italian. Vernacular Bible translations, the Gospels, the Psalter, as well as the Italian translation by Malerbi, were indeed some of Francesco's best-sellers. The Malerbi Bible is first recorded as an expensive book, but by the early months of 1487 demand had driven the price down by almost half, making it accessible for a wider public. Indeed, Francesco de Madii's accounts register the selling of 89 copies of Malerbi's translation.[54] Printed Bibles were somehow one of the best means of attracting potential new clients: the Genoese bookseller had, for example, according to an inventory of his bookshop, a printed Bible in the middle of his *apotecha* in order to show to his clients one of his most valuable books.[55]

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53) Lowry, *Nicholas Jenson* (see above, n. 51), p. 178.

54) Ibid., p. 194; Edoardo Barbieri, 'La fortuna della 'Biblia vulgarizata' di Nicolò Malerbi,' *Aevum* 63-3 (1989), 419–500, there 423–424.

55) Angela Nuovo, *Il commercio librario nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Milan, 2003), p. 111.

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This interest in biblical literature as a marketable product for the general public also emerges from smaller commercial enterprise. On 10 April 1480, for example, a *cerretano* (street-hawker, peddler, seller of religious objects) calling himself Antonio the Lombard ordered 500 copies of the *Pistola della domenica* (the Sunday Epistles, likely an extract from the lectionary) from the Florentine printing press in the Dominican nunnery of San Jacopo di Ripoli. He was probably planning to sell the Epistles on the streets to the church-going public.[56] In July 1480 he also ordered a print of the pericope of the Gospel of St. John with the prayer for St. Roche (the feast of St. Roche is on 16 August). The same press printed and sold the penitential psalms, the Psalter, and St. John's Gospel as well.[57]

Even before the period of the printing press, booksellers and *cartolai* offered vernacular religious literature in their shops. The Florentine Michele Baldini (1426) sold the penitential psalms, Gospels, and Psalters in his shop.[58] The above-mentioned notary Lapo Mazzei mentioned in a letter written between 22 January and 16 March 1395 the sending to his friend Francesco Datini of a 'beautiful book, richly illustrated, containing the letters of saint Paul' and 'a book of Gospels.'[59] It is known that this 'book of Gospels' had been bought in the shop of the Florentine *cartolaio* Jacopo di Bino, a bookseller working for private clients such as Lapo and Francesco, but also for Florentine religious institutions such as the Benedictine Badia and the Brigittine Paradiso monastery.[60]

Lay and Religious Book Networks

These lay and non-professional book networks do not, however, imply the exclusion of contacts and collaboration with religious individuals and groups. The above-cited correspondence between the merchant Francesco Datini and the notary Lapo Mazzei shows that both Datini and Mazzei were in contact with the most important religious figures of their time: Giovanni delle Celle (monk of Vallombrosa and spiritual advisor of several Florentine citizens), the Pisan Dominican nun Chiara Gambacorta, and the Dominican preacher Giovanni

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56) Mary A. Rouse and Richard H. Rouse, *Cartolai, Illuminators and Printers in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Los Angeles, 1988), p. 37. Antonio ordered the *Pistola della domenica* once more on 2 August 1480.
57) Rouse and Rouse, *Cartolai*, pp. 78, 80, 83.
58) Albinia de la Mare, 'Inventory of the shop of the late Giovanni di Michele Baldini, made on or after 18 June 1426,' in *Studi offerti a Roberto Ridolfi* (Florence, 1973), 237–248, there 247–248.
59) Brambilla, 'Libro di Dio' (see above, n. 41), 207.
60) Ibid., 243.

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Dominici.[61] These contacts could also lead to the purchase of books. The Franciscan monk brother Matteo of Pioppi wrote, for example, on 6 January 1398 a letter to Datini about the vernacular Gospels which he had been asked to copy for Datini's wife Margherita.[62]

In some cases, religious individuals engaged in the creation of a system of book lending similar to those organised in the houses of Venetian and Florentine citizens. The Dominican Niccolò Galgani, a friar in the Sienese convent of Domenico in Caporegio, noted in his own diary expenses for candles, his health problems, dreams, preoccupations, doubts, and disappointments, but also information about his books and the members of his book network: his Dominican brothers and members of other religious orders, but also laypeople such as the Milanese lawyer Franchino da Castiglione, Niccolò's sister-in-law Anna, and two Sienese surgeons, Marco and Ugo Benzi. Niccolò lent his own Bible to the *capitano del popolo* Petro del Peccia and to Franchino da Castiglione, and he ordered vernacular religious manuscripts for Anna, married to his brother Cristoforo, and for his cousin Elisabetta. His work at brokerage also included religious art, as he arranged a painted wooden crucifix and painted portrait of Catherine of Siena for Anna and Franchino, objects, which were probably destined for their household and for the performance of domestic devotions.[63] Similar networks emerge from the analysis of an account book (1396–1400) kept by a monk of Vallombrosa, a monastery outside Florence. The monk Giovanni di Baldassarre noted in his booklet the expenses made for the purchase of books, the gifts received by brothers and benefactors, and the names of borrowers from his personal library. Giovanni was in contact with two laywomen, monna Nenna and monna Filippa among others. Nenna and Filippa received a manuscript from Giovanni with Gregory the Great's Dialogues in the vernacular, a book that Giovanni had borrowed from a Camaldolese friar of the convent of Santa Maria degli Angioli in Florence.[64]

These networks of book exchange could also include religious institutions, in particular religious orders strictly connected to the urban laity, such as the Mendicants and the so-called *Yesuati*, a lay congregation devoted to preaching, penance, and service to the poor and sick, founded by Sienese merchant Giovanni

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61) Lapo Mazzei, *Lettere di un notaro a un mercante del secolo XIV con altre lettere e documenti*, ed. S. Guasti (Firenze 1880), *passim*.

62) Brambilla, 'Libro di Dio' (see above, n. 41), 205.

63) Vladimir J. Koudelka, 'Spigolature dal memoriale di Niccolo Galgani O.P. († 1424),' *Archivum Fratum Praedicatorum* 29 (1959), 111–138, there 17–18, 126–127, 133–134.

64) Nelly Brentano-Keller, 'Il libretto di spese e di ricordi di un monaco vallombrosano per libri dati o avuti in prestito (sec XIV, fine),' *La Bibliofilia* 41-4 (1939), 129–158, there 157.

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Colombini (1304–1367).[65] It was, for example, a common practice followed by religious laypeople to bequeath manuscripts to religious institutions, as in case of the manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Redi 127, copied by Nicolò di Francesco di Domenico Corsi between 1460 and 1462, and later owned by the "frati Jesuati abitanti a sancto Giusto fuori della porta a Pinti di Firenze,"[66] and of the manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Conv. Soppr. C.3.626, copied by the Florentine Gozzo di Nuccino Gozzi and brought into the library of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella.

A case in point is also the testament of the Venetian painter Ercole da Fiore. Ercole decided on 1 July 1461 to leave all the books in the vernacular he had received from his father to the nunnery of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Murano. He added that he wanted the executors to sell his breviary and to give the sum partly to pay the debts of convicted prisoners and partly to two novices, and to hand his diurnal to a canon of Santa Maria della Carità. All new books, including a Psalter and a Book of Hours, had to be given to Ixabeta, his *commessaria* (she was thus responsible for carrying out the provisions). A list of books appended to the testament makes clear which religious vernacular books were destined to the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli: a manuscript of the Apocalypse (*la mia Apochalipsis*), a treatise on confession and penitence (*summa de penitenzia*), a description of the last communion of St. Jerome (*El transito de San Ieronimo*), a lectionary (*Evanzelly Epistole de tuto lanno*), the Lives of the Holy Fathers (*Vita di Santi Padri*), the Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great (*Dialecho de San Gregorio*), and the Hours of Our Lady (*loffizio de nostra donna*). The list, moreover, bequeathed the diurnal to one of the canons of the Carità, and a paper book on the 'conscience of St. Bernard' (*la conscienza de san bernardo*) to the *Yesuati*, the friars wearing the white hoods (*da i capuzi bianchi*) and living nearby the church of St. Agnes.[67]

This practice of bequeathing Bibles and religious books to convents and religious institutions draws on a long tradition, which precedes the process of vernacularisation. It is important to stress that from the very beginning, this pattern was not only followed by the high nobility but also by less affluent believers, such

65) In 1355, Colombini, then a prominent merchant of Siena, had a religious experience that led him to divide his wealth with his wife, give his own share to charity, and dedicate his life to doing penance and serving the sick and the poor. He soon attracted a small band of followers. Around 1364, Colombini decided to organise his growing group of followers as a lay congregation following the rule of Saint Benedict. Pope Urban V granted the approval of the rule of the *Yesuati* a few weeks before Colombini's death.

66) Fol. IV^{r}.

67) Fremmer, *Venezianische Buchkultur* (see above, n. 44), p. 433.

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as artisans and merchants, willing to administer their salvation patrimony and to share through the donation of a manuscript in the religious activities of 'professional users' of the Holy Writ. One of the first and most intriguing examples is the donation of hundred *solidi* made in 1168 by a widow, Mattilda Veckii, to the monastery of St. Vito in Pisa in order to start the production of a giant Bible, destined for the monastery. Five dozen neighbours, two fishermen, a smith, a mason's wife, and twelve other women—whose names were all written at the end of the fourth volume of this pandect—'chipped in with smaller contributions, more than tripling the available funds.' Once the start-up capital was gathered, the production of the Bible could begin. It all happened completely *in situ*, in the monastery of St. Vito, where all the artisans involved in the production of the manuscript stayed until the conclusion of the writing and illumination project, before leaving Pisa for a new project.[68] In the specific case of the donation of vernacular Bible translations, however, the lay donors are clearly not delegating religious practices to the members of the religious community and asking them through their gifts to assume the traditional role of mediators between the earthly and the godly. They are donating books that have functioned in their own domestic religious lives, and through the donation to religious communities they express their desire to continue their own religious practice in a new context.

In some cases, an inverse process of distribution can be attested. Some of the vernacular Bible manuscripts were owned by a convent and successively sold or donated to laypeople, as in the case of Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II, MS Fondo Pantaleo 27. The *codex*, which contains the translation of the Gospels with the commentary of the Austin friar Simone da Cascia, was owned in the fifteenth century by the Augustinian convent of San Donato di Scopeto (near Florence) and then sold to Marco di Domenico di Neri, a second-hand book seller (*rigatiere*). In 1602 it was owned by the Sienese philologist Celso Cittadini and afterwards by the Roman book collector Petrus Francescus de Rubeis. Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1338 was copied by one of the nuns of the Brigittine monastery of the Paradiso near Florence, and was successively owned by a number of laypeople, as is clear from the list of names on the last folium of the manuscript.

It is also important to note that the gift of religious books to religious communities does not automatically imply that these manuscripts were somehow 'out

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[68] Lila Yawn, 'The Italian Giant Bibles,' in *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages. Production, Reception, and Performance in Western Christianity*, ed. Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly (New York, 2011), 126–156, there 126–127.

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of reach' for lay readers. And indeed, there is evidence pointing to the possibility of laypeople accessing religious libraries in order to copy and read religious books. The Florentine wool merchant Simone di Dino Brunaccini copied the manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1287, a narration of the life and miracles of Saint Francis, followed by Agnolo Torini's *Meditatione de' beneficii di Cristo*, a meditative text on the Passion of Christ (*Ciento meditazioni della passione e morte di christo*), and a short commentary to Agnolo's text entitled "A conclusione delle predette meditazioni beneficii di dio." The texts are followed by a short summary of the main elements of the Christian faith, the *Credo*, the Sacraments, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and a list of vices and virtues. Dino, who copied the manuscript in 1393, wrote in his colophon that the manuscript was 'copied from the exemplar kept in the book chest in the studio of Franciscan convent of the Friars Minor of Florence by Simone di Dino Brunaccini of the *popolo* of Sancto Romeo in Florence for himself and for his heirs.' This information implies that Brunaccini had been granted access to the Franciscan *studium* of Santa Croce, and that the Franciscan library was open for consultation to lay members of Florentine society.[69] The library of the Florentine Dominicans was also open for consultation—and even provided the possibility of lending books for a certain period of time—as emerges from one of the letters sent by the surgeon Lorenzo Sassoli to Francesco Datini (1407):

> I need a book, which is in the library of San Domenico and is called St. Augustine *De Civitate Dei*. And there are two of them: one is in one volume and the other in two volumes. I would prefer the one in one volume above the one in two, for practical reasons. I would be very grateful if you could contact someone who could arrange it giving every possible recommendation and reference about my person; if they need a pawn, I will be happy to send it.[70]

The direct connection between laypeople and mendicant orders in the dissemination of vernacular Bible translations has its roots in the social and cultural similarities between mendicants and the laity, in particular merchants and artisans.

69) Fol. 58r: "Explicit leggienda et mirachula beati sancto franciescho Amen copiata del libro nello armario dello studio del chonvento di frati minori di firenze scritto questo libro di mano di simone di dino brunaccini del popolo di sancto Romeo di firenze per se e per le sue Erede a di X di febraio MCCCLXXXXIII deo gratias." On Simone Brunaccini, see Corbellini, 'Beyond Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy' (see above, n. 48). For one of the most recent contributions to this discussion, see Peter Howard, '"Doctrine, When Preached, Is Entirely Civic": The Generation of Public Theology and the Role of the Studia of Florence,' in *Communities of Learning. Networks and Shaping of Intellectual Identity in Europe, 1100–1500*, ed. Constant Mews and John Crossley (Turnhout, 2011), 293–314.

70) Brambilla, 'Libro di Dio' (see above, n. 41), 232.

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Two of the most important 'meeting points' between both of the social groups that dominated the urban social and cultural landscape since the thirteenth century, were the use of the vernacular and the importance of education. Indeed, merchants 'were important catalysts to the growth of educational institutions within the urban environment and to the increased use of vernacular languages. For merchants, use of the vernacular was common by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and both vernacular literacy and a strong education in mathematics were necessities for successful commercial practice. [...] Most merchants received at least some basic education, often provided by the mendicants.'[71] The stress on a comprehensive and more sophisticated education, both on a practical and on a religious level, also characterized the mendicant movement, as friars received a multifaceted education 'including instruction in Latin grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music, science, moral philosophy, and metaphysics,' subjects, which 'not only prepared them for lives of preaching, but also of teaching in convents, cathedral schools, and universities, where merchants were among their students.'[72]

Conclusions

This overview of reading and writing activities related to the active use, readership, and exchange of vernacular Bible manuscripts in late medieval Italy shows to what extent laypeople were agents in the production and the dissemination of biblical knowledge in the vernacular. Far from being passive recipients, longing for the crumbs falling from the banquet of the Holy Scriptures, they were involved in every stage of the dissemination of the Holy Writ: as dedicatees of the translations, as scribes, as distributors, and as readers. This image of intense textual activity surrounding the biblical text in the vernacular is also corroborated by the results of the combination of philological, codicological, and archival research. And truly, the *mouvance* and the textual instability which, generally speaking, characterizes the manuscript tradition, implies that the scribes, often laymen, were at times transforming from mere copyist to 'co-authors' of the translation or at least of their own manuscript text. This process can be defined as a *translatio imperii*, a translation of intellectual power and textual creativity to new pragmatically literate groups of lay believers and audiences for religious texts.

The creation of book and textual networks, and of private and semi-private libraries—all of which create and stimulate forms of interaction between groups

[71] Taryn E.L. Chubb and Emily Kelley, 'Mendicants and Merchants in the Medieval Mediterranean: An Introduction,' *Medieval Encounters* 18 (2012), 149–173, there 157.
[72] Ibid., 162.

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of laypeople and between laypeople and members of religious orders, the Mendicants in particular—is of fundamental relevance for the dissemination of vernacular Bible translations in late medieval Italy and for the access of non-professional users of the Holy Writ to the text of the Bible in their own vernacular language. These networks enhanced the resonance and the impact of these translations, which rapidly became a part of the cultural patrimony of an active and engaged vernacular-literate public.

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