



# Writing as a Religious *Lieu de Savoir*

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## RESEARCH



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## ABSTRACT

Taking its start from the analysis of the notion *savoir-pouvoir* in Foucault's philosophical work, the article discusses the applicability of the concept *lieux de savoir* in the study of writing activities in late medieval France and Italy performed by non-professional vernacular scribes. The act of copying a text is evaluated as an active contribution to the dissemination of religious texts. It is approached as a social act and process, which creates a communication circuit facilitating the flow of information within a textual community created by the very same act of writing. The approach to *lieu de savoir* as an activity, in which a process-oriented methodology is preferred to a material one, paves the way for new applications of the concept, in which the spaces, the objects and the actors are studied in a continuous exchange and dynamic.

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When considering Christian Jacob's *lieux de savoir* in the context of Michel Foucault's philosophical work, the latter's notion of *savoir-pouvoir* immediately comes to mind. Foucault characterised *savoir-pouvoir* as the production of knowledge by the social processes of the exertion of power:

We should admit rather that power produces knowledge [...]; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.<sup>1</sup>

Foucault's ideas on knowledge and power have strongly influenced research into the history of censorship, most notably New Censorship Theory, to such a point that it seems as if *savoir-pouvoir* is mainly concerned with limiting access to knowledge and with strongly controlling its dissemination.<sup>2</sup> Our research into the social history of reading during the premodern period, however, involving the production, collection, and dissemination of religious knowledge, has resulted in finding several other implications than merely censorship and control. Using the methodologies of *microstoria* and "bottom-up history," our research is above all concerned with ordinary middle-class townspeople and urban daily life during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup>

From this perspective, alternative constellations of knowledge and social power emerge. This is most notably a horizontal, peer-to-peer dissemination of religious knowledge between laypeople, which was strongly inspired by the Christian ideal of spiritual charity, that we and other researchers have encountered in the historical sources.<sup>4</sup> The late medieval attitude resulted in the sharing of religious texts and knowledge among the laity, and often also including religious people: reading was often a collective and charitable activity helping those who were still illiterate, books were loaned to other people, and religious knowledge was shared through narrating and admonishing.<sup>5</sup> This approach is in stark contrast with the traditional reconstruction of late medieval religiosity and with the often-perceived controlling power and monopoly of the medieval Church concerning religious and sacred texts.<sup>6</sup>

Next to reading, the advanced levels of literacy of the urban population during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in almost all areas of Western Europe, also entailed a deep penetration of the skill of writing into all levels of society.<sup>7</sup> In addition to business administration and local governance, laypeople also used their skills for copying short religious texts, occasionally

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), chapter 1; Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Bunn, "Reimagining Repression: New Censorship Theory and After," *History and Theory* 54, no. 1 (2015): 25–44.

<sup>3</sup> In this article we address the "long fifteenth century," which we understand as the period from c. 1400 up to the 1530s, after which the first ruptures in the Roman Catholic Church became manifest. It is also the period where late-medieval conceptions and mentalities are detectable, especially on the subject of devotion, the religious importance of the *vita activa*, and the necessity of improving (reforming) the Church. In this article we discuss sources from France and Italy, because very similar religious texts and ideas were in circulation. Humanistic approaches to texts and moral philosophy were also actively developed in both areas during this period, although from the late fourteenth century onwards in Italy the visual arts and architecture were more visibly modelled after classical models, a phenomenon that is often called "Renaissance," but this term is in reality highly problematic and we do not use it in our approach. Despite the fact that, especially in Italy, Renaissance was already part of cultural life at the end of fifteenth century, linguistic choices (in particular the use of the vernacular) and selection of texts (vernacular religious texts) in the presented case studies justify the use of the term "late medieval."

<sup>4</sup> Micol Long, Tjamke Snijders, and Steven Vanderputten, eds., *Horizontal Learning in the High Middle Ages. Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Transfer in Religious Communities* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Sabrina Corbellini and Margriet Hoogvliet, "Late Medieval Urban Libraries as Social Practice: Miscellanies, Common Profit Books and Libraries (France, Italy, the Low Countries)," in *Die Bibliothek – The Library – La Bibliothèque. Denkräume und Wissensordnungen*, eds. Andreas Speer and Lars Reuke (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 379–398.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of this point, see Sabrina Corbellini, Mart van Duijn, Suzan Folkerts and Margriet Hoogvliet, "Challenging the Paradigms: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Late Medieval Europe," *Church History and Religious Culture* 93, no. 2 (2013): 171–188.

<sup>7</sup> For references, see Sabrina Corbellini and Margriet Hoogvliet, "Literacy – Christianity – Medieval Times," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 16 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), col. 794–796; Margriet Hoogvliet, "Rhétoriqueurs and Amateurs: Lay People writing Religious Texts in Tours around 1500" (in preparation).

longer ones, or even for the creation of completely homemade books.<sup>8</sup> Hence, late medieval manuscript culture was characterised by an almost uncontrolled copying and adapting of texts for personal use, and for sharing them with others, to such a point that one could even compare it to some of the characteristics of modern Internet culture: decentralised authority, an egalitarian character, interactivity, and the fostering of social networks.<sup>9</sup>

The act of writing, especially when performed in the private space and outside the realm of professional activities, is moreover fundamental to understanding the formation of late medieval *personae*, and is closely connected to *askesis*, or "training of the self by the self" as described by Foucault in his article "Self-Writing."<sup>10</sup> The transformation of writing into training is illustrated in Foucault's reconstruction of the composition of *hupomnemata*, informal notebooks in which thoughts, quotes, as well as recorded events and actions were registered. Ownership of these notebooks conveyed consciousness of collected materials and personal experiences and created a reservoir of texts and experiences, which could be used for guidance in personal and communal life.<sup>11</sup> Most importantly, the experience of writing could not be dissociated from the act of reading. As Seneca states in his Letter 84, which is at the centre of Foucault's essay, the practice of the self includes reading and the compilation of personal notebooks, and should be considered as a process of accumulation of knowledge, ready at hand for rereading and meditation.<sup>12</sup> This leads to a continuous process of blending of imitation and originality, leading to self-awareness, individuality, and identity in a continuous process of dialogue with the "other," either in textual or physical form.<sup>13</sup>

Despite its relevance for understanding late medieval societies, this subject has received relatively little scholarly attention, especially for the pre-modern period.<sup>14</sup> One of the few attempts to evaluate the relevance of writing in the study of societies and their cultural transformations is the work of the Italian palaeographer Armando Petrucci. In his reconstruction of Italian literature through the act of writing, he also focuses on the "writing relationship" (i.e. the connection between the scribe and the text) and on practices of "self-writing." He stresses that the practice of self-writing, in particular when performed by non-professional scribes, is the result of late medieval social transformations. In his view, this practice should be interpreted as the consequence of a strong desire for learning and self-education, both on the professional and on the personal level, as well as of a conflation of professional and personal writing activities.<sup>15</sup>

The lack of specific scholarly attention is even more evident when we consider the combination that will be at the very core of this article: the strict connection between the performance of writing and religious engagement and the transformation of writing into a religious *lieu de*

8 On the relations between the act of writing and medieval society, see for example Paul Bertrand, *Les écritures ordinaires. Sociologie d'un temps de révolution documentaire (1250-1350)* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2015).

9 Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen. "Introduction: Manuscripts and Cultural History," in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, eds. Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 9–10; R.W. McCutcheon, "Silent Reading in Antiquity and the Future History of the Book," *Book History* 18, no. 1 (2015): 22–24.

10 Michel Foucault, "Self Writing," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 207–22. For a recent reappraisal of Foucault's article, see Toby Svoboda, "Foucault on Correspondence as a Technique of the Self," *Le Foucaldien* 6, no. 1 (2020). <http://doi.org/10.16995/lefou.69>.

11 Toby Svoboda, "Foucault." This can also be retraced among the Modern Devout in the Low Countries, who encouraged Brothers, Sisters and lay friends to "read with the pen" by keeping notes copied from the Bible and other religious texts in a scrapbook (*raparium*). These little books could benefit the wider community, but reflected also the writer and his or her goals for spiritual advancement, thus serving for "self-knowing" and "self-care"; John Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: the Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 278–81, 294–304.

12 Seneca's Letter 84 is edited in Seneca, *Epistles, Volume II: Epistles 66–92*, trans. By Richard M. Gummere (Loeb Classical Library 76) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 276–85.

13 Cynthia R. Nielsen, "Unearthing Consonances in Foucault's Account of Greco-Roman Self-Writing and Christian Technologies of the Self," *The Heythrop Journal* 55, no. 2 (2014): 188–202, in particular 192.

14 This point has for example been restated in Martyn Lyons and Rita Marquilha, "A World Inscribed – Introduction," in *Approaches to the History of Written Culture*, eds. M. Lyons and R. Marquilha (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 15. Studies of self-writing, such as Claudia Ulbrich, Kaspar von Greyerz and Lorenz Heiligensetzer, eds., *Mapping the 'I'. Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland* (Leiden: Brill, 2015) scarcely ever focus on the "performance of writing" as central topic of research and privilege an approach to self-writing as a "social act."

15 Armando Petrucci, *Letteratura italiana: una storia attraverso la scrittura* (Rome: Carocci editore, 2007), 27–8.

*savoir*. Writing "in divinity" by non-professional lay people during the period 1580–1660 has been studied recently by Kate Narveson, who also notes that the topic has been understudied.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, Narveson characterises this phenomenon as "an unintended consequence of the Reformation push to teach layfolk to read Scripture,"<sup>17</sup> regrettably underestimating the rich biblical reading culture of the laity and their copying activities during the late Middle Ages.

This aspect of late medieval culture is evident in the tradition of the so-called Italian *libri di famiglia*, a kind of diary written by and about the family for its various members.<sup>18</sup> These "diaries," compiled by members of the urban middle classes, mostly in the vernacular and often in combination with accounts and administration, offer noteworthy reflections on the importance of memory and history writing, as well as on reading and private libraries and domestic devotion. Strictly connected to this ego documentary practice is the significant increase in the production of personal miscellanies or *zibaldoni* (notebooks or commonplace books), manuscripts in which several texts are collected, often over a long period of time. These *zibaldoni*, which show remarkable similarities with the ancient *hypomnemata*, were often copied on paper and in cursive writing and were considered portable libraries and "knowledge aggregators," spaces in which available and circulating knowledge was stored and organised for individual and collective use.<sup>19</sup>

As far as medieval France is concerned, the *écritures du for privé*, which might be translated as "writings of the private self," have become a much-investigated topic in the last few years. These writings are typically account books of the business or the household, or religious books such as Bibles and Books of Hours, where the owner has noted accounts of life events of his family, such as baptisms, marriages, and deaths, sometimes stretching over several generations.<sup>20</sup> In France, religious books copied by lay people themselves have even more seldomly survived as the *écritures du for privé*. This is due to the particularities of France's early modern history, which included several periods during which a large number of books were lost, sometimes because of the direct targeting of religious books, for instance during the Wars of Religion and the French Revolution. One of the few exceptions is Manuscript 5366 of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, containing a Life of Christ in French that was almost certainly copied by a lay woman who signed it with the name Nicole de Bretagne.<sup>21</sup> In spite of the rare survival of writings "in divinity" by lay people, it must have been a widespread practice. For instance, the anonymous author (a female professed religious) of the religious text in French intended for lay women *Une petite instruction pour femme séculière* (early 16<sup>th</sup> century) encourages her readers to copy parts of the text and paste it into their Books of Hours:

*Et aussi il vous seroit bon de en reciter en vng petit papier ce qui est a dire tous les iours comme la preparation que vous debuez faire tous les matins et la maniere de ouyr la messe. Et ce qui y est pour quant vous recepez nostre seigneur Ihesuchrist. Et mettez cela dedans voz Heures que vous portez a leglise.*

And it would be good if you copied on a small piece of paper what you have to pray each day, such as the preparation that you should do each morning and the way you

<sup>16</sup> Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England. Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2012), 95.

<sup>17</sup> Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> The scholarly tradition of the Italian *libri di famiglia* is summarized in Giovanni Ciappelli, *Memory, Family, and Self. Tuscan Family Books and Other European Egodocuments (14<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Century)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> On this topic, see for example Sabrina Corbellini, Giovanna Murano and Giacomo Signore, eds., *Collecting, Organizing and Transmitting Knowledge. Miscellanies in Late Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018); Marco Cursi, "Il libro del mercante: tipicità ed eccezioni," in *La produzione scritta tecnica e scientifica nel medioevo: libro e documento tra scuole e professioni*, eds. Giuseppe de Gregorio and Maria Galante (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012), 147–77. The term "knowledge aggregator" is inspired by Andrea Nanetti, Angelo Cattaneo, Siew Ann Cheong, and Chin-Yw Lin, "Maps as Knowledge Aggregators: from Renaissance Italy Fra Mauro to Web Search Engines," *The Cartographic Journal. The World of Mapping* 52, no. 2 (2015): 159–67.

<sup>20</sup> M. Foisl, "L'écriture du for privé," in *Histoire de la vie privée*, ed. Philippe Ariès (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 331–64; Jean-Pierre Bardet and François-Joseph Ruggiu, eds., *Les écrits du for privé, objets matériels, objets édités* (Limoges: Presses universitaires de Limoges, 2007); Mélanie Dubois-Morestein, "Transmission des savoirs: culture matérielle et pratique de l'écrit dans le livre de raison de Jean Teissiere, marchand cordier du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Apprendre, produire, se conduire: Le modèle au Moyen Âge, XLVe Congrès de la SHMESP*, ed. Société des historiens médiévistes de l'Enseignement supérieur public (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2015), 223–31.

<sup>21</sup> Margriet Hoogvliet, "Nicole de Bretagne and a Collection of Religious Texts in French: Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5366 (15<sup>th</sup> century)," *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 5, no. 2 (2016): 160–81.

have to listen to Mass. And what is written there for the moment that you receive our Lord Jesus Christ. And put this in the Book of Hours that you take with you to church.

As we already pointed out in the introduction, the French word *lieu* is often too literally interpreted as a physical and material place, whereas the concept comes closer to the English word "vector." The connotations of the semantic field of *lieu* or place in the concept of *lieu de savoir* easily leads to conceptualising knowledge as something immobile and inert, as something hidden away in a storage place. In this article we would like to explore the notion of *lieu de savoir* not as a place or an object, but as an activity, most notably the writing and disseminating of religious texts. We will show that a process-oriented approach to *lieux de savoir* through the investigation of lay people in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century France and Italy, who were copying their own religious books for personal use or for circulation within groups of kindred spirits, is an important enrichment of the concept. The activity of copying a religious text by hand implies that the body and mind of the person writing will be a part of the dissemination process as well as of the final written result.

## 2. WRITING AND REFLECTIONS ON WRITING AS A *LIEU DE SAVOIR* IN FRENCH RELIGIOUS POETRY

In this section, a French prayer book copied in the early sixteenth century by a lay man and amateur copyist will be examined, especially with regard to the implications of a religious poem in French celebrating the art of writing that he inserted in his book as a reflection on his activity of copying religious texts. The book and the poem provide an important insight into the value that could be attached to the presence of the (lay) self in a handwritten text, most notably in a religious text. In addition, the reflections about the importance of the art of writing for the Church and for the Christian religion show the importance of writing, encompassing both the act of writing and the resulting written book, as a religious *lieu de savoir*.

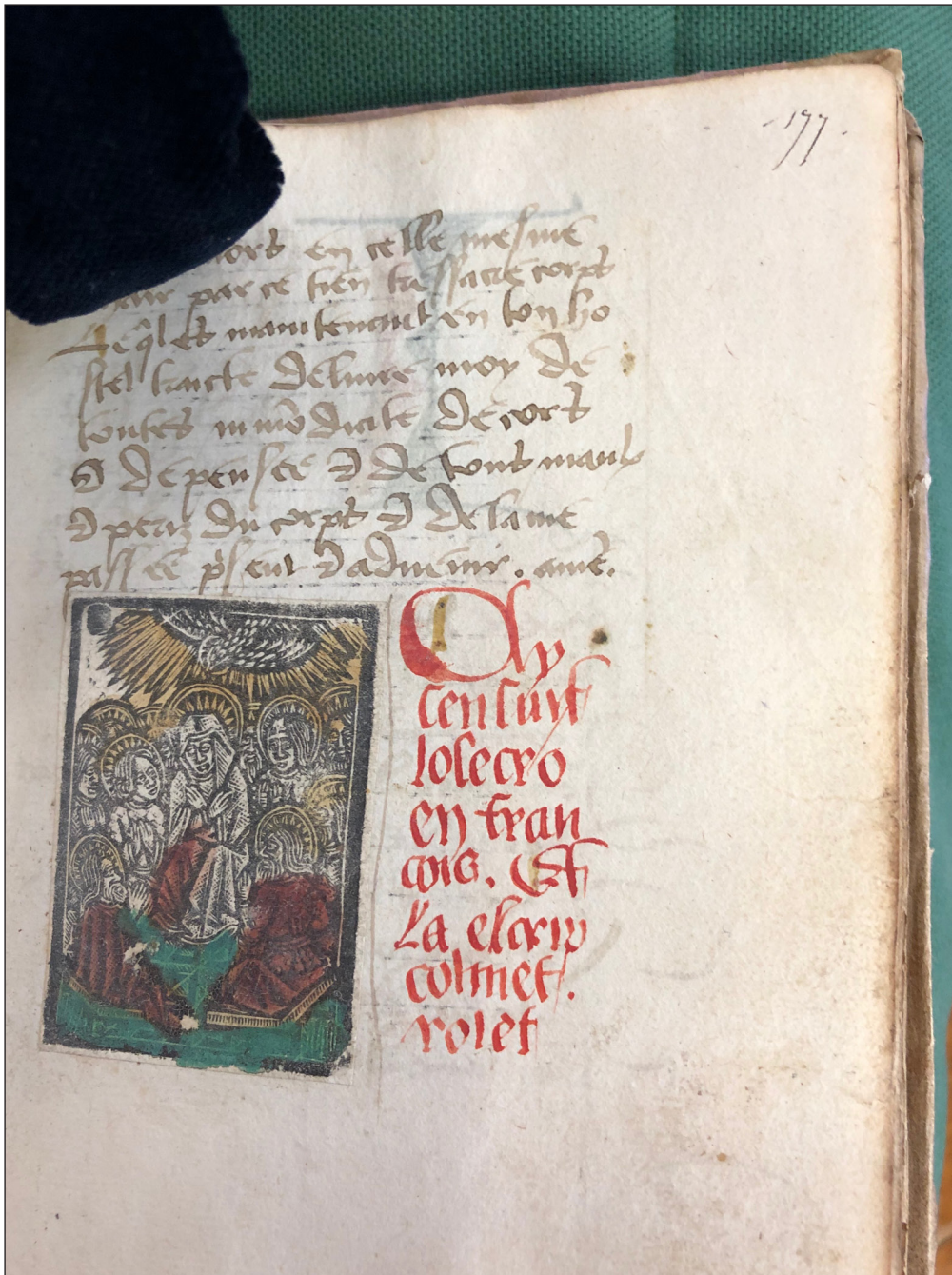
The book in question is manuscript Tours, Bibliothèque municipale, 231. It is in several ways an exceptional document. It is a complex and composite Book of Hours with several prayers and religious poetry in Latin and French added to it, as well as cuttings from printed Books of Hours pasted onto several pages.<sup>22</sup> But more importantly, a number of colophons proudly advertise that the book was copied by a lay man, Colinet Rolet. For instance, on folio 177r he penned in red ink: *Cy sensuyt l'osecro en francois. Et l'a escrip Colinet Rolet* (Here follows the *Obsecro* in French. And Colinet Rolet wrote it; **Figure 1**).<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, Colinet has pasted a woodcut image of the Virgin and the apostles during the outpouring of the Holy Spirit next to this colophon, thus connecting his activity as copyist of a prayer book with the work of the Holy Spirit. Colinet did not leave notes identifying the intended future users of his book, but the fact that he left a colophon with his name next to this image of the Holy Spirit is a strong indication that he intended the result of his copying activities for more readers than himself alone. Colinet even inserted a drawing, most likely his own, which shows him kneeling in prayer to the Virgin, who is standing on the crescent moon, which in fifteenth-century France was often understood as a visual reference to the Immaculate Conception (**Figure 2**).<sup>24</sup>

The particular characteristics of the handwriting, together with the presence of a brief poem celebrating the French king Louis XII (1498–1515) on folio 2r and the cuttings from printed documents pasted on several pages, all suggest that Colinet copied the texts in this book during the first or early second decade of the sixteenth century. A prayer in verse referring to the *sainte*

<sup>22</sup> For a description of the additional texts in French and links to digitalised pages of the manuscript see the Jonas database of the IRHT: [http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/consulter/manuscrit/detail\\_manuscrit.php?projet=59858](http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/consulter/manuscrit/detail_manuscrit.php?projet=59858).

<sup>23</sup> He noted his name as copyist on two other folios: f. 19v Nicolae Rolet, f. 20r Nicolae Rolet.

<sup>24</sup> Eléonore Fournié and Séverine Lepape, "Dévotions et représentations de l'Immaculée Conception dans les cours royales et princières du Nord de l'Europe (1380–1420)," *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques* 10 (2012): <http://journals.openedition.org/acrh/4259>, consulted 21 August 2020. The conflation of writing and drawing activities by non-professionals is seldom attested and discussed. One of the few examples is examined by Alice Cavinato, "'Nicolò di Giovanni da Siena à fatto questo libro di sua propia mano e di sua spontana volontà': note su due manoscritti illustrati senesi del Quattrocento e le loro sottoscrizioni," *Opera · Nomina · Historiae* 2, no. 3 (2010): 219–62.



**Figure 1** Colinet Rolet's colophon (Tours, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 231, f. 177r).

*Larme de Vendôme* (the relic of the Holy Tear in Vendôme)<sup>25</sup> copied on folio 166 verso strongly suggests that this Book of Hours was copied in the Loire Valley, possibly in Tours.

The activity of writing seems not only to have been a way of creating an affordable book, but also to have had a special religious meaning for Colinet, because he added a poem in French with a praise of writing on folios 2v to 4r:<sup>26</sup> writing (*l'escriptrue*) is a means by which Christian faith and the Church are being glorified, and in addition it is a divine gift for the benefit of society. The formal particularities of the poem copied by Colinet all point to the poetical activities of the *Grands Rhétoriqueurs* in France, most notably the members of rhetorical confraternities (sometimes called *Puys*) active in towns in northern France who produced formally highly complicated poetry, often celebrating the perfection of the Virgin and her immaculate

<sup>25</sup> A relic of one of the tears shed by Christ upon hearing of the death of Lazarus, collected by Mary Magdalene. The relic was kept in the Benedictine Abbey of la Trinité in Vendôme. See: René Crozet, "Le monument de la Sainte Larme à la Trinité de Vendôme," *Bulletin Monumental* 121, no. 2 (1963): 171–80; Helen Hickey, "Capturing Christ's Tears: 'La Sainte Larme' in Medieval and Early Modern France," in *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History*, eds. Stephanie Downes et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 58–71.

<sup>26</sup> For a transcription of the text of the entire poem (some verses are difficult to decipher and to interpret), see Appendix 1. In the present ordering of the manuscript, Folios 1 to 4 seem have been misbound and it is possible that they were originally intended to follow at the end of the manuscript.



**Figure 2** Self-portrait of Colinet Rolet with the Virgin and child in the sun and standing on a crescent moon (Tours, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 231, f. 182r).

conception.<sup>27</sup> The resemblances to the poetry of the *Rhétoriciens* are most notably formal aspects, such as the same verse being repeated in each stanza (*Par l'ars d'escripiture ... Est honoree la court de sainte eglise/* By means of the art of writing ... the court of the Holy Church is being honoured), and the envoy to a dedicatee called *prince* closing the poem. The indebtedness to the religious poetry produced by the *Rhétoriciens* is also evidenced by the insertion of the drawing of Colinet praying to an image of the Virgin that was understood as a reference to the Immaculate Conception. The celebration of the Immaculate Conception, the theological defence of this idea, and the dissemination of this cult were often at the heart of the *Rhétoriciens'* poetical activities.

<sup>27</sup> Gérard Gros, *Le poète, la Vierge et le prince du Puy. Étude sur les Puys marials de la France du Nord du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1992); Denis Hüe, *La poésie palinodique à Rouen (1486–1550)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002); François Cornilliat, *"Or ne mens": couleurs de l'éloge et du blâme chez les "grands rhétoriciens"* (Paris, Honoré Champion, 1994); Margriet Hoogvliet, "Metaphorical Images of the Sacred Workshop: The confrérie du Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens as a 'Hybrid Forum'," *Church History and Religious Culture* 99, no. 3–4 (2019): 387–411.

In his copy, Colinet has split the poem's verses of ten syllables in the middle, at the natural cesura. This is revealed by a few mistakes he made during the copying process by accidentally continuing the verse, for instance in the third stanza: *Du vray manoir de ha- / De haulte eternite*. When the verses are recombined a poem emerges with four eight-line stanzas following the rhyme scheme a-b-a-b-b-c-b-c and the envoy a-b-a-b. The rhymes show some slight irregularities, for instance in the first stanza the couple *Crist* and *escript*. From a poetical-formal point of view, this is not the most sophisticated example of the poetry of the *Rhétoriqueurs* and one is tempted to suppose that Colinet himself was the author of this poem. In any case, the overall theme of the poem must have been so important to him that he decided to insert it in the book that he had copied himself.

The first stanza underscores the importance of writing for the Christian faith, which is thus presented as a strongly text-based religion: *Par l'ars d'escripture / Est redigee / La foy de Iesus Crist* (The faith of Jesus Christ is composed by means of the art of writing). The second stanza celebrates writing as a divine gift and as the basis of religious knowledge and wisdom: *Par l'escripture sont tous clers fonde / Et en grant scavoir* (By means of writing/Sacred Scripture all clerics are well educated and have great knowledge). In the third stanza the importance of writing as an external memory is underscored: *Par l'escripture tout revient a memoire / Ce que jadiz a este recitez* (By means of writing everything is remembered that was said in the past). Here again the ambiguity of *escripture* as writing and as Sacred Scripture is exploited, for instance: *Par l'escripture trouvons la verité / De la vertu a notre ame requise* (lines 41–44: Through writing/Sacred Scripture we find the truth of the virtue that our souls are required to have).

The fourth stanza turns to human society by stating that writing is an important tool for government as well as for a well-functioning society: *Par ce noble ars scevent princes et rois / Comment il doivent leurs suietz regenter* (lines 49–52: By means of this noble art princes and kings know how they should govern their subjects). Furthermore, writing enables merchants and city dwellers to have prosperous activities and thus a good life, because the art of writing is instrumental for the well-being of all of society: *Par ce noble art peult chacun profiter / Compter nombrer et scavoir son emprise* (lines 67–60: Everyone can profit from this noble art: to count, to calculate, and to know the state of their enterprises).

As mentioned earlier, the polysemous nature of the French word *escripture* is fully exploited: it refers simultaneously to any written text, to Sacred Scripture, and to the activity of writing itself. Colinet's decision to insert this poem in particular in the book that he copied himself is highly significant, because it is also a reflection on his activity as copyist of the book that the reader is reading and from which he or she is praying the Hours. It is a celebration of the activity of writing as a *lieu de savoir*, for oneself, and for other people.

Turning now to the conceptualisation of writing as evidenced by the poem and by the personally hand-copied Book of Hours itself, several aspects come to mind. Firstly, writing is a pragmatic activity, serving the production of a cheap prayer book that is also custom-made to the wishes of the copyist and future user himself. Secondly, through the process of writing, the copyist Colinet is present in the written text that is the result of this efforts. He does not only give his name in several colophons, but the result of his finger movements with the pen is also present in the written text. Seen from this perspective, Colinet's writing activity is a form of identity formation as well.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the copying of religious texts and prayers also takes the form of bodily worship, because their content would most likely resonate in the mind of the copyist during the copying process: in this manner, writing turns into prayer. Through his presence in the copied text, his handwriting, his name, and his image, Colinet himself becomes a religious text as well: an inversion of the Word that became flesh as in John 1:14, a connotation that is again reinforced by the wordplay on *l'escripture* as both writing and Scripture in the poem.

Finally, because of his presence in the texts he has copied, Colinet also became a textual authority. Through the result of his writing activities, Colinet was instrumental in spreading the Word, in disseminating the prayers to other readers. His writing, both the activity and the result, is a religious *lieu de savoir*. Next to the above-mentioned colophons, Colinet's manuscript

<sup>28</sup> For another medieval example, from Avignon, see: Mélanie Dubois-Morestin, "Lire, écrire, compter: Jean Teisseire, une petite élite urbaine du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *La fabrique des sociétés médiévales méditerranéennes*, eds. Marie Dejoux and Diane Chamboduc de Saint Pulgent (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2018), 373–80.



contains evidence that other readers did actually use it for reading and prayer. Folio 249r, a parchment bifolium at the end of the manuscript, possibly inserted for protection of the paper pages, contains a later sixteenth-century ex-libris note by someone called Nicole Charmeteau:

*Ce present papier apertiens a Nicollae Charmeteau. Qui le touuara si lui rend te poysa le ving jour de feste Saint Martin. [...] Nicolae Charmeteau.*

This paper belongs to Nicole Charmeteau. To the person who finds it, if they return it, he will pay wine on the day of the feast of St Martin.

The reference to the feast of Saint Martin suggests that Nicole Charmetau lived in Tours, the famous burial site of the saint and where his death was commemorated each year with elaborate festivities. On folio 235v Nicolas Charmeteau has added his name a second time below a short note written in the same ink. And even after him the Book of Hours apparently was still in use for several decades, because an inscription on folio 238r was penned on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1622.

Taken together, the specific particularities of Tours, Bibliothèque municipale, ms 231 show that it was copied for his own use by an amateur scribe active in the Loire Valley in the early years of the sixteenth century. The Book of Hours, the result of his copying activities, was a religious *lieu de savoir* in the sense that it was a storage place of religious knowledge – knowledge that could be retrieved by the copyist himself and by other readers. Because of his presence in the prayer book through his handwriting, his name, and his picture, the copyist Colinet Rolet, too, became a *lieu de savoir*, because it is through him that the readers had access to prayers and religious knowledge. Finally, and this the most important point for our argument, the activity of writing, *l'art de l'écriture*, is a *lieu de savoir* as well. This is also stressed in the fourth stanza of the poem that Colinet inserted into his book: "*Par ce noble ars ... est honnoree la court de sainte eglise*" (By this noble art ... is the court of the Holy Church being honoured). The art of writing is here celebrated as a skill and as an activity that functions as a *lieu de savoir*, facilitating both the storage and the dissemination of knowledge.

### 3. ITALIAN PERSONAL MISCELLANIES AS RELIGIOUS *LIEUX DE SAVOIR*

According to Armando Petrucci, late medieval Italy is characterized by "freedom of writing," i.e. the possibility of large groups within Italian society to participate in scribal practices. He focuses in particular on groups of vernacular literate non-professional writers, who represent the vast majority of the members of the late medieval scribal communities reconstructed through colophons and ownership marks. They write for themselves, for peers, or for the creation of small libraries open to family members or members of professional networks and they often leave their "signature" in their manuscripts. They often declare that they are copying for their pleasure, to gain consolation, to counter temptation, and as a form of prayer and devotion. Petrucci stresses, moreover, the spatial contiguity of writing and reading activities, both located in the domestic space.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the entire domestic space is perceived as a *lieu de savoir*, in which knowledge is produced, preserved, and exchanged.

The Venetian Benedetto Cotrugli, for example, writes in his *Book of the Art of Trade*, a manual for the perfect merchant, that the merchants "should not have to keep their books in the common writing areas, but should have a little desk of their own either in their bedroom or at least nearby, where they can study when they have spare time, which is a most honourable activity and worthy of glorification." Next to common writing activities, related to their trade, they are thus encouraged to create a dedicated space, a *studiolo*, where books are stored and where writing and reading activities are performed.<sup>30</sup> Studies of probate inventories have confirmed this practice and corroborate the evidence of the dissemination of textual materials, in particular of those with religious connotations, in the late medieval *casa*, as well the active

<sup>29</sup> Armando Petrucci, *Leggere e scrivere nell' Italia medievale* (Milano: Edizioni Sylvestre Bonnard, 2007), 215–6. See also Nicoletta Giovè, "I copisti dei manoscritti datati," *Aevum* 82, no. 2 (2008): 523–41 and Elisabetta Caldelli, "Copisti in casa," *Pecia* 13 (2010): 199–249.

<sup>30</sup> Benedetto Cotrugli, *The Book of the Art of Trade*, eds. Carlo Carraro and Giovanni Favero (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 144.

engagement of mercantile and artisanal groups in the production and circulation of vernacular manuscripts.<sup>31</sup>

The specific place where these non-professional scribes revealed their identities, their motivations for engaging in writing activities and their bids for the use and the conservation of the manuscripts were colophons. These were scribes' inscriptions at the end of a text or a manuscript, in which the scribes provided readers and users with information about their endeavours and "expressed an assertion of ownership over a book's intellectual and spiritual contents."<sup>32</sup>

The fundamental role of colophons in the process of transformation of personal miscellanies, the results of a voluntary self-commitment in writing, into religious *lieux de savoir* becomes evident from the analysis of the manuscripts copied by Antonio da Filicaia (1430–after 1512), a Florentine public servant.<sup>33</sup> As Antonio writes in one of his seventeen colophons, his goal is to create a family library, contributing to the moral and religious education of his family members:

*Et per gratia dj Dio ebbj finito di scrivere ogj quessto dj xxv d'agosto 1493. Solamente non per me tanto perché sono d'annj chopioso finitj Lxxij atto a potere trare frutto tardissimo ma più per quellj che dopo me succiederanno. Abbino dapoterne prendere frutto e buona dottrina e insegnamento insieme anchora con circa di xxv altrj o ppiù di mia mano tuttj schritti priego chi gl'arà a ghodere di tuttj faccj diligente guardia a cchonservaglj e nnon gli mandare fuory di chasa senza un altro schambio simile a quello o meglio perché avendogli in suo servizio e tuttj legiando quand'uno et quant'un altro ne chaverà grandissima utilità*

Thanks be to God, I have completed the writing of this text today, 25 August 1493. It was not copied for myself, because I am 72 years old and I am already quite old to learn from it, but in order that those who will succeed me may learn from it and draw good lessons and learning, together with the other 25 books I have copied with my own hands. And I pray those who will use them will guard them with care and will not let them leave the house without asking a similar one or a better one in exchange because having all the books at his disposal and reading them, he will get great profit from it.

Antonio da Filicaia also clearly places his writing activities in a religious framework, not only by invoking protection but also by stressing the salvific function of writing and reading activities:

*Qui finisce il primo Libro dy vita patris lo quale schrisse et translatò santo Girolamo dottore della santa Chiesa cominciato a 166. Finito di chopiare per Antonio di Piero di Nicholaio da Filicaia quessto dy xxvij di marzo anno 1500. A onore di Dio e della sua madre Vergine Maria et di tutti gli altri santj et sante et di tutta la corte di paradiso. E a .ssalute et bene di chi lo leggerà peggando chi .llo leggerà che prieghj Jddio per me che .llò schritto che mj conciedj veracie perdono di tuttj i miei pecchatj e .chosj ancora jo lo priegho v'esauldischa raccomandandomi a .ttutti e santj de' qualj le loro Leggiende ò schritto in questo Libro mi sieno jn aiuto al fine della mia morte. E priegho*

<sup>31</sup> Sabrina Corbellini and Margriet Hoogvliet, "Artisans and Religious Reading in Late Medieval Italy and Northern France (ca. 1400–ca. 1520)," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43, no. 3 (2013): 521–44; Margriet Hoogvliet, "Manual Labour and Biblical Reading in Late Medieval France," *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 6/2 (2019): 277–97.

<sup>32</sup> For a recent overview of studies of medieval colophons, see Markus Schiegg, "Scribes' Voices: The Relevance and Types of Early Medieval Colophons," *Studia Neophilologica* 88, no. 2 (2016): 147. A study of colophons in Italian has been conducted by Sissi Mattiazzo in her MA-thesis at the University of Padua ("Di mia propria mano. Le sottoscrizioni dei copisti "italiani" del Quattrocento nei codici della Biblioteca Riccardiana di Firenze," 2014–2015, under supervision of Nicoletta Giovè Marchioli). For the specific function of colophons copied by female religious scribes, see Melissa Moreton, "Pious Voices: Nun-scribes and the Language of Colophons in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 29 (2013): 43–73.

<sup>33</sup> The manuscripts copied by Antonio da Filicaia have been described and studied by Monica Bianco, "Predicazione e letteratura nelle trascrizioni di Antonio da Filicaia," in *Letteratura in forma di sermone. I rapporti tra predicazione e letteratura nei secoli XIII–XVI*, eds. Ginetta Auzzas, Giovanni Baffetti and Carlo Delcorno (Florence: Olschki, 2002), 233–53.

tuttj quellj a .cchuj quessto libro succiederà di chasa mia lo tenghino charo e con buona diligenza e .rriguardo chavandone buono construtto per edificatione dell' anime loro<sup>34</sup>

Here ends the first book of the Lives of the Fathers, which was written and translated by St Jerome, Church doctor; it starts on [fol.] 166. Completed by Antonio di Piero di Niccololaio da Filicaia today, 28 March 1500. To the honour of God and his mother Virgin Mary and all male and female saints and the court of paradise. To the health and well-being of those who will read it and I pray the one who will read it that they pray God for me who has written it. [And that] he will forgive my sins. And I bid that he will fulfil my wish and that he will recommend me to all saints whose legends are described in this book and that they will assist me until my death. And I pray that the family members who will inherit this book will cherish it and keep it with respect and diligence, drawing good building blocks for their souls' edification.

Particularly interesting is the combination of the two aims made in the colophons: the wish to build up a library, the textual fulcrum of the family, to be preserved and cherished, and the aspiration to create a moral and religious textual cluster, able to guide and inspire the family across generations. His writing activities are all geared toward creating a religious space and place in his family, in which materiality and learning processes are combined and conflated.

In many respects Antonio, the narrating "I" in the colophons, describes himself as an individual and carefully reports personal experiences and turning points in his long career as a civil servant. His seventeen colophons provide the readers with autobiographical information and descriptions of seminal moments in his long life. He mentions that in his writing activities he is following his grandfather's model and that he is living in the Florentine city quarter of St Brocolo, linking his work to a "spatial" family tradition.<sup>35</sup> He stresses that he has lived in the "Rocca di Santa Agnese" in Pisa (1467), was thrice syndic of the *Arte della Lana* (the wool guild of Florence, in 1462, 1471, and 1490) and city prior (member of the Florentine city government in January and February 1485).<sup>36</sup> He makes particularly clear that his identity is also defined by his social affiliations and ties.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, conflating his biography with his scribal activities, he is actually turning his manuscript collection into a multi-volume family book, in which each professional experience seems to be connected with carefully selected texts and moral and religious exercise.

Constantly moving from the "I" to the "you" while describing his experiences and activities and addressing his family members, he is instructing them on how to maintain their social position through extensive networking and participation in Florentine political life, but also on how to preserve the religious space he has been creating through a continuous process of reading, textual selection, and writing. This point is also reinforced by the use of colophons not simply marking the end of the manuscript, but also signposting several writing phases and reflecting on individual texts. Each manuscript is placed in a (long) chronological timeframe, in a slow process of "rising awareness of the self."<sup>38</sup>

An instance of this practice is manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, II.I.338, in which the three scribal phases of the *Lives of the Fathers* and other religious texts are marked by long colophons. The first phase, marked by the above mentioned long colophon, was

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<sup>34</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.I.338, fol. 233vb. Describing his scribal activities as a religious exercise, Antonio follows the example of many non-professional vernacular scribes. As Sissi Mattiazzo states, scribes often wish to signal their endeavours within the framework of devotional activities. It is particularly interesting to note that scribes often date their scribing activities through references to the liturgical calendar and specific religious festivities (e.g. Lent or Easter).

<sup>35</sup> His grandfather, Andrea del Pannocchia Riccomanni, copied Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.IV.63 (containing a copy of Domenico Cavalca's *Lives of the Fathers*).

<sup>36</sup> Bianco, "Le trascrizioni," 238–9. His experience as one of the city priors is further described and evaluated in a long autobiographical reflection in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.II.188. In this ego-document, he accurately describes the ceremonies related to the instalment of the *priori*, as well as all speeches delivered during this event. As Bianco stresses, this note should be considered as a manual for other member of the family harbouring political ambitions.

<sup>37</sup> This process has also been detected in the study of German family books. See for example, Wolfgang Neuber, "Exscribo ergo sum. Self-Reflection and Meditation in Early Modern German Family Books," in *Meditatio: Refashioning the Self. Theory and Practice in Late Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual Culture*, eds. Walter S. Melion and Karl A.E. Enenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 109–24.

<sup>38</sup> Neuber, "Exscribo ergo sum," 122.

completed on 28 March 1500, followed by a second one concluded a few days later, on 1 April 1500. The marking of this second phase, four days of work for writing six folia on a large-format paper manuscript, allows Antonio to reflect on the importance of his writing activities, as well as on his family traditions. He states that his manuscript has been copied from an exemplar composed by his grandfather Antonio around 1400, who in turn had copied four copies of the *Lives of the Fathers* (two of which were illustrated), and that he hopes that his heirs will cherish both books and pay homage to a century of family scribal tradition. The last part is dated ten years later and completed on 8 April 1510, while Antonio was staying in Borgo San Sepolcro:

*Finito di chopiare questa ultima hoperetta per me Antonio di Piero da .fFilicaia questo dj viij d'aprile 1510 a onore di dyo e per utilità di me e di tutti quelli di chasa mya. Deo gratias amenne*<sup>39</sup>

Finished the copying of this last little work by me Antonio di Piero di Filicaia today 8 April 1510 to the honour of God and for the benefit of me and all the others in my house. Glory to God, Amen

This last "little work," copied in a different chronological and spatial context, is a selection from the Italian translation of Thomas a Kempis' *Imitatio Christi*.<sup>40</sup> One of the transcribed passages is particularly interesting for a better understanding of the lessons transmitted by Antonio to his family:

*La uerita e non la eloquentia e da essere cierchata nelle sante schritture tutta la schrittura sachra debbe essere letta con quello spirito che e fatta douiamo cierchare piu questo l'utilita nella schrittura chella sottilita del parlare [...] l'amore della pura uerita ti muoua a leggere Non cierchare quale uomo abbi detto questo ma intendi quello chessi dice Inpero che gl'uomini passono ma la uerita nel singniore permene inneterno Dyo parla annoy in uary mody senza acciettazione di persone lanosttra churiosita spespe uolte cimpediscie nella lettione delle schrittura quando uogliamo intendere et esaminare in quello locho doue senpliciamente sarebbe a passare settuuoy chauare profitto della lettione Leggi umilmente senpliciamente ne mai uolere auere nome di scientia a dimanda uolentieri et odi con silentio le parole degly santi et non ti dispiacino gly esenply degli antichi pero che non sono detti senza chagione*<sup>41</sup>

Truth and not eloquence should be sought in the Holy Writ. The Holy Writ should be read with this attitude and we should look for the usefulness of the Writ rather than refinement in speaking [...] Love of real truth should give you a reason to read. Do not worry about who is the author of a sentence but try to understand what he is saying, as people pass away and the godly truth stays forever. God speaks in different ways without making any distinction, but our curiosity often holds us up in understanding the Scriptures, when we want to examine instead of simply longing for drawing a good profit from the lesson. Read with humility and simplicity without any scientific claim, listen in silence to the saints' words and do not despise the examples of the ancients, as they are described with a reason.

In some ways, Antonio is not only presenting his family with a series of texts, but also offering a reading key and an approach allowing them to transform the act of reading into a religious exercise. The ability of reading is in Antonio's words linked strongly to its utility, a pragmatic approach that is typical for these non-professional scribes.

<sup>39</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.II.188, fol. 283va. The precise place of writing, Borgo San Sepolcro (nearby Arezzo), is mentioned in the table of contents.

<sup>40</sup> According to the medieval tradition, the *Imitatio Christi* is in the manuscript attributed to Jean Gerson: "Comincia uno libro diuoto e utile composto per lo nobilissimo messere giouanni Gyerson cancelliere di parigy della imitatione di christo yhesu et del dispregio del mondo et sono distinti in quattro libri e i loro chapitoli di per se ciaschuno i quali saranno ischritti qui di sotto come uedrai comincia detta bella hopera da 240 insino a charte 283 finita di chopiare a di viij d'aprile 1510 essendo Al borgo a santo sepolcho e di molto utile per lanima." The first Italian translation of Thomas a Kempis' treatise was printed in Venice in March 1488, followed by several editions in Milan and Florence. The description in Antonio's table of contents matches the incipit of the printed text (see for example, a digital copy of the Florence 1493 print on <https://www.beic.it/it/articoli/incunaboli-italiani-lingua-volgare-0>).

<sup>41</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II.II.188, fol. 242r-v (*Della electione delle sancta scripture*). For the original Latin text, see *De imitatione Christi: libri quatuor*, ed. Tiburzio Lupo, Storia e Attualità, 6 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 19.

The suggested silent attitude in reading also conveys the idea that the act of reading is strongly connected with meditation and with a process of interiorisation of the religious lessons and personal transformation. This connection between reading, learning, meditation, and growing in virtues lies at the very heart of the process of transmission of religious knowledge as it is, for example, described in Hugh of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon*, one of the most complete medieval overviews of intellectual life and learning processes. As Hugh describes, "the start of learning, thus lies in reading, but its consummation lies in meditation; which if any man will learn to love it very intimately and will desire to be engaged very frequently upon it, renders his life pleasant indeed, and provides the greatest consolation to him in his trials." The point of silence and quiet is particularly important, as reading and meditating "take the soul away from the noise of earthly business and makes it have even in this life a kind of foretaste of sweetness of eternal quiet."<sup>42</sup>

Through the combination of texts, instructions, and autobiographical information, Antonio creates a series of religious *lieux de savoir* destined to be kept in a dedicated space, the family library. By putting his literacy at the service of the religious education of his family, he transforms his writing activities into a silent, dynamic, and safe place of knowledge in which religious contents are selected, transmitted, and assimilated.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Many excellent recent studies into the history of books and reading in the Middle Ages and the early modern period are based on a detailed examination of material texts. This approach also entails a lively interest in the material contexts of books and reading practices. In our own research, too, we investigate the physical places where books were stored and consulted, as well as the resulting changes in the construction of these conceptual spaces (*espaces vécues* in the terminology of Henri Lefebvre)<sup>43</sup> because of the presence and dissemination of religious texts. As a consequence, the concept of *lieux de savoir* developed by Christian Jacob has become an important analytical category in our thinking about late medieval places and spaces of religious reading: not only churches, convents and chapter libraries, but also hospitals, town halls, churchyards, chapels, confraternities, private homes, and workshops.

On the other hand, we prefer not to limit ourselves to accurate descriptions of the material culture of places and spaces of reading. In our view, the social aspects of these places and spaces are just as important as their materiality. In this spirit, we have examined, for earlier publications, social spaces (inspired by Pierre Bourdieu) connected to religious texts and we have studied libraries as social practices.<sup>44</sup> In this article we have looked for another perspective on books and *lieux de savoir*, in particular challenging the connotation of "immobility" that could be associated to "places" and thus focusing on the mobility of books, texts and information.

Our interpretation of the *lieu de savoir* as an activity, preferring a process-oriented to a material approach allows for new applications of the concept, in which the spaces, the objects, and the actors are studied in a continuous exchange and dynamic. The amateur copyists from France and Italy that we have presented here copied religious texts for their own private use, but in all the cases we have discussed, the writing activities of the lay copyists were also explicitly intended for other readers, in a dialogical relationship between the "I" and the community in which the same individual is functioning. Copying a text is an active contribution to the dissemination of religious texts. It is a social act and process, creating a communication circuit that facilitates the flow of information within a textual community created by the very same act of writing. The interesting aspect of religious texts is that sharing and disseminating religious knowledge is not just a duty of spiritual charity; it also, to some extent, transforms the copyists, lay and non-professional, into instruments of dissemination of religious texts. Moreover, by claiming

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<sup>42</sup> Hugh of Saint Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. by Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 92–3.

<sup>43</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 41.

<sup>44</sup> Sabrina Corbellini and Sita Steckel, "The Religious Field during the Long Fifteenth Century: Framing Religious Change beyond Traditional Paradigms," *Church History and Religious Culture* 99, no. 3–4 (2019): 303–29; Margriet Hoogvliet, "Metaphorical Images of the Sacred Workshop."

their roles as writers and scribes, they stress their "ownership" of the selected contents through a painstaking reiteration of their names, professional activities, and chronological frameworks.

As discussed in the introduction, during the fifteenth and early sixteenth century alternative constellations of knowledge and social power can be retrieved in the horizontal, peer-to-peer dissemination of religious knowledge between laypeople: it created textual communities with a diffuse and circulated leadership in which both laity and clerics could participate and where individuals and communities were involved in a continuous dialogue and exchange. The investigated lay and non-professional copyists clearly create and appropriate religious spaces, which are shared with family members and peers in a horizontal transmission of knowledge. They craft their own identity, through a process of selection and textual and material recombination, producing devices that are at the same time personal and public, as results of their personal engagement towards fostering a communal growth of the awareness of the possibilities for non-professional users of the Word to overcome boundaries and restrictions. The bodily performance of writing is converted into a social act, capable of transforming an artefact into a dynamic site of knowledge.

## APPENDIX

Tours, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 231

f. 2v

Memoires tous/ Que par l'art d'escripiture  
Est redigee/ La foy de Iesus Crist  
Toute raison/ Toute exemple et figure  
Est recitee/ Par ce qu'il es escript  
Vraye verite/ Sans aucun contredit  
D'iulgement/ Prent effet sans fainctise  
Par lez docte mos/ Et ce qu'il ont prescript  
Est honnoree/ La court de sainte eglise

f. 3r

Par l'escripiture/ Sont tous clers fonde  
En grant scavoit/ Et notable prudence  
Tous esperitz soultiz/ Sont redoubtes  
Par ce hault art/ Et notable excellance  
Par l'escripiture/ Est en magnificence  
Tout divin(?) fait/ Et grant vertu prisise  
Par tel scavoit/ En toute fulgence  
Est honnoree/ La court de sainte eglise

f. 3v

Par l'escripiture/ Tout revient a memoire  
Ce que jadiz/ A este recitez  
Par l'escripiture/ Nons sont bien notoire  
Du vray manoir/ De haulte eternite  
Par l'escripiture/ Trouvons la verite  
De la vertu a notre ame/ Requite  
Par l'escripiture/ En grant felicite  
Est honnoree/ La court de sainte eglise

f. 4r

Par ce noble art/ Scevent princes et rois  
Comment il doivent/ Leurs suietz regenter  
Par l'escripiture/ Tous marchans et bourgeois  
Scevent(?) en bruyt/ Et richesse augmenter  
Par ce noble art/ Peult chacun profiter  
Compter nombrer/ Et scavoit son emprise  
Par l'escripiture/ De tous ces excepter  
Est honnoree/ La court de sainte eglise

Princes pense sans/ Plus language faire  
 Au bien parfait/ Issant de sa promise  
 Car par l'escrit/ Sans trouver nul contraire  
 Est honnoree/ La court de sainte eglise.

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