

Chapter 12

A PRIVATE LIBRARY AND THE MAKING OF THE MIDDLE AGES IN FLORENCE

PIERO GINORI CONTI'S COLLECTION

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THE HOLDINGS OF the National Library of Florence (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale), like many historic libraries, are the result of a gradual process of accumulation, which continues today. One of the more recent acquisitions of the National Library is the collection of manuscripts and antiquarian books that belonged to Piero Ginori Conti, Prince of Trevignano. Born in Florence in 1865, Ginori Conti was an important Italian businessman.¹ His wealth came partly from his family and partly from his marriage to Adriana Larderel in 1894.² He further increased his wealth by managing the Larderello geothermal company created by Florestano de Larderel, his father-in-law. During the fascist period, Ginori Conti was a senator, consul, and minister of State. His enormous economic potential and political power enabled him to become one of the most important buyers of everything circulating on the Italian and international antiquarian market. In addition to manuscripts, Ginori Conti collected incunabula, *cinquecentine*, paintings, coins, medals, and many archival documents. Moreover, Ginori Conti published studies based on his books. In this way, he shaped his own interpretation of the Middle Ages.

To date, there has been no study of the Ginori Conti library before 1939, the year of the prince's death and subsequent dispersal of part of his collection on the antiquarian market. In order to trace as many manuscripts with Ginori Conti's provenance as possible and identify the ways in which the collection was dispersed, I began my research using the archives of the Manuscripts and Rare Department of the National Library of Florence, which contain important documents for the history of the dispersal of the col-

1 For Piero Ginori Conti's biography, see Fulvio Conti, "Ginori Conti, Piero," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 55 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2000), 43–45.

2 The Ginori Conti family is an old and wealthy Florentine family; the oldest document concerning this family is dated 1304. For the reconstruction of the family history see Luigi Passerini, *Genealogia e storia della famiglia Ginori* (Florence: M. Cellini E C. alla Galileiana, 1876).

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lection.³ The papers were presented in no particular order, and therefore needed rearranging to reconstruct the various pieces of the story.

The oldest document is dated 1940. On June 1, 1940, the notary Franco Franchi took an inventory of the prince's collection. Ginori Conti's intention had been to establish a foundation in his name that could ensure the preservation and accessibility to scholars of his entire library. However, a clause in his will allowed family members to opt not to create the foundation, and the erosion of the family holdings by the Second World War prompted the dispersal of the collection. During the war years, the books were kept in boxes: first at the bank Cassa di Risparmio of Florence and then in the home of Piero's son, Giovanni Ginori Conti, in Florence. Part of the family's papers reached the Florence State Archive in 1961.⁴ These papers mainly concern the administration of the family's farms. There are also registers containing various scholarly writings belonging to the family library. Part of the manuscript collection was donated to the National Library of Florence;⁵ coins and medals are kept at the Bargello Museum, and Giuseppe Mazzini's documents were destined for the Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano in Rome. The donation of the manuscripts to the National Library of Florence was the result of lengthy negotiations between 1940 and 1961. The negotiators of the agreement were Alberto Giraldi, director of the National Library of Florence, and Giovanni Ginori Conti. Giraldi, in collaboration with a commission of experts, compiled four lists dividing the possessions according to their cultural but also their economic value.

My study will be limited to manuscripts but, in order to give an overview of the entire holdings, I will briefly list the other valuables in the 1940 inventory. These are 1,432 pieces of gold and coins of various sizes, 3,939 pieces of silver, and 1,348 pieces of copper, a painting by Rembrandt, and one by a member of the Florentine school. In addition, there are premodern books such as incunabula, *cinquecentine*, and rare books of historical interest. These historical books have been variously dispersed. For example, the *Liber cathecumeni* printed in Florence in 1496,⁶ went to the National Library, while Francesco Petrarca's *Vite dei Pontefici e Imperatori Romani*, printed in Florence in 1478, is now at Cambridge University Library (sold by the Italian bookseller Carlo Alberto Chiesa).⁷ Other examples are the fifty-eight Savonarola incunabula, now in the Württembergische

3 Archivio Manoscritti 42 and Archivio Manoscritti 43.

4 The inventory can be viewed at the Florence State Archives and online at: https://archivio-distatofirenze.cultura.gov.it/asfi/fileadmin/risorse/allegati_inventari_on_line/n442_inventario.pdf, accessed May 12, 2023.

5 The topographical inventory of the Ginori Conti manuscripts in the National Library of Florence can be consulted in Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Catalogue 77. The transcribed inventory can be viewed on the library's website: www.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Inventario-topografico.pdf, accessed May 12, 2023.

6 For a description of the incunabulum, see Piero Scapecchi, ed., *Catalogo degli incunaboli della Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze* (Florence: BNCF, Nerbini, 2017), 273.

7 Chiesa will be discussed in more detail below. See the record on this incunabulum on the "Material Evidence in Incunabula" website: <https://data.cerl.org/mei/00561425>, accessed May 12, 2023.

Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart (five of these were also owned by Giuseppe/Joseph Martini, the Italian scholar, collector, and bookseller) and the twenty-nine incunabula in the Staatsbibliothek in Munich (seven of which were also owned by Martini).⁸ Many others can be found periodically on the antiquarian market, such as Gaetano Vascellini's *Statute di Firenze parte I*, printed in Florence for Giovanni Chiari in the eighteenth century, present in Pandolfini's catalogue dated November 26, 2018;⁹ and Jacopo Passavanti's *Specchio di vera penitencia*, printed in Florence for Bartolomeo de' Libri in 1495 in catalogue forty-seven of the Libreria Antiquaria Mediolanum, Milan.¹⁰ Ginori Conti also owned the first edition of the illustrated Italian book on arithmetic printed in Florence, published ca. 1491 by Lorenzo Morgiani. The latter was included in a Sotheby's catalogue in September 2018 as part of the auction of the library of Erwin Tomash, which reveals that it was owned by Édouard Rahir before Ginori Conti.¹¹ Ginori Conti probably purchased Rahir's book during the Hoepli auction in 1931 and Tomash bought it at a Christie's auction in 1991.¹² Furthermore, in October 2022 the catalogue of the Florentine auction house Gonnelli featured *Saggi di naturali esperienze fatte nell'Accademia del Cimento* by Lorenzo Magalotti. The book, printed in Venice in 1711, includes Ginori Conti's *ex libris*.¹³

Before the dispersal, Ginori Conti's collection of manuscripts and rare books was divided into four lists by the committee: A, B, C, D. List A contains manuscripts destined for the National Library of Florence. List B comprises manuscripts that the heirs would not be able to sell for a certain period of years. List C includes manuscripts that could also be sold abroad. Finally, List D contains the codices and incunabula that were free of any constraints.¹⁴

List A corresponds to what is contained in the Ginori Conti Collection of the National Library. This collection consists of several units: a group of 114 letters addressed to Niccolò Machiavelli (Ginori Conti 23); the personal archive of Niccolò Michelozzi, secretary

8 Further information can be found in Edoardo Barbieri, "Il catalogo degli incunaboli di Giuseppe Martini, 1934," in *Da Lucca a New York a Lugano: Giuseppe Martini libraio tra Otto e Novecento. Atti del convegno di Lucca, 17-18 ottobre 2014*, ed. Edoardo Barbieri (Florence: Olschki, 2017), 107–26 at 112–14. What follows will show that some manuscripts belonging to Martini were acquired by Ginori Conti.

9 The book was lot 94 in the auction: *Argenti, numismatica e libri*, November 26, 2018 (Florence: Pandolfini); www.pandolfini.it/it/asta-0276/illustrati-700-vascellini-gaetano-statue-di-.asp, accessed May 12, 2023.

10 The printed book is no. 7 in *Libri antichi e rari, Catalogo 47* (Milan: Libreria Antiquaria Mediolanum), 15–16. The catalogue can be consulted at www.libreriamediolanum.com/catalogo/Catalogo_47.pdf, accessed May 12, 2023.

11 *The Erwin Tomash Library On The History Of Computing*, September 18, 2018 (London: Sotheby's, 2018), www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2018/the-library-of-erwin-tomash-118409.html, accessed September 29, 2023.

12 See *Erwin Tomash Library*, lot 98.

13 *Asta 36: Libri, autografi e manoscritti*, October 11–12, 2022 (Florence: Gonnelli, 2022), lot 263, p. 106.

14 I have transcribed these lists and intend to publish them in a forthcoming study.

of Lorenzo il Magnifico (Ginori Conti 29); and manuscripts and account books from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Some of the manuscripts from list B can be traced, following their sale. For example, List B contains a book of accounts by Lorenzo Ghiberti of 1441. Today, this manuscript is held by the National Library of Florence (Nuove Accessioni 1181), having been acquired at Sotheby's on July 9, 1969.¹⁵ List B also includes the Commentary of Jacopo di Dante Alighieri and others on the *Divina Commedia*.¹⁶ The latter manuscript is the Poggiali-Vernon codex belonging formerly to Gaetano Poggiali, Lord Vernon, Martini, and then to Ginori Conti. In 1964 it was bought by the Frati Minori Conventuali of Ravenna.¹⁷ List B also contains a manuscript that was illuminated as a commission by Alfonso II of Aragon, duke of Calabria, heir to the throne of Naples, around 1470.¹⁸ During the fifteenth century, Alfonso of Aragon's codex belonged to Domenico Mellini, tutor of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici. In the early nineteenth century, it was acquired by Count Gaetano Melzi and later became part of Martini's collection. When this was sold at a Hoepli auction in 1935, the codex became part of the Ginori Conti library. After the dispersal of this part of Ginori Conti's collection, the manuscript was acquired by the Biblioteca della Società Dantesca (Florence, Biblioteca della Società Dantesca Italiana, MS 3).¹⁹

List C contains thirty-four manuscripts, including codices containing texts by Gregorio Dati, Galileo, and Boccaccio, a thirteenth-century illuminated Antiphony of the Bolognese school, and 247 autograph manuscript folders by Giuseppe Mazzini.²⁰ In addition, this list comprises a file of twenty-eight original letters to Cosimo il Vecchio

15 *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts...Which will be Sold by Auction...9th July, 1969* (London: Sotheby & Co.), lot 40.

16 This codex is described in Piero Ginori Conti, "Il codice dei commenti alla Commedia Poggiali Vernon, oggi Ginori Conti," *Studi danteschi* 23 (1938): 99–105.

17 This manuscript (Centro Dantesco dei Frati Minori Conventuali di Ravenna, MS 1) is described in *Mostra di codici ed edizioni dantesche* (Florence: Sandron, 1965), 95–96n130 bis. Another codex belonging to Lord Vernon, Giuseppe Martini, and Piero Ginori Conti is now Tours, BM, MS 2103.

18 The codex is described by Domenico de Robertis in *All'ombra del lauro: documenti librari della cultura in età laurenziana*, ed. Anna Lenzuni (Milan: Silvana, 1992), 19; and on Mirabileweb: www.mirabileweb.it/manuscript-rom/firenze-biblioteca-della-società-dantesca-italiana-manuscript/LIO_138401, accessed May 12, 2023; and in Tammara De Marinis, *La biblioteca napoletana dei re d'Aragona*, 4 vols. (Milan: Hoepli, 1947), 2:63–64. In the same volume, the bookseller describes the dedication copy of work by Giannozzo Manetti, *De dignitate et excellentia hominis*, written for Alfonso V of Aragon. De Marinis claimed it belonged to Ginori Conti's collection (p. 105). José Ruysschaert, however, denied that the manuscript belonged to Ginori Conti; José Ruysschaert, "L'envoi au roi Alphonse d'Aragon du 'De dignitate et excellentia hominis' de Giannozzo Manetti," *La Bibliofilia* 73 (1971): 229–34, cited in Jonathan J. G. Alexander and Albina C. de la Mare, *The Italian Manuscripts in the Library of Major J. R. Abbey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 36–38 and table XIV. Manuscript J. A. 3212 belonged to De Marinis who sold it to Professor Federico Patetta. Finally, in 1928 it was purchased at the Hoepli sale by Charles St. John Hornby.

19 The Biblioteca della Società Dantesca Italiana in Florence has two codices of Ginori Conti provenance: MSS 3 and 4.

20 Today these autographs are in the Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano in Rome, Fondo Mazzini—Ginori Conti.

and letters from Vittorio Alfieri, Ugo Foscolo, Giacomo Leopardi, Vincenzo Borghini, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Antonio Vespucci, and others. Finally, List D contains 189 manuscripts mainly on historical subjects, manuscripts about the fifteenth-century Florentine laws, statutes of merchandise, manuscripts about the Strozzi family of Florence, histories of the Medici family, and others.

According to these lists, Piero Ginori Conti's manuscript collection, including codices, autographs, and letters, consisted of about 1,407 shelfmarked items. Half of the collection is made up of manuscripts on historical subjects (55%) and the other half is made up of manuscripts on literature (28%), religion (2%), account books (2%), science (5%), art (2%), and theatre (6%). A clear marker that distinguishes Ginori Conti's codices is the *ex libris*. This consists of the family coat of arms surmounted by a princely crown and two angels above a view of Florence.²¹

The Missing Codices and the Testimony of Carlo Alberto Chiesa

The missing codices number more than two hundred. I have identified about sixty manuscripts: two codices at the State Archive in Florence (MS Acquisti e doni 359 written by Filippo di Lorenzo Benci,²² and an eighteenth-century codex, *Il priorista*, with the old shelfmark 107). The Ginori Conti Collection of the State Archive is being inventoried and is currently inaccessible; there may be further Ginori Conti manuscripts there. Other codices identified are Gregorio Dati's History of Florence, now in the Biblioteca Comunale Forteguerriana in Pistoia (Acquisti e doni 6),²³ and one codex in the Biblioteca Roncioniana in Prato (Manoscritti roncioniani, Q.II.7 (85)).²⁴ The latter is *Storia del Sacro cingolo* (title in List B); this codex belonged to the Florentine bookseller and bibliophile Leo Olschki before it was in the Ginori Conti library and after the dispersal of his collection it was sold to the Biblioteca Roncioniana by the Gonnelli auction house in 1966.²⁵ Another codex is in a private collection in Prato and five manuscripts are in the Biblioteca Moreniana of

²¹ The *ex libris* can be found in Egisto Bragaglia, *Gli ex libris italiani: Dalle origini alla fine dell'Ottocento*, 3 vols. (Milan: Bibliografica, 1993), 3: no. 2331.

²² More information about the copyist Lorenzo Benci can be found in Giuliano Tanturli, "I Benci copisti. Vicende della cultura fiorentina volgare fra Antonio Pucci e il Ficino," *Studi di Filologia Italiana* 36 (1978): 197–313. *Catalogue...9th July, 1969*, lot 37. A description of the manuscript is available on Mirabileweb: www.mirabileweb.it/manuscript/firenze-archivio-di-stato-acquisti-e-doni-359-manuscript/179211, accessed May 12, 2023.

²³ A description of the manuscript is available at Manus Online: <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/web/manus>, accessed May 12, 2023.

²⁴ See Simona Bianchi et al. eds., *Manoscritti Medievali della Toscana 2: I manoscritti medievali della provincia di Prato* (Florence: Regione Toscana, 1999), 40–41n25 and table XX; and Manus Online.

²⁵ *Libri d'occasione, alcuni rari ed incunaboli, testo di lingua del 1389, priorista fiorentino, veneziani del '700, edizioni cominiane, autografi*, December 1965–January 1966 (Florence: Gonnelli, 1965), lot 386, pp. 50–51.

Florence.²⁶ These manuscripts were all acquired via Gonnelli. A further volume is in the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in Milan.²⁷ The latter was acquired by the Library in 1925, when Ginori Conti was still alive. Six manuscripts are at the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence,²⁸ and four manuscripts are at the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.²⁹ The National Library of Florence acquired five codices of Ginori Conti's provenance from sales at Sotheby's,³⁰ Gonnelli's,³¹ and Christie's. The manuscripts bought from Christie's have the *ex libris* of Giannalisa Feltrinelli (Nuove Accessioni 1402 and 1406, both were acquired in 1997).

Many of Ginori Conti's manuscripts are no longer in Italy. One of these is the *Decameron* that belonged to Martini, which was later acquired by Ginori Conti, and then by Chiesa (now Cologny, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 38).³² Seven manuscripts are in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania: codices 446,³³ 1256,³⁴ 1439,³⁵ 1440,³⁶ 1441,³⁷ and Lawrence J. Schoenberg collection 175 and 379.³⁸ Two other Ginori

26 A description of the codex, now housed in Prato, is available on Mirabileweb. See Manus Online for descriptions of Biblioteca Moreniana Acquisti Diversi 278–81; Acquisti Diversi 284. These are recorded in list D.

27 Manz.B.XXXIII.16; see Manus Online.

28 Ricc. 4006 (with Walter Sneyd's *ex libris*); Ricc. 4011; Ricc. 4099; Ricc. 4102; Ricc. 4103 (this codex bears the *ex libris* of Landau-Finaly); Ricc. 4129. These manuscripts were sold by the antiquarian bookseller Renzo Rizzi between 1968 and 1977. The last one was sold by Gonnelli in 1981, see Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Catalogo delle Nuove Accessioni, Manoscritti Nuove Accessioni, MS, sec. XX.

29 BMLF, Acquisti e doni 655, 717, 830, and 831. The first manuscript was sold by Gonnelli in 1965, see BMLF, Catalogo Sala Studio 91.1, *Inventario dei codici Laurenziani 'Acquisti e doni'*, MS, sec. XX, fol. 59r–v; the second codex was acquired at the Libreria Fortuna in 1978, and Acquisti e doni 830 and 831 were sold by the Ginori heirs in Florence in 1987, see BMLF, Catalogo Sala Studio 91.2, *Inventario di codici Laurenziani 'Acquisti e doni'*, MS, sec. XX, fol. 5r and fols. 45r–47r.

30 This is Lorenzo Ghiberti's accounts book, dated 1441 (see above). It is now Nuove Accessioni 1181.

31 Nuove Accessioni 1339 and 1338.

32 See Vittore Branca, *Tradizione delle opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, 2 vols. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 1991), 2:94–95.

33 The codex was sold by Davis & Orioli (London) in 1965 for £90. A description of the codex can be found on the website of University of Pennsylvania Libraries: <https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/>, accessed May 12, 2023. I would like to thank Mitch Fraas for his assistance.

34 The manuscript was purchased in 1966, but unfortunately no vendor record was preserved.

35 The codex was sold by Renzo Rizzi (Milan) in 1963 for 80,000 Lire.

36 The manuscript was sold in 1963 probably by Rizzi.

37 This codex is composed of seventeen volumes. They were purchased from Rizzi in 1963 for \$3,000.

38 The owners of the first codex were Piero Ginori Conti, Robert B. Honeyman (San Juan Capistrano), John D. Stanitz (Cleveland), and Lawrence J. Schoenberg. The second codex was acquired by Lawrence J. Schoenberg at Sotheby's on May 19, 2000. The owner donated this codex to University of Pennsylvania Libraries in 2012. Descriptions of all the books in Philadelphia are available on the University of Pennsylvania Libraries' website.

codices now abroad are the correspondence of Carlo Clusius, housed in the University of Leiden Library, and the letters between Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Caccini that are at the Pierpont Morgan Library, which were sold by Chiesa.³⁹

To date, most of the manuscripts identified were sold through auction houses. However, the family itself was also involved in directly selling the codices and old printed books such as the manuscripts *Acquisti e Doni 830* and *Acquisti e Doni 831* of the Biblioteca Laurenziana that were sold by the heirs in 1987. One of the earliest periods of the dispersal of the collection was recorded by Chiesa, one of the most important antiquarian booksellers of the twentieth century.⁴⁰ Chiesa states that he was the first person to be able to choose what to buy from the Ginori Conti collection.⁴¹ The antiquarian bookseller describes Ginori Conti as the greatest Italian collector between the two wars. Chiesa's account also allows us to imagine what Conti's library looked like physically: its furnishings, the arrangement of books, and the shelving. Chiesa describes a room full of shelves, where books, manuscripts, letters, and documents were placed in three rows. The antiquarian bookseller wrote that during the two hours he spent in that house, from four to six in the afternoon, he ran from shelf to shelf among the unsorted books and documents, as if he were hunting a prey. Thanks to Chiesa's book, we know that he acquired a letter by Bartolomeo Ammannati; three manuscripts of the *Sfera* by Gregorio Dati; a manuscript of the Buondelmonti family; a letter by Vincenzo Borghini; and three Dante manuscripts. This list also includes the manuscript of the *Decameron*, the Clusius correspondence, and the Vasari correspondence, which are also now abroad.

The Scholar and the Ghost-Writers

Ginori Conti published several studies about the manuscripts in his possession. In 1938, for example, he published the previously unpublished letters of Clusius, a prominent sixteenth-century botanist, to Matteo Caccini.⁴² After Ginori's death, these documents were acquired by Chiesa. Ginori also wrote about the correspondence of Vasari and Vincenzo Borghini.⁴³ Other examples of Ginori Conti's publications are *Rime antiche secondo la lezione di un testo a penna del sec. XIV della raccolta del principe Piero Ginori Conti*

³⁹ The letters are described on the PML website in the Corsair Online Catalogue (MA 2477.1–67).

⁴⁰ Carlo Alberto Chiesa, *“Un mestiere semplice.” Ricordi di un libraio antiquario* (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2016), 52–55.

⁴¹ Information about the ancient books belonging to Ginori Conti and sold by Chiesa can be found in Cristina Dondi, *Printed Books of Hours from Fifteenth-Century Italy: The Texts, the Books, and the Survival of a Long-Lasting Genre* (Florence: Olschki, 2016), 159–61.

⁴² Piero Ginori Conti, ed., *Lettere inedite di Charles de l'Écluse (Carolus Clusius) a Matteo Caccini, floricultore fiorentino. Contributo alla storia della botanica* (Florence: Olschki, 1939).

⁴³ Piero Ginori Conti, ed., *L'apparato per le nozze di Francesco de' Medici e di Giovanna d'Austria nelle narrazioni del tempo e da lettere inedite di Vincenzo Borghini e di Giorgio Vasari* (Florence: Olschki, 1936).

(Florence: Fondazione Ginori Conti, 1940); *I fioretti dei traditori di Manetto Ciaccheri*;⁴⁴ *La vita del beato Ieronimo Savonarola*;⁴⁵ *Un antifonario miniato della scuola bolognese* (Florence: Fondazione Ginori Conti, 1940); and *Carte Cambi da Querceto, sec. XV-XVI* (Florence: Fondazione Ginori Conti, 1939).

Other scholars also wrote on the texts collected by Ginori Conti, including Roberto Ridolfi, son of Maria Luisa Ginori Conti, Piero's sister. Thanks to these studies, I can add to my list another missing Ginori Conti codex.⁴⁶ A further example is the study of Giuseppe Gentili which explored three previously unpublished nautical charts written between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁴⁷

Ginori Conti's reputation as a scholar is, however, undermined by the contents of the National Library of Florence, Ginori Conti 24, which contains documents and sixteen parchment leaves concerning Pietro di Dante Alighieri. Teresa de Robertis identified a note dated "Vallombrosa 2 settembre, 1938" (Vallombrosa, September 2, 1938) initialled "P. G. C." and the subscription "Lavori in corso del prof. Piattoli p(er) me" (Professor Piattoli's works in progress for me).⁴⁸ Professor Renato Piattoli probably applied his skills as a palaeographer and codicologist to identify interesting pieces to increase the Ginori Conti collection. Moreover, as de Robertis recognized, four studies published under Conti's name were written by Piattoli.⁴⁹ Piattoli was not the only "ghost-writer"

44 Manetto Ciaccheri, *I Fioretti dei traditori*, ed. Piero Ginori Conti (Florence: Fondazione Ginori Conti, 1940). The registration of this bibliographic record found in the Olschki publishing house's paper file is followed by the annotation: "Trascrizione dei sonetti del popolano rimatore fiorentino vissuto a cavaliere del Tre e Quattrocento, scarsamente noti e studiati. Il Codice Ginori Conti da cui è stratta questa trascrizione è il più antico che porti il testo completo di questo interessante ternario" ("Transcription of the sonnets of the Florentine commoner who lived at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which are scarcely known and studied. The Codex Ginori Conti from which this transcription is excerpted is the earliest to bear the complete text of this interesting ternary").

45 Piero Ginori Conti, ed., *La vita del beato Ieronimo Savonarola. Scritta da un anonimo del sec. XVI e già attribuita a fra Pacifico Burlamacchi. Pubblicata secondo il codice ginoriano* (Florence: Olschki, 1937).

46 For example, Roberto Ridolfi, "Lorenzo Poggio e le sue sconosciute Istorie," *La Bibliofilia* 65 (1963): 188–94. Ridolfi mentions a manuscript of Lorenzo Poggio consisting of 132 fols. for sale at the Gonnelli auction house in 1963: *Codici, manoscritti e autografi, libri vari e di cultura, alcune edizioni gotiche*, October 15, 1963 (Florence: Libreria Antiquaria L. Gonnelli & Figli, 1963), lot 336, p. 42. On Ridolfi, see Mauro Moretti, "Ridolfi, Roberto," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 94 vols. (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960–), 87:475–78.

47 Giuseppe Gentili, *Di alcune carte nautiche dei secoli XV–XVII conservate a Firenze nella Biblioteca del Principe Piero Ginori Conti* (Florence: Mariano Ricci, 1936).

48 See Dante Alighieri, *Le Opere, vol. 7: Opere di dubbia attribuzione e altri documenti danteschi*, ed. Teresa de Robertis et al. (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2016), xxxvii.

49 These were: Renato Piattoli, *Le magone della verna del ferro di Pisa e Pietrasanta sotto la gestione di Pietro dei Medici e Comp., 1489–1492* (Florence: Fondazione Ginori Conti, 1939); Piero Ginori Conti, "Il codice dei commenti alla Commedia Poggiali Vernon, oggi Ginori Conti," *Studi danteschi* 23 (1938): 99–105; Renato Piattoli, *Vita e opere di Pietro di Dante Alighieri: Con documenti inediti* (Florence: Fondazione Ginori Conti, 1939); and Renato Piattoli, *Rime antiche, secondo la lezione di un testo a penna del sec. 14. della raccolta del principe Ginori Conti* (Florence: Fondazione Ginori Conti, 1940).

for Ginori Conti. The names of two other scholars are documented in the Olschki publishing house's card catalogue preserved today at the Regione Toscana headquarters in via Farini in Florence. That archive contains fifteen records of books published under the name of Piero Ginori Conti. However, some of these records have annotations revealing that the real author of the works was not Ginori Conti. The entry for Ginori Conti, Piero, *Il vetro per ottica in Italia e l'istituto del boro-silicio in Firenze* (Florence: Tipocalcografia classica, stampa 1938) is annotated "L'autore ha pagato il libro ma non l'ha scritto" (The author paid for the book but did not write it). On another card, the cataloguer, while writing the bibliographical record, denies Ginori's authorship as follows: "Ginori Conti, Piero (ma non è lui l'autore), *Un libro di ricordi e di spese di Lorenzo e Vittorio Ghiberti*. Firenze, 1939." Again, "Ginori Conti, Piero. *Bibliografia delle opere di Savonarola*. Vol. I. *Cronologia e bibliografia delle prediche. Con contributi storici e filologici di Roberto Ridolfi*. Firenze, Olschki, 1939" is followed by the annotation in red: "L'autore è Ridolfi; G. C. non ci ha messo che i soldi" ("The author is Ridolfi; G. C. only put in the money"). On the entry for "Ginori Conti, P. *La Basilica di S. Lorenzo di Firenze e la famiglia Ginori*. Firenze, 1940" we find: "Il vero autore di quest'opera è Umberto Dorini" ("The real author of this work is the archivist Umberto Dorini"). Another card contains the same title and in this case there is a particularly incisive annotation. The writer, "L. M.," expresses her disapproval of the count's actions.⁵⁰ She affirms that Ginori signs works written by other scholars to whom he gives in return the crumbs of his immense wealth:

Il principe Ginori Conti poneva il suo nome sopra libri e pubblicazioni scritti da altri che pagava con le briciole del suo immenso patrimonio. Egli si arrogava con ciò il diritto di mistificare la posterità. Tanta è la potenza del denaro e, spesso, la vanagloria dei ricchi!

Prince Ginori Conti placed his name on books and publications written by others that he paid for with the crumbs of his immense fortune. He thereby arrogated to himself the right to mystify posterity. Such is the power of money and, often, the vainglory of the rich!

50 Thanks to the suggestion of Teresa de Robertis and David Speranzi these initials can be attributed to the name of Luciana Mosiici.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this research, the aim was to reconstruct Ginori Conti's manuscript collection which was lost during the Second World War. The task has turned out to be more challenging than anticipated. Consulting the Gonnelli's catalogues, for example, we periodically find manuscripts with a Ginori Conti provenance, which are not documented in the archival lists. Of lot 132 in the auction catalogue of 1968, for example, we read: "(Firenze). *Stemmi e scritte sepolcrali di S. Maria Maggiore, S. Ambrogio, S. Niccolò soprarno, S. Jacopo tra i fossi e S. Spirito di Firenze.*" This codex has the Ginori Conti's *ex libris* but it is not in the lists B, C or D with the other missing manuscripts.⁵¹ As we have seen, other manuscripts of Ginori Conti provenance appeared in many other auction catalogues: for example, in the catalogues of the bookseller Rizzi in the 1960s and 1970s, in the catalogues of Davis & Orioli in the 1960s; and in Christie's and Sotheby's catalogues in the 1990s.

This demonstrates how manuscripts, as well as printed books, with Ginori Conti's provenance were purchased by public institutions and private individuals around the world.⁵² The latter often resold their purchases, and books with Ginori Conti's *ex libris* continue to appear on the antiquarian market. Many grey areas remain in this affair, for example, not all the manuscripts that I have identified are present in the inventory drawn up by Franchi, including the manuscripts sold by the Ginori Conti heirs to the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana. The heirs probably sold other unlisted manuscripts, and these are very difficult to locate. Many booksellers were involved in the sale of the manuscripts, including Olschki, Martini, Hoepli, De Marinis, and Chiesa, but also Renzo Rizzi, Libreria Fortuna, and Davis & Orioli. Yet, the various steps that took the books from the Ginori Conti library to local and foreign collections are not always clear. It would also be interesting to investigate how these manuscripts reached Ginori Conti's house. Some manuscripts identified have *ex libris* from possessors prior to Ginori Conti, such as the Poggiali-Vernon codex or the *Storia del sacro cingolo* now in Prato. Finally, were Piatoli, Dorini, and Ridolfi the only "ghost-writers" in the service of Ginori? Did they only have the role of writing in the count's stead or were they also the book's agents? This research was intended to provide many answers, but at this moment it ends with many more questions.

51 *Recenti acquisti e varia. Traduzioni italiane del Cinquecento*, March–April, 1968 (Florence: Libreria L. Gonnelli & Figli), lot 132. In the same auction catalogue lot 420 was another Ginori codex: Cavalca Domenico, *Trattato di pazienza*. This manuscript contains the *ex libris* of Ginori Conti and Walter Sneyd, whose library was sold at Sotheby's in London in 1903. In *Trenta manoscritti e cento opere a stampa* (Florence: Libreria L. Gonnelli & Figli, Spring 1974), lot 10, p. 6, we find David Pietro's *Ricordi di prigionia sull'Amba di Magdala dal 1856 al 1868* accompanied by a printed book with the Ginori Conti *ex libris*: Osio Egidio, *La spedizione inglese in Abissinia: Giornale di viaggio* (Rome: Perino, 1884). Gonnelli probably received the manuscript and the book from the same seller.

52 An epistle by Francesco Petrarca bought by E. P. Goldschmidt & Co. in 1933 and sold to Piero Ginori Conti, for example, was recently spotted by Laura Cleaver in New York, Grolier Club, E. P. Goldschmidt & Co. Stock Book 5.