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*A Papal Gift.  
From Girolamo Aliotti to Pope Pius II Piccolomini,  
via Vespasiano da Bisticci*

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**1. Aliotti, the Pope and the Humanistic Patronage between Arezzo and Rome**

**I**n 2018, a deluxe presentation manuscript once owned by Pope Pius II Piccolomini (1405-1464) suddenly emerged through the antiquarian book trade.<sup>1</sup> This precious volume, finely illuminated with Pius II's papal coat of arms (Fig. 1 and 2), contains the text of the *Gratulatio ad Pium II pro foelici, ac secundo ex Mantuana peregrinatione reditu* by the Aretine humanist and, as of 1446, prior of the Benedictine monastery of St. Flora and St. Lucilla, Girolamo Aliotti (1412-1480).<sup>2</sup> In addition to this laudatory text,

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\* Margherita Palumbo wrote paragraphs 1 and 2; Fabrizio Govi wrote paragraphs 3 and 4. The essay further develops the book description already published on «Philobiblon. Italian Books», I, 2019 (<<https://www.prphbooks.com/italian-books-1>>, last access: 1.12.2021).

<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is now in a private collection in New York.

<sup>2</sup> On the figure of Girolamo Aliotti see the biography appended to *HIERONYMI ALIOTTI Arretini ordinis sancti Benedicti SS. Florae et Lucillae Epistolae et Opuscula Gabrielis Mariae Scarmalii notis et observationibus illustrata*, Arretii, typis Michaelis Bellotti impressoris episcopalis, 1769, 4°, vol. 1, pp. XIII-XXX, mainly edited by Gabriele Maria Scarmagli, prior of St. Flora and St. Lucilla from 1750 to 1757, and subsequently by Scarmagli's successor Paolo Redi (hereafter: *Hieronymi Aliotti Epistolae et Opuscula*). More recently, cf. ALDO ONORATO, *Gli amici aretini di Giovanni Tortelli*, Messina, Centro interdipartimentale di Studi umanistici, 2010, pp. 3-60; ELISA TINELLI, *Introduzione a GIROLAMO ALIOTTI, De optimo genere degende vite*, Napoli, La Scuola di Pitagora editrice, 2016, pp. 7-108; and of course the ponderous volume by CECILE CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine en humaniste. Girolamo Aliotti (1412-1480)*, Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2018 (hereafter: CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*). In both the text and the final *Index des noms de personnes et de lieux*, Caby inexplicably refers to Scarmagli as Giovanni Maria, rather than Gabriele Maria, as he is generally known in the literature. See LUCA CERIOTTI, *Contributo alla cronologia abbaziale dei monasteri cassinesi (1419-1810)*, Parma, Tipografie Riunite Donati, 2019, p. 227, «Gabriele Maria Scarmagli da Lucignano», in the list of the abbots of the monastery of St. Flora and St. Lucilla. On this Benedictine monastery cf. MARIO SALMI, *Ricerche intorno alla Badia di ss. Flora e Lucilla d'Arezzo*, «L'Arte», XV, 1912, pp. 281-292; MARIA TERESA BARTOLI, *La Badia delle SS. Flora e Lucilla in Arezzo*, «Studi e documenti di

the manuscript also contains two more works by Aliotti, the *Dialogus de optimo vitae genere deligendo* and the *De monachis erudiendis*, both of which were composed in the 1430s and originally dedicated to other prominent patrons.

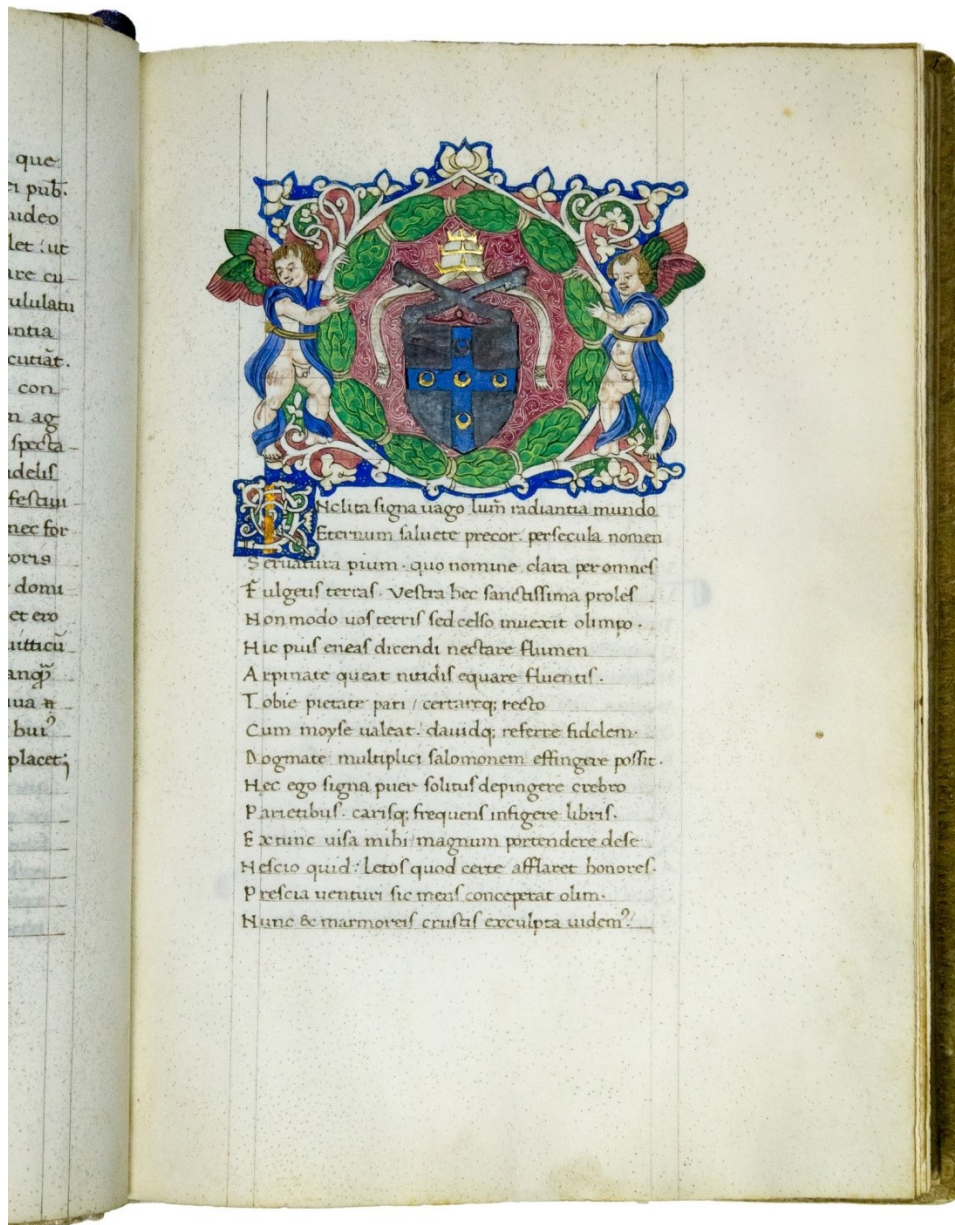


Fig. 1. G. ALIOTTI, verses in praise of Pope Pius II Piccolomini, fol. 2/8r.  
New York, private collection.

architettura», VI, 1976, pp. 27-35; ANNA PINCELLI, *Monasteri e conventi del territorio aretino*, Firenze, Alinea Editrice, 2000, pp. 51-55, MAURO MUSSOLINI, *Architettura ad Arezzo nel XV secolo*, in *Arezzo nel Medioevo*, a cura di Giovanni Cherubini et al., Roma, Bretschneider, 2012, pp. 271-281.

Aliotti had always zealously promoted himself and his relatives: the manuscript we present here offers striking evidence of his industriousness in this regard, demonstrating the different strategies he employed in an effort to attain a higher social status, as well as the particular use and re-use of his writings in order to win new and ever more effective patronage. The Prior of St. Flora and St. Lucilla was able to build a wide network of mutual recommendations and favours not only within – as Carlo Ginzburg states – the «clan of Aretine humanists»,<sup>3</sup> but also in Rome as well as in other Italian cities, as evinced by a voluminous manuscript of his correspondence held at the Biblioteca Città d'Arezzo.<sup>4</sup> Among his numerous correspondents the names of Ambrogio Traversari, Poggio Bracciolini, Giovanni Tortelli, and Leonardo Bruni particularly stand out.

Aliotti had become acquainted with the Siennese humanist, and future pope, Enea Silvio Piccolomini in the early years of their common training at the *Gymnasium* in Siena.<sup>5</sup> Piccolomini counts among the most interesting and multifaceted figures of the Italian Renaissance; he was a diplomat as well as a prolific writer, having also composed love poetry and prose, and in 1442 was crowned poet laureate by Emperor Frederick III. He was elected pope on 19 August 1458 and took the name of Pius II, a reference to 'pious Aeneas', the hero of Virgil's epic.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. CARLO GINZBURG, *Indagini su Piero. Il Battesimo, il ciclo di Arezzo, la Flagellazione di Urbino*. Nuova edizione con l'aggiunta di quattro appendici, Torino, Einaudi, 1994, p. 20 (Engl. transl. *The Enigma of Piero. Piero della Francesca*, London-New York, Verso, 2000, p. 29). Besides Aliotti himself, there were Carlo Marsuppini, Giovanni Tortelli, and Giovanni Bacci. Cf. also ROBERT BLACK, *Humanism and Education in Renaissance Arezzo*, «I Tatti Studies. Essays in the Renaissance», II, 1987, pp.171-237, esp. pp. 206-219; ID., *Benedetto Accolti. A Portrait*, in ID., *Studies in Renaissance Humanism and Politics. Florence and Arezzo*, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, 2012, vol. IV, pp. 1-22; PAOLO VITI, *Arezzo tra Firenze e Roma. Lo sviluppo della cultura umanistica*, in *Arezzo nel Medioevo*, cit., pp. 261-269.

<sup>4</sup> Arezzo, Biblioteca città di Arezzo, ms. 400. For a description of the content of this manuscript, which was once preserved at the Abbey of St. Flora and St. Lucilla (see the ownership inscription on fol. 3r, «Iste liber est manasterii Sanctarum Flore et Lucille de Aretio»), and which also includes the texts of numerous works by Aliotti, cf. *I manoscritti medievali della Biblioteca Città di Arezzo*, a cura di Giovanna Lazzi et al., Firenze, Regione Toscana; SISMELE Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2003, p. 69, n. 65; *Catalogo di manoscritti filosofici nelle biblioteche italiane*, vol. 10, Firenze, Olschki, 2003, pp. 67-68, n. 36; CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, pp. 86-92. I am grateful to the staff of the aforementioned Library for allowing me to consult the original manuscript in December 2018. The ms. 400 represents the main source used by Scarmagli for the edition *Hieronymi Aliotti Epistolae et Opuscula*. For a punctual survey of Aliotti's correspondence, his epistolary practices, and the limits of Scarmagli's expurgated edition, cf. CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, pp. 85-198.

<sup>5</sup> On Aliotti's studies and his relationship to the Piccolomini circle see CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, pp. 164-171. Cabby stresses Aliotti's construction of the motif «de la mémoire de l'âge d'or des études communes», which justifies «en effet l'activation, relativement tardive, de ce motif et du réseau qu'il supporte, en lien étroit avec l'accession au pontificat d'Eneas Silvio Piccolomini» (ivi, p. 165).

Soon after Piccolomini's election to the pontifical throne, Aliotti composed the laudatory *Oratio ad Pium II Pont. Max. pro Florentino populo* – in order to demonstrate the Tuscan fidelity to the new pope – and then sent it to him, though it failed to have much effect.<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of 1460, he learned that Pius II, returning from Mantua to Rome, intended to sojourn in his hometown of Siena. Aliotti did not let the occasion go to waste, and – possibly through the intercession of one of his patrons, Cardinal Juan de Torquemada (1388-1468) – managed to obtain an invitation to the *aula pontificalis* from the new Roman pontiff. Aliotti decided to commission a gift for the Pope in the form of a luxurious manuscript containing the expressly written *Gratulatio ad Pium II pro foelici, ac secundo ex Mantuana peregrinatione reditu*, along with – as revealed by the newly discovered manuscript – two other works, the *Dialogus de optimo vitae genere deligendo* and the well-known *De monachis erudiendis*.

As attested by Gabriele Maria Scarmagli's manuscript *Synopsis Monumentorum SS. Florae et Lucillae*, no expense was spared in preparing the volume for its illustrious recipient. From his maternal uncle – the wealthy wool merchant Paolo di Nanni Spadari – Aliotti had received the sum of 70 florins to finance his travel to Siena and for the production of a codex fit for a pope.<sup>7</sup> The copying of the texts and illumination were commissioned to none other than the Florentine *cartolaio* or bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421/22-1498), an established and internationally renowned figure in the production of illuminated manuscripts who counted among his clients kings, popes, cardinals, and bishops, in addition to a number of eminent and affluent scholars throughout Europe, and is known to have employed the most refined artists to satisfy his high-profile clientele.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The text of Aliotti's *Oratio ad Pium II Pont. Max. pro Florentino populo* is contained in the ms. 400 of the Biblioteca Città di Arezzo (fols. 292v-294r); an edited version is included in *Hieronimi Aliotti Epistolae et Opuscula*, cit., vol. 2, pp. 317-322. On Aliotti's reasons for writing this oration, see CABY, *Autoportrait d'une moine*, p. 420.

<sup>7</sup> GABRIELE MARIA SCARMAGLI, *Monasterij S.S. V.V. Florae et Lucillae Synopsis Monumentorum Ex ejusdem Archivo deprompta*, Arezzo, Archivio Diocesano e Capitolare, (without shelfmark; hereafter: SCARMAGLI, *Synopsis*), p. 943, «1460. [...] Si fece dare fiorini 70. da Paolo di Nanni degli Spadari quando andò a uisitare il Papa che stette un mese in camino, e comprò due caualcature, e pagò il Libro, che donò al Papa». The entries in the *Synopsis* concerning the commission and production of the manuscript are based on Aliotti's account books, particularly on 'libro 62', as indicated by Scarmagli himself at the end of his notes regarding the expenses for those months, *ibid.*, «Lib. 62. f. 2. 142. 147. 148. 158. ad 162. 180. 181. 212. ad 216. 237. ad 242.». The Book 62 of Aliotti's account records is now lost. See on this point CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, p. 417, note 153. I am grateful to the Director of the Archivio Diocesano e Capitolare, Arezzo, for allowing me to consult Scarmagli's manuscript in December 2018.

<sup>8</sup> On Vespasiano da Bisticci, refer above all to the seminal works by ALBINIA C. DE LA MARE, especially *New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence*, in *Miniatura fiorentina del Rinascimento 1440-1525. Un primo censimento*, a cura di Annarosa Garzelli, Firenze, Giunta

As transcribed by Scarmagli, Aliotti's account book – now lost – reports a sum previously paid on 2 January 1460 to Vespasiano «per [...] la scrittura d'un libro».<sup>9</sup> Further, «Il dì 20. di Marzo l'Ab.<sup>e</sup> fece nota delle spese fatte nel uaggio a Siena et a Firenze quando fece scrivere il dialogo al Papa, e per la miniatura in mandar a Firenze – 5».<sup>10</sup> i.e. for the copying and illumination of the *Dialogue* commissioned as a gift to Pope Pius II: precisely this newly discovered manuscript, which scholars had believed to be no longer extant.<sup>11</sup>

The manuscript is a total work of art: the parchment employed is of the highest quality; a single and yet unknown scribe copied the texts in an elegant and accurate humanistic script; the page layouts are spacious and light; and the fine white vine-scroll initials opening each text, as well as Piccolomini's illuminated coats of arms, are executed with exquisite taste, likewise befitting the prestige of the recipient. The decision to entrust Vespasiano da Bisticci with the production of a codex intended for the pope was certainly not accidental. Aliotti highly esteemed the pre-eminent bookseller,<sup>12</sup> and Pope Piccolomini himself possessed manuscripts that had been copied and illuminated for him in Vespasiano's workshop.<sup>13</sup>

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Regionale Toscana, 1985, vol. 1, pp. 393-600; *Vespasiano da Bisticci e i copisti fiorentini di Federico*, in *Federico di Montefeltro. Lo stato, Le arti. La cultura*, a cura di Giorgio Cerboni Boiardi et al., Roma, Bulzoni, 1986, vol. 2, pp. 81-96; *Vespasiano da Bisticci as Producer of Classical Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, in CLAUDINE A. CHAVANNE-MAZEL, MARGARET. M. SMITH *Medieval Manuscripts of the Latin Classics. Production and Use. Proceedings of the Seminar in the History of the Book to 1500*, Los Altos Hills, CA, Anderson-Lovelace; London, The Red Gull Press, 1996, pp. 167-207. See also GIUSEPPE M. CAGNI B., *Vespasiano da Bisticci e il suo epistolario*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969, pp. 11-114.

<sup>9</sup> SCARMAGLI, *Synopsis*, p. 943, «il dì 2. Gen.º 1460. à nat. L'Ab.<sup>e</sup> per Mr Gio: Roselli mando a Vespasiano [...] per pagar la scrittura d'un Libro». On the Aretine lawyer Giovanni di Antonio Roselli cf. CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>10</sup> SCARMAGLI, *Synopsis*, p. 943. The price notice given by Scarmagli is of course of the greatest importance, as it can be compared with analogous data reporting the cost of manuscript materials, writing, and illumination. See for example A. C. DE LA MARE, *New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence*, cit., pp. 408-412; ANNA MELOGRANI, *Manuscript Materials: Cost and the Market for Parchment in Renaissance Italy*, in *Trade in Artist's Materials. Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700*, edited by Jo Kirby, Susie Nash, Joanna Cannon, London, Archetype Publications, 2010, pp. 199-219.

<sup>11</sup> Caby assumes the existence of this manuscript exclusively on the basis of information given by SCARMAGLI in the *Synopsis*, which she summarizes in her *Autoportrait d'un moine*, pp. 416-417, adding «je n'ai retrouvé aucune trace [of the manuscript]» (p. 416).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Aliotti's letter of 1446 to Francesco Coppini, *Hieronymi Aliotti Epistolae et Opuscula*, cit., vol. 1, p. 196 (and CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, p. 597), regarding a manuscript of Pliny's *De naturali historia* he wanted to borrow, «opus sane longissimum, et multorum dierum opera conficiendum, modo tu exemplaria invenire possis, quae certe sunt apud Cosmum [Cosimo de' Medici]. Ceterum nescio an apud aliquem alium habeantur Florentie. Tu isti sciscitator a librariis publicis et a Vespasiano nostro, qui est optimus huius rei explorator». Aliotti's letter is also quoted by A. C. DE LA MARE, *New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence*, cit., p. 401, «In 1446, when Vespasiano was little more than

The illumination of the new discovered manuscript can confidently be attributed to the renowned Florentine artist Filippo di Matteo Torelli (1408/10-1468), as suggested by the similar decorative elements and nuance in colour handling and composition.<sup>14</sup> A pupil of Michele di Giovanni Guarducci, Filippo di Matteo Torelli is considered a *maestro* of border decoration, and deeply influenced Florentine artists of the next generation, above all Francesco di Antonio del Chierico, and Ricciardo di Nanni.<sup>15</sup> This attribution is based on a comparison with a group of manuscripts produced by Vespasiano in 1458-1464 for the Medici. Among others, the *Ab urbe condita* by Livy, realized in 1458 for Piero de' Medici,<sup>16</sup> and the *De civitate Dei* by Augustine, produced on commission for Pietro's brother Giovanni.<sup>17</sup> These manuscripts are decorated with

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twenty-five years old, Girolamo Aliotti [...] already referred to him as "the best person to investigate such matters"».

<sup>13</sup> On this issue, cf. A. C. DE LA MARE, *New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence*, cit., p. 404 «Pope Pius II (1458-1464) owned at least one Florentine manuscript, in addition to the many that he acquired or commissioned in Rome». See also FRANCESCA CORSI MASI, *Su alcuni codici miniati a Firenze per Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, in *Il codice miniato in Europa. Libri per la chiesa, per la città, per la corte*, a cura di Giordana Mariani Canova, Alessandra Perricoli, Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2014, pp. 461-474.

<sup>14</sup> On Filippo di Matteo Torelli, see MIRELLA LEVI D'ANCONA, *Miniatura e miniatori a Firenze dal XIV al XVI secolo. Documenti per la storia della miniatura*, con una premessa di Mario Salmi, Firenze, Olschki, 1962, pp. 99-107; FRANCIS AMES-LEWIS, *The Library and Manuscripts of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici*, New York-London, Garland, 1984, pp. 167-173; ANNAROSA GARZELLI, *Le immagini, gli autori, i destinatari*, in EAD., *Miniatura fiorentina del Rinascimento 1440-1525*, cit., vol. 1, pp. 33-36; DIEGO GALIZZI, *Torelli, Filippo di Matteo*, in *Dizionario biografico dei miniatori italiani*, a cura di Milvia Bollati, Milano, Edizioni Sylvestre Bonnard, 2004, pp. 956-958.

<sup>15</sup> Filippo di Matteo Torelli was also active for the Opera del Duomo in Florence as well as the Dominican closter of San Marco See for example the four choir books realized for the Opera del Duomo, in partnership with Zanobi Strozzi (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Edili 148-151); cf. ANGELA DILLON BUSSI, *La miniatura quattrocentesca per il Duomo di Firenze. Prime indagini e alcune novità*, in *I libri del Duomo di Firenze. Codici liturgici e Biblioteca di Santa Maria del Fiore (secoli XI-XVI)*, Lorenzo Fabbri, Marica Tacconi, Firenze, Centro Di, 1997, pp. 79-96.

<sup>16</sup> Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 63.10-12. Cf. Vespasiano's letter to Piero de' Medici, Florence, 23 June 1458, in G. M. CAGNI, *Vespasiano da Bisticci e il suo epistolario*, cit. no. 18, pp. 141-142, «Il Prinio [sic] e lla Decha sono di tutto finiti in buona forma, in modo credo che vi piaceranno sommamente. [...] Mandate uno chon qualche panno da involgergli che non si guastino. Meser Piero Strozi ha finite l'abreviationi e holle date a Pippo <che> le mini, e subito si legheranno». See F. AMES-LEWIS, *The Library and Manuscripts of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici*, cit., pp. 109-112, 283; A. GARZELLI, *Le immagini, gli autori, i destinatari*, cit., p. 34; A. C. DE LA MARE, *New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence*, cit., pp. 427-428, 570.

<sup>17</sup> Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 12.19 The manuscript is dated to 1460/63, and was copied by Piero di Benedetto Strozzi. See F. AMES-LEWIS, *The Library and Manuscripts of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici*, cit., pp. 233-234; A. GARZELLI, *Le immagini, gli autori, i destinatari*, cit., p. 34; A. C. DE LA MARE, *New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence*, cit., p. 530, no. 11; the entry by ANGELA DILLON BUSSI, in *Manoscritti e incunaboli*

elaborate white vine, or *bianchi girari* borders, inhabited by winged putti called 'putti eroici', which are practically signature Filippo di Matteo Torelli.<sup>18</sup> Striking similarities are also noted with the opening page of the ms. Harley 2731 of the British Library, which once belonged to Pius II and contains an abridgment of Livy's *Ab urbe condita*.<sup>19</sup> This manuscript was likewise produced in Vespasiano's workshop, with the copying of Livy's text being attributed by de la Mare to the scribe 'Sinibaldus C'.<sup>20</sup> The opening page of the London codex is framed by a three-sided white vine border with winged putti and various animals; at the bottom of the page, the papal arms are surrounded by a laurel wreath held by two winged putti, which are identical – in style, features, and colouring – to those holding the papal crest on fol. 2/8r of the newly discovered manuscript (Fig. 1).

Scarmagli reports that on 5 February 1460 Aliotti travelled to Florence to collect the manuscript he had commissioned. He then travelled to Siena, riding the horse he had purchased with his uncle's money and, to enhance his prestige, with a chaplain and two monks in tow.<sup>21</sup> We do not know precisely on which day Aliotti may have finally been able to meet Pius II at the *aula pontificalis* to offer him his precious manuscript gift, since Scarmagli based his report on account books, stating only that Aliotti went

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*di testi patristici da Francesco Petrarca al primo Cinquecento*, a cura di Sebastiano Gentile, Firenze, Rose, 1997, no. 83, pp. 328-329. Filippo illuminated further manuscripts for the Medici family; see for example the Latin translation of the *Praeparatio evangelica* by Eusebius of Caesarea, decorated in 1462 for Giovanni de' Medici, and also kept in the Biblioteca Laurenziana (Plut. 17.25; cf. the entry by A. DILLON BUSSI, in *Manoscritti e incunaboli di testi patristici*, cit., no. 62, pp. 275-278).

<sup>18</sup> On the 'putto eroico', a motif introduced by Filippo di Matteo Torelli from 1447 onwards, cf. A. GARZELLI, *Le immagini, gli autori, i destinatari*, cit., p. 33, «Le novità morfologiche sono costituite da una rarefazione del mondo vegetale, da una maggiore simmetria delle componenti, da un infittirsi della popolazione dei Putti di cui è interessante osservare la struttura, quasi un assemblaggio di zone muscolari, come per blocchi, ad esempio nella saldatura dei ventrali [...] converge su questa 'scultura' il complesso di connotazioni proprie del nudo virile eroico, ostentato quasi umoristicamente». See also F- AMES-LEWIS, *The Library and Manuscripts of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici*, cit., pp. 169-170, «The putti in the border of the Livy, *Dec. IV*, fol. 1r, are plump and heavily-built, but convincingly rendered in three dimensions with the use of fairly heavy modelling [...] Their faces are well characterized; they have solid heads with thin, upturned noses and deep-set eyes».

<sup>19</sup> London, British Library, ms. Harl. 2731.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. C. DE LA MARE, *New Research on Humanistic Scribes in Florence*, p. 537, no. 9. Vespasiano also prepared for Piccolomini a manuscript containing Cicero's *Orationes*, copied by Piero di Benedetto Strozzi (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 231; cf. *ibid.*, p. 531, no. 39).

<sup>21</sup> SCARMAGLI, *Synopsis*, p. 943, «Il dì 5. Feb.º andò a Firenze, e poi a Siena, ove condusse il Capellano, due Cherici, e due caualcature».

to Siena on 21 April and returned to Arezzo on 6 May, spending a total of 16 florins on his *familiari* and two horses.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. A Complex Strategy: Literary Re-Use and Political Propaganda

The manuscript opens with the *Gratulatio ad Pium II pro foelici, ac secundo ex Mantuana peregrinatione reditu*, written in the form of a fictional dialogue between the pope's nephew Guidantonio Piccolomini and Aliotti himself.

The conversation concerns an especially pertinent topic at the time, and one of Pius II's highest priorities, i.e. the crusade against the Ottoman Turks, who had conquered Constantinople in 1453. As is generally known, in 1459 Pius II had called a council in Mantua for discussing his project with the representatives of European states, an initiative strongly supported by Cardinal Torquemada. The assembly opened in Mantua on 1 June 1459 and the pope proceeded to hold various orations on the potential benefits of a war against the Turkish Sultan, Mehmed II. His efforts failed, however, and the Council closed in January 1460 without apparent issues. Disappointed, Pius II left for Siena, in the company of the loyal Torquemada. It is therefore not coincidental that the *Gratulatio* contains an unbounded defense of the planned crusade against the Turks, and ends with a 78-verse poem (Fig. 1) in praise of Piccolomini and his plea for Christian unity.<sup>23</sup> Until the discovery, in 2018, of this earliest version of Aliotti's *Gratulatio*, the text was known by a miscellaneous codex dating to 5 February 1461 and preserved in the National Library of Florence,<sup>24</sup> as well as by the collection later assembled by Aliotti himself, now kept at the Biblioteca Città d'Arezzo.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, «Il dì 21. Ap.<sup>le</sup> l'Ab.<sup>e</sup> andò a Siena e torno il dì 6. di Maggio, e spese fiorini 16 per se e tre famigli, e due caualcature». Cf. also the information included in Aliotti's letter to an unidentified disciple of Lorenzo Valla ('Cuidam Laurentii Vallae discipulo'), Arezzo, 16 May 1460, *Hieronymi Aliotti Epistolae et Opuscula*, cit., vol. 1, p. 413, «Senis te primum vidi in aula Pontificali [...]». On Pius II's stay in Siena between February and April 1460, cf. SERGE STOLF, *Les Lettres et la Tiare. E. S. Piccolomini, un humaniste au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2012, pp. 347-348, and 355-361.

<sup>23</sup> See below, paragraph 3. The literature on Pius II's plan for a crusade against the Ottoman Turks and the Council in Mantua is vast; particularly worthy of mention in relation to the present study is LUCA D'ASCIA, *Il Corano e la tiara. L'Epistola a Maometto II di Enea Silvio Piccolomini (papa Pio II)*, Bologna, Pendragon, 2001; MARCO PELLEGRINI, *Pio II, il collegio cardinalizio e la dieta di Mantova*, in *Il sogno di Pio II e il viaggio da Roma a Mantova*, Atti del convegno internazionale, Mantova 13-15 aprile 2000, a cura di Arturo Calzona et al., Firenze, Olschki, 2003, pp. 15-76; JOHANNES HELMRATH, *Pius II. und die Türken*, in ID., *Wege des Humanismus. Studien und Diffusion der Antikeleidenschaft im 15. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2013, pp. 279-342.

<sup>24</sup> Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, cod. Magl. XXI.151, fols. 25r-45r. See CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, p. 37, note 112.

<sup>25</sup> Arezzo, Biblioteca Città di Arezzo, ms. 400, fols. 124v-132v, edited in *Hieronymi Aliotti Epistolae et Opuscula*, cit., vol. 2, pp. 323-345. On the content of the *Gratulatio*, cf. ELISA TINELLI, *Pio II e la dieta di Mantova nella Gratulatio pro felici ac secundo reditu di Girolamo*



Aliotti's intent to flatter is clear, and the other two texts included in the present manuscript – the *Dialogus de optimo vitae genere deligendo* and the *De monachis erudiendis* – are likewise part of his strategy to ingratiate himself with Pope Piccolomini and gain the latter's patronage. Both works had been composed during the 1430s, and addressed by Aliotti to other patrons in order to win their favour. Aliotti regarded his literary production as a «monnaie d'échanges de faveurs»:<sup>26</sup> in 1460, each work was now introduced by four dedicatory verses to Pius II written on the verso of the preceding leaves.<sup>27</sup>

The *Dialogus de optimo vitae genere deligendo* is the first humanistic work composed by Aliotti. The text was written in 1437 and originally dedicated to his patron, the Bishop of Split and future Archbishop of Florence Bartolomeo Zabarella (d. 1445). Only one manuscript of the original version, containing the dedication to Zabarella, is recorded, included in a miscellaneous codex held at the Casanatense Library in Rome.<sup>28</sup> The renewed version addressed to Pius II – introduced by the verse dedication «Ad maximum pontificem Pium secundum versiculi ante dialogum hunc de optimo vite genere deligendo» – was, until now, attested by two manuscripts, preserved at the Biblioteca Città d'Arezzo<sup>29</sup> and the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, respectively.<sup>30</sup> In both cases, the text

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Aliotti, in *Roma, Napoli e altri viaggi per Mauro de Nichilo*, a cura di Davide Canfora e Claudia Corfati, Bari, Cacucci, 2017, pp. 409-418; CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, pp. 412-416. Of course, neither Tinelli nor Caby could refer to the present codex, which emerged only in 2018.

<sup>26</sup> CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, p. 298.

<sup>27</sup> See below, paragraph 3.

<sup>28</sup> Roma, Biblioteca Casanatense, ms. 4053, fols. 1r-32r. On the text of the *Dialogus de optimo vitae genere deligendo* as testified in this codex (and introduced by the slightly different title *De optimo genere degende vite*) see ELISA TINELLI, *Il 'De optimo vitae genere deligendo' di Girolamo Aliotti. Alcune osservazioni*, «Archivum mentis», II, 2013, pp. 127-150. Tinelli considers the ms. 4053 of the Casanatense Library as «l'esemplare di dedica all'arcivescovo di Spalato: un testimone, dunque, presumibilmente affidabile e di pregio, cronologicamente vicino all'originale poichè certamente confezionato tra il 18 ottobre 1439, data dell'epistola a Leonardo Bruni riprodotta in calce al testo del *De optimo vite genere*, e il 18 dicembre 1439, data della promozione di Zabarella al seggio vescovile fiorentino» (ivi, p. 134).

<sup>29</sup> Arezzo, Biblioteca Città di Arezzo, ms. 459, fols. 1r-25r. In this manuscript, the initial dedication to Pope Pius II is expressed in a rather different form from that copied in the newly discovered manuscript. Further, in the ms. 459, the dedication is immediately followed by four verses; by contrast, in the new manuscript, these four verses are transcribed on the verso of the leaf preceding the beginning of the text. On the ms. 459 see also *I cancellieri aretini della Repubblica di Firenze*, a cura di Roberto Cardini e Paolo Viti, Firenze, Edizioni Polistampa, Firenze, Edizioni Polistampa, 2003, no. 30 (description by Maria Chiara Flori); *I manoscritti medievali della Biblioteca Città di Arezzo*, cit., n. 87.

<sup>30</sup> Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Marc.lat.XIC.180 (4467); cf. CÉCILE CABY, *Réseaux sociaux, pratiques culturelles et genres discursifs: à propos du dialogue 'De optimo vitae*

presents some textual variants as compared to the newly discovered manuscript.

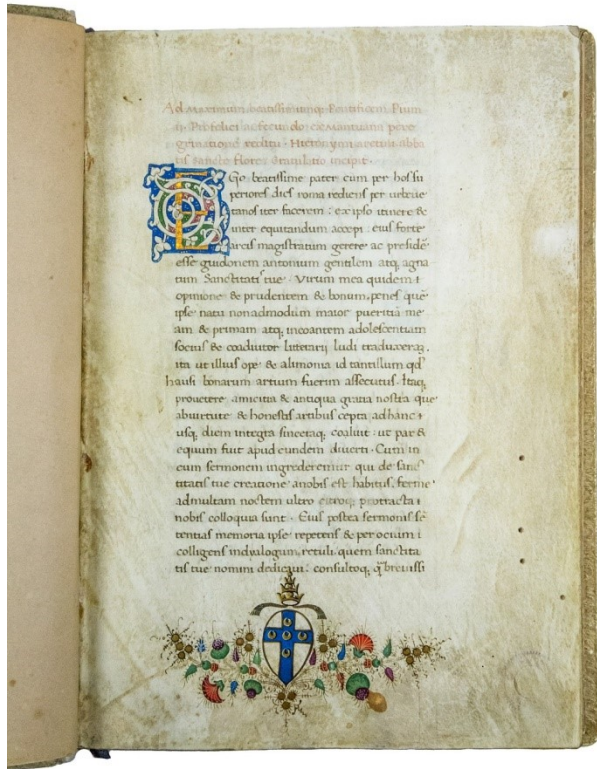


Fig. 2. G. ALIOTTI, *Gratulatio ad Pium II pro felici ac secundo ex Mantuana peregrinatione reditu*, opening page.  
New York, private collection.

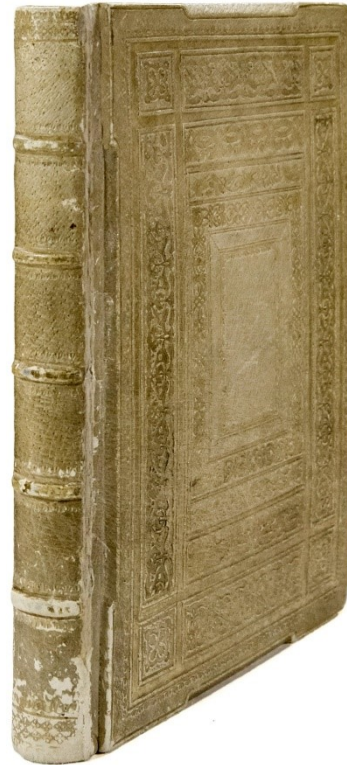


Fig. 3. Binding.  
New York, private collection.

The third and more lengthy text included in the present manuscript is one of the most famous works by Aliotti, the dialogue *De monachis erudiendis*, composed around 1439.<sup>31</sup> Divided into two books, the work is a manifesto for a reform of monastic life, remediating the decline of monasteries encouraging studies. Aliotti had already presented this text to a pope in 1445: in fact, the Vatican Library preserves Aliotti's presentation manuscript for Eugene IV,<sup>32</sup> offered as a gift for receiving ecclesiastical benefices, and consequently obtaining greater social stature. The Vatican

*genere'*, in *Humanistes, clercs et laïque dans l'Italie du XIII<sup>e</sup> au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, dir. Cécile Caby et Rosa Maria Dessì, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012, pp. 405-482.

<sup>31</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the *De monachis erudiendis*, cf. Caby, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, pp. 265-367.

<sup>32</sup> Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat. 1063. On the Vatican manuscript see JEANNINE FOHLEN, *La bibliothèque du pape Eugène IV (1431-1447). Contributions à l'histoire du fonds Vatican latin*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008, p. 29; ANTONIO MANFREDI, "Lo misse sopra la libreria che aveva ordinata". *Note sul Tortelli bibliotecario di Niccolò V*, in *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae*, XVI, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2009, p. 213.

codex, whose decoration and script are however of minor quality, is introduced by an obsequious *epistola* to Eugene IV, which Aliotti uses again in the present manuscript, this time preceded by a short metric dedication to Pius II.<sup>33</sup> On 6 November 1445 Aliotti sent a supplication to Eugene IV requesting he be granted, as a reward, the benefice of the abbey of St. Fedele de Strumi at Poppi, near Arezzo. In 1460 he attempted to re-use the *De monachis erudiendis* to obtain a bishopric from Pius II, possibly that of Città di Castello, in the Umbria region, whose then-bishop Rodolfo was in a precarious state of health. Surely Aliotti's plan to reform monastic life, transforming monasteries into veritable humanistic academies, would be even more welcomed by Pius II, the Humanist Pope *par excellence*.

Aliotti thus revised the text, corrected various scribal errors, and partially reworked the section dealing with the study of philosophy. As a result, the text of *De monachis erudiendis* included in the present manuscript is quite different from that of the Vatican codex. The newly discovered codex is therefore not only a splendid example of Florentine humanist book production, but also of highly significant import from a textual point of view.

Unfortunately, even this second tribute to Pius II did not have the desired effect. On 8 June 1460 – just one day before the death of the Titular Archbishop Rodolfo – Aliotti personally wrote to Pope Piccolomini, reasserting their familiarity, originating from their common studies at the University of Siena, along with their shared cultural interests.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Aliotti's supplication seems to have fallen on deaf ears, and on 28 August he sent a letter to Cardinal Torquemada, enquiring as to Pius II's opinion on his manuscript.<sup>35</sup> Torquemada answered politely: the Pope had obviously appreciated Aliotti's works, but could read only a few pages of the volume, owing to his «majores et continuas occupationes».<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See below, paragraph 3.

<sup>34</sup> Aliotti to Pius II, 8 June 1460, in *Hieronimi Aliotti Epistolae et Opuscula*, vol. 1, pp. 415-417. See esp. p. 416, «Vacaturus est propediem Episcopatus Tipherni, quae Civitas nobis finitima est, nec pluribus quam XX. millibus passuum dispartate. Ad eum Episcopatum per Sanctitatem vestram promoveri cupio cum servatione hujus Monasterii mei».

<sup>35</sup> Aliotti to Juan de Torquemada, Arezzo, 28 August 1460, *ibid.*, p. 424, «Cupio interprete atque intermedia Reverendissima Dominatione vestra explorare prudenter, caute iudicium Sanctissimi Domini nostri circa libellum meum, quem dono dedi Sanctitati suae; nam scribuntur ad me egregia quidem ab amicis, sed ego vereor, & suspectas habeo adulatorum artes».

<sup>36</sup> Juan de Torquemada to Aliotti, Siena, 31 August 1460, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 369-370, «Praeterea ut desiderio vestro morem gestum daremus, quam existimationem de libro vestro faceret, heri a Sanctissimo Domino Nostro diligenter exploravimus. Retulit enim Sanctitas Sua, pauca quaedam se in eo legisse, propter quae de toto libro optime concepit, quem laudat, & affirmat sibi placuisse, licet propter majores & continuas occupationes Sanctitas Sua eum totum videre nequiverit, quem nescio cui Episcopo interea videndum commisit». On Aliotti's epistolary exchange with Torquemada about the *Gratulatio*, see also CABY, *Autoportrait d'un moine*, pp. 417-418.

Aliotti would have remained prior of the St. Flora and St. Lucilla monastery until his death in 1480, while the luxurious and expensive manuscript commissioned to Vespasiano da Bisticci remained among the shelves of the large private library Pius II had amassed. In fact, the present manuscript never even entered the Vatican Library, and was inherited – along with the greater part of the pope’s library – by his nephews Andrea, Antonio, Giacomo, and Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini. Pius II’s books were later dispersed, and manuscripts bearing his papal coat of arms are presently scattered across various European and American libraries.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. *Physical Description of the Manuscript and its Decoration Project*

Aliotti’s illuminated manuscript is on parchment and measures 253x181 mm. It consists of 14 quires and comprises II + 139 + II leaves (collation: 1-13<sup>10</sup>, 14<sup>9-10</sup>). It is unfoliated and complete but for the final blank leaf which is lacking. The fols. 2/10r, 14/8v, and 14/9r-v are blank. The catchwords are written in the middle centre of the last page of each quire except quires 2 and 4. The text block measures 164x90 mm, is in one column and comprises 28 lines. The first capital letter of each sub-chapter is set out. Ruled in brown ink, the text is written in brown ink by a unique hand in formal humanist script. Headings and names of interlocutors are provided in pale red ink.

The illumination includes on fol. 1/1r the papal coat of arms of Pius II Piccolomini<sup>38</sup> (55x109 mm) presented in shield in the *bas-de-page*, in blue and gold embellished with floriated extensions in red, green, purple, and gold, and on fol. 2/8r a large miniature (112x78 mm) bearing at the centre

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<sup>37</sup> On Pius II’s library and the book collection of the Piccolomini family more generally, cf. ENEA PICCOLOMINI, *De codicibus Pii II et Pii III deque Bibliotheca Ecclesiae Cathedralis Senensis*, «Bullettino senese di storia patria», VI, 1899, pp. 483-496; RINO AVESANI, *Per la biblioteca di Agostino Patrizi Piccolomini vescovo di Pienza*, in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, vol. VI, *Bibliothèque Vaticane. Première partie*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964, pp. 1-87, esp. pp. 33-37; ALFRED A. STRNAD, *Studia Piccolomineana. Vorarbeiten zu einer Geschichte der Bibliothek der Päpste Pius II und III*, in *Enea Silvio Piccolomini Papa Pio II. Atti del convegno per il quinto centenario della morte*, a cura di Domenico Maffei, Siena, 1968, pp. 295-390; MAURO LENZI, MILVIA BOLLATI, *I codici della Libreria: vicende storiche. The Codices of the Library: their Later History*, in SALVATORE SETTIS, DONATELLA TORRACA, *La Libreria Piccolomini nel Duomo di Siena*, Modena, Franco Cosimo Panini, 1998, pp. 312-320. It is quite difficult to trace the subsequent story of Aliotti’s codex newly discovered. A potential clue is offered by notices written on the pastedowns and on the pasted-in card, both of which attest to its circulation on the German market (see below, paragraph 4). This point will be discussed in depth by the author elsewhere.

<sup>38</sup> See ADRIANA MARUCCHI, *Stemmi di possessori di manoscritti conservati nella Biblioteca Vaticana*, in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, vol. VII, *Bibliothèque Vaticane. Deuxième partie*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964, pp. 71-72; LUIGI BORGIA, *L’araldica dei Piccolomini*, in *Enea Silvio Piccolomini. Pius Secundus. Atti del convegno internazionale 29 settembre-1 ottobre 2005*, a cura di Manlio Sodi e Anna Antoniutti, Roma, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 2007, pp. 183-237.

the coat of arms of Pius II in burnished silver, blue, and gold surmounted by a white and gold tiara and surrounded by a laurel crown held by two winged putti; the background is coloured in red and patterned in white, while the white-vine border and the putti are in blue, red, and green; attached to the miniature is a three-line gold and white-vine initial (18x19 mm). Furthermore, there are 5 four- to six-line gold and white-vine initials (34x31 mm) in blue, red, and green, 14 smaller gold initials (18x13 mm) variably mixing blue, red, and green for the ground with patterns in white, and 5 one-line blue paragraph marks.

The volume is bound in early twentieth-century German blind-tooled pigskin over wooden boards. It also has a spine with four raised bands, marbled flyleaves, gilt and gauffered edges (Fig. 3).

The first leaf is slightly soiled, there are four small round wormholes in the blank outer margin of the first leaves reducing to one and then disappearing, a few marginal stains, and an old repair to the lower blank margin of fol. 14/3, but all in all a very well-preserved manuscript.

The text is arranged as follows:

- fols. 1/1r-2/7v: G. ALIOTTI, *Ad Maximum beatissimumque Pontificem Pium II. Pro felici ac secundo ex Mantuana peregrinatione reditu* (G. ALIOTTI, *Epistolae et opuscula*, vol. 2, pp. 323-345). Inc. «Ego beatissime pater cum per hos superiores dies Roma rediens»; Expl. «meae gratulationis cantus adoriar sic placet»;

- 78-verse poem follows on fols. 1/8r-2/9v (inc. «Inclita signa uago lumen radiantia mundo»);

- fols. 2/10v-4/10r: G. ALIOTTI, *Dialogus de optimo vite genere deligendo* (C. CABY, *Réseaux sociaux, pratiques culturelles et genres discursifs: à propos du dialogue 'De optimo vitae genere'*, pp. 461-482). Inc. «Nuper apud foianum agri aretini opidum»; Expl. «Hiero. Vale o cimber! Mar. valete & reliqui. Finis»;

- fols. 4/10v-14/8r: G. ALIOTTI, *De monachis erudiendis* (G. ALIOTTI, *Epistolae et opuscula*, vol. 2, pp. 176-292). Inc. «Plerosque nostrorum temporum religiosos»; Expl. «beatissimi martiris donati inscriptum nomini atque constructum. Finis».

#### 4. Provenance

The manuscript, produced in the workshop of Vespasiano da Bisticci, was given by the author to Pope Pius II in Siena in the Spring of 1460. Dispersed for centuries like the rest of Piccolomini's library, it has re-emerged in Germany at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> or beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The binding dates to that period and region, as probably the small round stamp on the opening page (fol. 1/1r; the stamp is repeated on fol. 14/8r), which reads «Dr. Adolph [...]horn», and by a pasted envelope on the first flyleaf verso that houses half a card from the Frankfurt publisher and bookseller Moritz Diesterweg (1834-1906) bearing pencilled notes («Pius II Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini in humanistischen Minuskel

geschrieben, sehr gut erhalten»), as well as a thick, folded piece of paper with several pencilled notes on both sides (side A: «Hieronymi Aretini monachis eruditus gehört Papst Pius II 1440. Dedications-exempl. Manuscript auf Pergament in humanistischen Minuskel 2 Teile nebst Einleitung u. Widmung am Papst Eugen IV (Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini) mit 19 blauen Initialen, 2 Bordüre auf 1 Blatt, 1 schönes Kopfstich mit Papstwappen in 4 Farben»; side B: Mk 900 «Widmung an Papst in Hexameter in einem gepresste neueren Holzband. Vollständiges als das Exemplar in der Libreria Vaticana segnato [sic] del num. 1063 139 Blatt. Aretino Girolamo Abate di Santa Flora Allen Maggs - Breslauer, R. - H. Rosenthal L. Bibl. Vatic. Hiesermann»). Diesterweg began his career as a bookseller in Berlin, Leipzig, and Vienna.<sup>39</sup> In 1859 he started working in Frankfurt at Hermann'sche Buchhandlung, which he took over in 1860. At the same time, he devoted himself to his recently founded publishing house, Moritz Diesterweg Verlag, and quickly gained renown for its academic editions. After the early death of his youngest son Emil Diesterweg (d. 1905), who was also his successor at the publishing house, the two men's widows sold the company to long-time employee and bookseller Erich Herbst, who continued to run it in the spirit of its founder. In 1995, the publishing house was sold to the Holtzbrinck Group by Dietrich Herbst, one of Erich's grandsons. Today it belongs to the Braunschweig-based Westermann publishing group.

The whereabouts of the manuscript from the early 1900s to its reappearance in 2018 in the antiquarian book market are not known.




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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *100 Jahre Verlag Moritz Diesterweg*, «Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel», LI, 1960, pp. 1111-1112; PATRICIA STAHL, *Diesterweg, Moritz*. Artikel aus der *Frankfurter Biographie* (1994/96) in: *Frankfurter Personenlexikon* (Onlineausgabe), <<https://frankfurter-personenlexikon.de/node/2015>>, last access: 15.12.2021.