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# Matteo Palmieri's City of life: The original idea of three opportunities for salvation

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**Abstract:** The Anglo-Saxon world has always devoted special attention to the Florentine humanist Matteo Palmieri (1406-1475). The *Città di vita* (The City of Life) represents the last, great creative effort of Palmieri, the moment when he was, to quote Marsilius Ficinus, a *theological poet*. Palmieri was aware of the heterodoxy of his poem and did not circulate it widely to avoid accusations of heresy. He, therefore, left the final reviewed copy (the *Laurenziano* manuscript) to the Proconsul of the Art of Judges and Notaries. This paper provides a brief summary of the *City of life*, a discussion of its sources (notably Origen), and an outline of Palmieri's theological outlook, before presenting new findings based on the recently published Modena manuscript. This manuscript offers a unique chance to further investigate Palmieri's theological outlook with the original idea of three opportunities for salvation. In addition, the Modena manuscript provides new elements to be analyzed considering that the three circulating manuscripts (*Magliabechiano*, *Ambrosiano*, and *Barberiniano Latino*) never mention Dati's commentary. There are reasons to think that the Modena manuscript circulated in Florence after Palmieri's death and therefore this is an additional relevant piece in the fascinating, yet still hazy-edged mosaic that is the knowledge and the history of the tercet poem by Matteo Palmieri.

**Keywords:** Italian Studies, Renaissance Studies, Italian Literature, Renaissance Humanism, Renaissance Florence, Renaissance Philosophy, Renaissance Literature, Origen

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## 1. The *City of Life*: A Journey to the Afterworld

The figure and work of Matteo Palmieri (1406-1475) [1] has received considerable attention among Anglo-American scholars such as Paul Oskar Kristeller [2], Hans Baron [3], George M. Carretto [4], Richard J. Palermino [5], and Margaret Rooke [6]. Scholars have highlighted Palmieri's dedication to public life, which made him a crucial figure under the Medici's rule, and which was also constantly reflected in his written production. His works, such as the well-known *On Civic Life (Della vita civile)*, were indeed a direct response to the political climate and historical circumstances of Florence at the time. Among Palmieri's writings the *City of Life (Città di vita)* deserves a special mention, as it was his last great creative moment and the one which earned him the definition of 'theological poet' by Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) [7].

Palmieri supposedly conceived the *City of Life* after dreaming on two separate occasions of Cipriano Rucellai, his erstwhile classmate at the school of Carlo Marsuppini (1399-1453) [8]. In his dreams, Matteo had begged Cipriano to tell him how the soul descends from the Elysian Fields to Earth, and how it is variously affected by the planets and the material elements constituting the body [9]. Cipriano explained that a good angel and an evil angel escort the souls throughout their pilgrimage. Matteo then asked: 'What do you want me to do?', and Cipriano answered: 'Sing what I have told you, as Dante did in the form of tercets'. When Matteo tried to object, Cipriano cut short, saying: 'Just begin, and God will lead you to a successful conclusion' [10].

Palmieri's work is not alone in its genre. Narratives of visions are not particularly uncommon, and although the *Città di vita* is not merely a pedantic imitation of Dante's *Comedy*, the latter was unquestionably a powerful model. Not only had Palmieri concluded his earlier work, *On Civic Life*, with Dante's vision at Campaldino; deeper similarities

between the *City of Life* and Dante's poem are also easy to find. In both cases, for instance, a friend and schoolfellow plays a prominent role; furthermore, in both cases a kind of knowledge that is restricted to those who have done great deeds is disclosed by divine will.

As for Matteo's choice of writing in the vernacular, it can be traced back to the cultural climate of the years 1460-1470, when a literary production charged with political agendas develops around the Medici (first Cosimo and then Lorenzo). By way of example we could mention Cristoforo Landino (1424-1498), who chose to dedicate an entire academic course to Petrarch's vernacular works between 1467 and 1470; Luigi Pulci (1432-1484); and Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494).

As Dante's *Commedia*, Palmieri's *City of Life* is a narrative of the poet's journey to the afterworld, made with the purpose of reminding all men of the dangers and delights they are bound to experience after their death, depending on how they choose to behave on Earth. Palmieri moves from the Origenian assumption that the Angels, who once upon a time were all gathered around God, subsequently split into three groups. The first group remained loyal to God; the second group chose to follow Lucifer; the third group remained undecided, and was allowed a second chance by God. Such second chance was human life on Earth.

Again as Dante's *Commedia*, Palmieri's poem is divided into three parts, the first and the second comprised of thirty-three chapters each, whereas the last part contains thirty-four chapters. In his journey, Matteo is accompanied by the Cumaean Sibyl. In the first chapter, the latter promises to be the poet's guide; she then sets about explaining the essence of God and of the world, and tells the story of creation. In the Beginning, God created the Angels. Some rebelled against him and followed Lucifer, who settled in the North. Another group, among whom was Michael, remained loyal to God, whereas a third group kept neutral. After defeating Lucifer and (literally) sending him to Hell, God kept Michael and his followers close to himself, whereas He sent the neutral spirits to the Elysium, which Palmieri places in the firmament, beyond the planets, in accordance to the Ptolemaic system. The neutral angels (those who did not take a stand on the occasion of Lucifer's rebellion) wait in the sky of the fixed stars until their moment comes to descend into earthly bodies. Indeed, God decreed that the neutral spirits would descend to Earth and animate human bodies, so that He could verify what use they would make of their free will.

The Sibyl explains to Matteo that before being put to the test of bodily existence the souls must travel for a year, starting with the winter solstice. After leaving the Empyrean Heaven through the door of Cancer, the souls travel through each of the seven planetary spheres where they are exposed to several influences, all of which are described in the poem (I shall return to this in a moment). Afterwards they reach the region of the elements, which constitute the body and give shape to man. Overall, the Spirits make ten stops throughout their descent from the Elysium to Earth: seven stops in the planetary region (one for each sphere), and three in the

elementary region. Although all the souls make the same journey, by the end of it they will all be different from each other, as each soul freely picks the qualities that she finds most appealing from the range of influences exercised by the seven planets. Jupiter, for instance, bestows power, Mars military valour, Mercury shrewdness, Saturn prudence, and Venus beauty and courtesy [11]. Finally, before arriving on Earth the souls must cross the Lethe River, which causes them to forget everything they saw during their journey. Then each soul is joined with a body and assumes a human form. This is the end of the first book, dedicated to explaining the descent of souls into bodies.

In book Two, the souls, which are now joined to bodies, take the left path under the leadership of Cacogenius, the evil angel, and move into the darkness of the longest night of the year, that of the winter solstice. Matteo and the Sybil, too, stumble across Cacogenius, who guides them throughout the eighteen infernal levels, the dwelling place of sinful souls. They first encounter those who were not able to resist the passions of the senses and the goods of fortune, then descend further to reach those who were overcome by rage, envy, sloth, and hypocrisy. The lowest levels—which are the farthest from God as well as the innermost—are reserved for those who, according to Palmieri, committed the gravest of sins: clairvoyants, heretics, and idolaters. Looking up from there, Matteo sees a staircase, on top of which dwell the blessed souls; this marks the end of book Two.

Book Three opens with a description of how Matteo and the Sybil encounter Calogenius, the good Angel, who promises the two pilgrims to escort them for the rest of the journey. A beautiful sunshine pours on them: it is the longest day of the year, that of the summer solstice, and the souls who have taken the right path progress towards the final destination of their pilgrimage, Paradise, passing through the remaining twelve stages.

After a conversation about the highest Good, Calogenius, Matteo, and the Sybil reach the Hill of virtues, which is divided into three levels. The first level is that of the civil virtues: this is the dwelling place of the ancient philosophers, as well as of Solon, Pericles, and Lycurgus, all of whom are not allowed to climb any higher because they never knew faith. The second level is that of the purgative virtues, the place where those souls who lacked virtue in their earthly existence can purify themselves. Subsequently, Matteo and the Sybil reach the level where the true virtues reside. The summit is occupied by the blessed souls of those who were able to combine virtue and love of God in their earthly life: among them are John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, the latter sitting next to her Son, who is adored by the angels. The poet's journey ends with a description of the Heavenly Father, surrounded by a choir of angels and accompanied by His Son, who spreads love among all created things.

Palmieri's *City of Life*, just as Dante's *Commedia*, is rich in allegorical images: the poet often refers to groups of unidentified people, who generically represent a vice or a virtue. However, he does mention the names of some great figures of the classical world. These notably include lawyers,

jurists, and lawgivers: among the Greeks, Draco, Lysias, Lycurgus, Aristides, Charondas, Demosthenes, and Aeschines; among the Latins, Numa Pompilius, the Decemviri, Cato the Censor and his nephew Cato the Younger, Hortensius, Scaevola, Sulpicius, Laelius, Cicero, Aemilius Paulus, Marcus Antonius Orator, Ulpian, and, seen at a distance, Quintilianus followed by Justinian, the 'great compiler' (*grande abbreviator*) [12]. Among all the ancients, Plato takes pride of place by virtue of Matteo's Neoplatonic approach to faith. This stands in stark contrast to Dante's poem, where Plato is famously located in the *limbo*.

## 2. Palmieri's Theological Outlook

The *City of Life* is a fruitful blending of Christian theology and themes more akin to the philosophy of Plato, Pythagoras, and Origen [13]. In his poem, Palmieri confronts a crucial issue of medieval theology, namely the conciliation of astral influence with free will, and suggests his own solution. Already in *On Civic Life*, demonstrating the existence and the critical importance of man's free will had been among Palmieri's chief concerns. *On Civic Life* described the process of becoming a citizen as an uninterrupted series of choices: indeed, life itself is tantamount to making choices, and the noblest choice of all is to become a great citizen, fulfilling one's true nature and putting the Good of the many before the Good of the few. During his life on earth, man must endure a continuous trial: he must fight against fate and his peers to achieve fame. Similarly, in the *City of Life* Origen's idea of an absolute freedom of the will is presented as the highest value in human existence.

To be sure, there is at least one crucial difference between the *City of Life* and *On Civic Life*: while in the former the focus is on man as a single individual, the latter explores the two sides of human life—individual and communal—in tight connection. However, in both works the idea of a trial that man must endure on Earth is closely related with the dimension of active life. The perspective of the reward also varies greatly between the two works. In *On Civic Life*, the greatest praise goes to rulers and, more in general, to those who work for the common Good. In the *City of Life*, the place closest to God is reserved to the Blessed. Two figures particularly stand out: John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary. Both attained holiness not by removing themselves from the world, nor by choosing contemplative life over active life, but by welcoming the Messiah and by operating in His name. John, a great leader of masses, tirelessly spread the message of Christ's coming [14], and managed to put many a man on the path to Truth through his 'good examples' (*buoni esempi*). He is thus better than others insofar as he actually made the path to Christ more accessible. Yet Matteo places Mary before and above John, as she, as a woman, made the choice of becoming the Mother of God [15]. The entire journey described in the *City of Life* therefore challenges the reader to choose freely between the path that leads to Paradise and the one that leads to eternal damnation.

Virgil's *Aeneid* is another crucial source of the *City of Life*.

Indeed, the first chapter of Palmieri's poem echoes the epic of Aeneas in several ways, for instance through the appropriation of figures such as the Sybil, Charon, and Tantalus [16]. Other Latin authors who figure prominently among Palmieri's sources are Seneca [17], Persius [18], Ovid [19], Statius [20], and his beloved Cicero, whose name Palmieri associates to Plato's *Republic* and of whom he praises the political realism [21].

Palmieri's debt to the Greek tradition is more complex to assess. His attitude towards Pythagoras is particularly intriguing. The pre-Socratic philosopher is explicitly mentioned in the first book with regard to the significance of the number 40 (which symbolizes human life) [22], within the context of a larger discussion on the *habitus* that souls receive when they are free from bodies. Additionally, book Two seems to contain other echoes of Pythagorean doctrines, as when it mentions the choice between the path that 'leads to Heaven' (*mena in cielo*), and 'the other path that leads to Hell' (*et l'altra ad lo inferno*), or where it refers to the concept of a third and eternal death [23].

However, while at first glance we might be tempted to think that the *City of Life* propounds a doctrine of reincarnation akin to that of Pythagoras, it must be pointed out that Palmieri does not regard the descent of the soul into a body as a punishment, nor does he conceive of the body as a prison; furthermore he never envisages the possibility for a human soul to inhabit non-human bodies. Additionally, Palmieri does not share Pythagoras' belief in a series of infinite rebirths in different bodies: in fact, it is stated in the *City of Life* that the neutral angels received permission from God to live but three times—an idea which Palmieri owes neither to Pythagoras nor to Origen. Finally, the author of the *City of Life* does not believe, as Pythagoras allegedly did, that in the aftermath of bodily death the souls descend to the underworld to receive reward or punishment before being assigned a new body according to their deeds. According to Palmieri, if the souls are not yet resolved to take the path of salvation after their first life on Earth, they may choose to wait for the next two 'turns', wandering through the various levels of the Elysian fields and thereby receiving various influences, among which they freely choose which to follow according to their own nature. Then, when the time to reincarnate has come, they cross the river Lethe and forget about their past experiences.

In the light of this, I think there is no solid basis for accusing Palmieri of Pythagoreanism. Without a doubt, Matteo presents Pythagoras as a wise man, as well as an example and a symbol of moral integrity. However, he seems to have incorporated but very few aspects of the Pythagorean tradition into his own theory of the condition of souls before and after their choice—a theory which is for the most part original. As in *On Civic Life*, Palmieri picks from his sources only what agrees with his own thought. This is also the case with the author who was most frequently associated with the *City of Life* by its very first readers, namely Plato. 'Greatest of all philosophers' (*sommo di tutti i filosofi*), Plato is quoted repeatedly in Palmieri's works. The humanist's

admiration for the *Republic* is obvious, though not uncritical: indeed, Palmieri departs from Plato in several respects. For instance, Plato deems it possible to become truly excellent citizens, whereas Palmieri seems to believe that such a goal cannot be attained, as he speaks of the 'ideal, imaginary goodness of citizens who have never been seen on Earth' (*immaginata bontà de' non mai veduti in terra cittadini*) [24]. Therefore, it must be emphasized that Matteo freely forms and puts forward his personal opinions on all matters. He does, however, share the Platonic idea that in order to do a better service to the State, one must follow two rules: first, to act for the sake of the common good and not for that of a single person; second, to strive to keep the State united in all of its parts [25].

In other cases, Palmieri remains faithful to Christian orthodoxy, as when he ties the idea of Grace to that of faith. God, in His infinite love, bestows His Grace upon those who listen to Him, and it is up to these latter to answer the call: if they choose the Creator, they shall live eternally, but if they choose the Evil, their suffering will be everlasting. The idea that faith leads to the enjoyment of an eternal life is completely in line with the Christian tradition. However, Palmieri complicates this idea by adding that the souls can enjoy a life separate from the body and acquire knowledge while they await the time to descend into bodies: now, such a view clearly appears to be Platonic rather than Christian.

Palmieri proves to be profoundly influenced by those 'alternative' strands of the Christian tradition that had come to fore in the fifteenth century, and particularly by the writings of the Greek fathers, among which he had read Justin's *Apologies*, the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and the works of Origen. From Justin, Matteo had taken the idea that the ancient philosophers were justified by virtue of their participation in the Truth. Since the very beginning of the world, Justin writes, God has allowed the *Logos* to illuminate every man, and this explains why thinkers of all times, including those who lived before the Revelation, have been able to propound true doctrines, though only in a partial and imperfect form. Justin's works had circulated in Florence at least since the beginning of the fifteenth century. Two manuscripts of his works notably appear in the 1418 inventory of the Medici's library [26]. Scholars agree that the knowledge and diffusion of the Greek Fathers was due primarily to the tireless work of Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439), who both actively searched for and translated their writings [27]. Among the works that stand in direct relation to the *City of Life*, Traversari translated and contributed to the circulation of Pseudo-Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy* and of Origen's *Homilies on the Canticle of Canticles*, as well as of his thirty-nine *Homilies on St Luke* [28]. Other works of Origen, such as the *Homilies on Ezekiel* and the first part of his *Commentary on St John*, can be found in the San Marco collection at the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, mostly formed by Niccolò Niccoli's book collection [29]. Finally, other works of Origen that would have been easily accessible to Palmieri were those belonging to the so-called

'Latin Origen' (the corpus of Origenian writings already translated into Latin by the time that Palmieri was composing his poem): among these, the evidence coming from the *City of Life* points to the fact that Matteo was probably familiar with the *Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles* [30].

Palmieri's knowledge of the Greek Fathers was also based on a diligent reading of St Jerome's epistle CXXIV *Ad Avitum*, which circulated widely throughout the Middle Ages. This letter provides valuable, though biased insights into Origen's doctrines, especially those formulated in the *De Principiis*. One of the most original aspects of Origen's thought is his anthropology. According to Origen, all spirits were created equal by God. Nevertheless, all human beings are different from each other and have each their own destiny. Where, then, does such diversity come from? Jerome notes that, according to Origen, all creatures originally enjoyed true beatitude, at the time when they were close to God. Then, free will pushed man to depart from his Creator, and God established that in order to regain his lost beatitude man would have to undergo an earthly trial: each spirit would have to choose between Good and Evil by his own free will, counting on as many chances as may be necessary for a complete reconciliation with God. Incidentally, this explains why Origen asserts the existence of an infinite series of worlds. Based on the choice he makes, each spirit will reach a different place: if he chooses the Good, he will dwell in the Heavens in the form of an angel; if he chooses the Evil, he will have to undergo yet more trials on Earth. It should be noted here that Origen's outlook differs from the Greek concept of reincarnation, because with Origen human souls always reincarnate into human bodies, and their transmigration into lower forms of life is not contemplated [31].

In another one of his works, Origen further confirms this theory through his etymology of the word *psyché* (Greek for 'soul'). He argues that *psyché* stems from the word *psychrós* (Greek for 'cold'), and infers from this that the soul's descent into the body is tantamount to a decay from her original state of perfection, the one she enjoyed at the time when she was close to God and her love for the Creator had not yet grown cold [32]. The only way that man can be saved is by choosing the Good: then, and only then, will God's Grace and infinite Love come to his rescue. According to Origen, everyone (including Satan) is granted several chances, until he is thoroughly purified and able, at last, to join the invisible world. Once all men will have expiated the original sin, they will attain perfection and thus revert to their pristine condition. Christ's second descent will follow, bringing about the resurrection of all bodies, not in a material, but in a spiritual sense: God will be everything in everyone.

In all of his works, Origen insists on the voluntary nature of the act that caused the fall. All beings took part in the rebellion against God and were therefore condemned to undergo the earthly trial, except for the *Logos* or Son. Origen regards the visible world as a decayed counterpart of the intelligible world, and of the pure, rational essences that inhabit it. According to the choice they freely made, all

creatures became part of a hierarchy: those who immediately and unhesitatingly chose the Good over the Evil were placed higher—the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones occupying the highest positions of all, followed by other angels who are placed lower, thus closer to the Earth, and who are bound to bodies. On the other hand, those who chose the Evil and departed from God turned into demons and men. The specific nature of each being therefore depends on their own free choice.

While taking inspiration from Origen's doctrines, Palmieri does not accept them entirely, but he partly revises and mitigates them in an attempt to reconcile the ancient world with his own time. The outcome of this is a theory that might at first glance appear quite bizarre: as with Origen, each man is allowed not one, but several chances (that is, several subsequent incarnations) in order to take the path that leads to God. However, Palmieri departs from Origen by limiting the number of chances to three, after which the soul will head to either eternal life or eternal torment. Consequently, not everyone will attain salvation, but only those who choose the Good without yielding to the passions of the flesh. The concept of free will, which implies that of responsibility, is therefore emphasized by Palmieri even more than it was by Origen, since each soul has only three chances before her choice becomes final. Neutrality is not an option: True Beatitude or Eternal Pain are the only scenarios that Palmieri envisions. As for Satan, he shall remain secluded from God for ever more. Origen, in contrast, had clearly formulated the idea of a universal salvation in the excerpts of the *De Principiis* quoted by Jerome [33]. We can thus conclude that in this case Matteo was consciously and deliberately departing from Origen's ideas.

In other cases, however, Palmieri follows Origen more closely. One such case concerns the idea of a guardian angel that accompanies each creature throughout its life: this idea, which can be found in Origen's *Homilies on Ezekiel* and *Homilies on St Luke*, as well as in his *Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles*, is echoed by the author of the *City of Life*, who believes in the existence of both good Angels (such as Calogenius, who escorts the poet and the Sibyl through the realm of the blessed souls) and evil Angels (Cacogenius the tempter, who escorts the two pilgrims through the realm of the Damned).

On the other hand, an issue on which Palmieri takes a more ambivalent attitude to Origen concerns the resurrection of the body. Indeed, Palmieri ascribes all creatures with various degrees of corporeality depending on how close or how far they are from God. However, after the final judgment and Christ's second descent to Earth, each creature will recuperate its own body and live with it for eternity.

In conclusion, Palmieri's ability to both take inspiration and depart from his sources by reworking them critically is exactly what makes the *City of Life* so interesting from a theological point of view.

### 3. Unorthodoxy of the Poem

We must now ask ourselves what Palmieri thought himself to be doing in referring to Origen's doctrines. Was he consciously and provocatively departing from the established orthodoxy of the Church? Was he rather trying to claim the orthodoxy of non-mainstream Christian traditions which propounded peculiar views of the nature of the soul and of the angels? In this section, I shall attempt to answer this question by collecting some of the passages in which Palmieri follows Origen (though he always does so without acknowledging his source) and by verifying which authorities, if any, are invoked in support by Leonardo Dati (1408-1472), bishop of Massa Marittima and close friend of Palmieri's, who repeatedly stressed the orthodoxy of the poet's views.

Let us consider an example. At the outset of the first book, the Sibyl illustrates to Matteo the theory of the souls. The fifth chapter (which is included in the Modena manuscript: see below) is indeed almost entirely devoted to this topic. Dati begins by summarising the contents of this section, before devoting himself to a close analysis of each verse: the Sibyl, he recalls, explains that men belong to that third group of creatures who on the occasion of the rebellion followed neither Lucifer nor the Creator, and because of their irresoluteness must undergo an earthly trial [34].

Commenting upon this passage, Dati mentions that Augustine and Peter Lombard had already expressed the ideas propounded by Matteo. He also refers the reader to Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* for the idea that God had provided His creatures with an ability to discern between Good and Evil [35]. According to Palmieri, the act of creation was an act of pure love, the essence of which we cannot fully grasp. God had endowed His creatures with free will, and it is therefore 'by their own fault' (*per la sua malizia*) that the latter fell from their pristine condition [36]. That freedom truly is the essential feature of God's creatures is unanimously agreed by the entire Christian tradition; however, Dati particularly points to St Jerome, to St Paul's *Epistle to the Corinthians*, and to Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* as the chief authorities on the matter. He also adds that Justin, in his *Apologies*, had thoroughly demonstrated that events are not inexorably subject to fate [37].

These parallels may serve as proof of the fact that Matteo did not conceive of himself as departing from the orthodoxy of the Roman Church, but that he was rather trying to reconcile the thought of Origen (stripped of its most radical aspects) with the rest of the Christian tradition. The least that we can say is that Dati was restless in supporting his friend's theories by backing them up with references taken from the Bible and from Christian authors of unquestioned orthodoxy [38]. For instance, the bishop argued that St John, in his *Book of Revelation*, had been the first to speak of a dragon that would purportedly take the third part of the creatures away from Heaven. He also insisted that Plato, Dionysius, Gregory the Great, and Palmieri's own fellow citizen Dante had all expressed views not unlike those of Matteo. Dati was thus

seeking to justify the author of the *City of Life* and his potentially problematic reappraisal of Origen by positioning him within an ideal lineage inaugurated by Augustine, Gregory the Great and Peter Lombard, authors whose orthodoxy had never been called into question [39].

As I have already mentioned above, Origen justified the existence of an infinite number of worlds by its ultimate purpose, namely the universal salvation for all creatures. Palmieri does not go so far as to support such a doctrine in all its radicalism; in particular, he does not believe that Satan can be saved. However, he also refuses the traditional idea that man has been given a single chance. Death happens not one, but three times, as he stresses at the beginning of the second book, just before entering Hell:

Perdete ogni speranza voi ch'entrate  
per vostra colpa nella terza morte  
eterna pena all'anime dannate [40].

That recidivists will be punished with eternal damnation is repeated several times in the poem: in this respect, Palmieri departs strongly from Origen. Also in contrast to Origen, Matteo believes that on the Day of Judgment the material body will not be replaced by its spiritual counterpart, but after Christ's second descent to Earth every soul will be reunited to her previous body, from which she will never again be separated. Dati's commentary fully supports Matteo's interpretation on this point [41]. This is another case in which Palmieri proves eager to call traditional ideas into question and to rework them into original insights.

In his discussion of the nature of angels, Palmieri seems to follow Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Justin rather than Origen. He draws extensively from the Neoplatonic imagery that Dionysius, in turn, had received from Plato and attempted to reconcile with Christian truths [42]. In his *Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius describes the order in which the angels are arranged in the Heavens. He depicts a layered universe, on top of which we find God, whereas the angels are located at its bottom. Creatures located in the higher layers communicate God's truths to lower ones; the latter, indeed, cannot relate to God but through the intercession of the former. This hierarchical order allows the highest-ranking creatures to partake of the qualities of all the others, whereas the lower groups only partake of the qualities of those located beneath them. The exact disposition of each being has been fixed by God's decree according to its inherent worth.

This hierarchy is thus a sacred order, which reflects the beauty of God: each being receives a share of secret knowledge proportionate to its intellectual capacity and to its place within the hierarchy, and strives to imitate God to the best of its capacities. Indeed, resembling God and becoming 'God's collaborator', as the oracles say, represents the highest point of perfection for all the creatures included in this sacred hierarchy [43].

Palmieri seems to have been fully aware of the fact that such ideas were potentially problematic, even dangerous, and that circulating his text was likely to cause some havoc. In fact, the tenth chapter of the first book is entirely dedicated to

anticipating and refuting many foreseeable accusations of heresy. Already at the end of the previous chapter, after listening to the Sibyl's exposition of her theories on the soul, Matteo had asked for further explanations:

Ma fammi chiaro questo obscuro decto  
s'accordi ad quel che sancta Chiesa canta  
o non lo stimi reprobato e neglecto [44].

The chapter that follows (possibly added at a later time) sets about demonstrating that 'the above-mentioned opinion is not contrary to the Christian Church'.

That Palmieri knew quite well what havoc his poem could cause is also revealed by his verse '*Ma perché non paian miei decti strani*' ('So that my verses should not appear strange'). The *City of Life* ought not to be taken as mere poetic fiction, as it was later understood by Matteo's friends: to the contrary, the poet aims to provide a literal report of the afterlife journey of the soul. Quite understandably, he insists on relating his ideas to the unquestioned authority of St Augustine and St John. Leonardo Dati's commentary also conjures up the name of Gregory the Great, who more than anyone else had been influenced by Origen's doctrines. Although Origen is never explicitly mentioned in Palmieri's poem, his influence on the author of the *City of Life* was crystal clear and immediately became a major target of accusation when the poem came under attack.

The chief goal of the whole poem is to propound a message capable of renewing Christian faith, bringing it back to the liveliness, authenticity, and intensity of its origins. Palmieri was not attempting to subvert the foundations of Christian orthodoxy; he was rather trying to revitalize the latter by recuperating Origen's forgotten message in the light of the unquestioned authority of other Christian Fathers, many of whom—such as Jerome, Augustine, Peter Lombard and Gregory the Great—were great masters of scholarship. Therefore, the *City of Life* results from two separate, but related aims: on the one hand, to go back to the roots of proto-Christian spirituality; on the other hand, to reconcile and harmonize ancient philosophy and Christian message in accordance to the humanistic ideals that he had learned at Traversari's school. In this perspective, Palmieri's careful use of language also acquires a precise meaning.

These, I think, were Matteo's intentions when he completed the poem in 1466. By recuperating themes on which he had started to meditate in his youthful years, spent at the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli and in close connection to Traversari, he was already anticipating the two tendencies that would drive the development of Florentine culture in the last decades of the fifteenth century: on the one hand, the Platonic-Hermetic strand represented by Marsilio Ficino and the Platonic Academy; on the other hand, the effort to combine an explicit defense of Origen with an attempt to reconcile astral influence and free will—an attempt abruptly interrupted by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) [45].

One last thing before we conclude this section. In a recent and stimulating essay, Bruno Cumbo suggested a direct

connection between the *City of Life* and Michelangelo's ceiling frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. More particularly, Cumbo argues that Palmieri's poem provided Michelangelo with a 'general source of inspiration for the overall visual project, and a chief source of specific theological knowledge' [46].

#### 4. Circulation and Fortune of the Poem

As soon as Palmieri completed it in 1464, the *City of Life* began to circulate in manuscript form [47]. Many of the questions addressed by Palmieri (e.g. the freedom of the will, the relationship between grace and the supreme Good, the role of astrology) were then lively debated by the members the Platonic Academy, but concerns with the presumed heterodoxy of the poem arose right after the author's death. Indeed, the censorship to which the work was subjected proves that at some point Palmieri's thought came to be considered unorthodox and dangerous, mostly because of its debts to Origen's theological views.

Matteo himself must have seen it coming, as is proved by the fact that as soon as the poem was ready, he asked his friend Leonardo Dati to compose a commentary. Leonardo agreed to his request, but advised his friend to modify parts of the poem. While we know for a fact that Palmieri did listen to the bishop's advice, it is impossible to establish the exact contents of this revision, since no copy of the first draft of the poem has survived.

As I said above, the *City of Life* began to circulate in Florence in 1466 and was read by Marsilio Ficino, Alamanno Rinuccini (1426-1504), and probably by other members of the Platonic Academy as well. The text that circulated at this early stage, however, was to undergo yet further changes, since Palmieri kept revising and polishing his poem for a few more years, just as he had done with *On Civic Life*. The final version, accompanied by Dati's commentary and by the author's biography, was ready by 1472.

Alamanno Rinuccini, who delivered a public speech in Florence on the occasion of Palmieri's funeral, did mention the *City of Life*, but after long reflection he prudently decided to avoid any explicit praise of the work. Less than a decade after Palmieri's death, Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421-1498) referred to the allegedly heretical ideas contained in the poem and recalled Palmieri's own decision to keep the manuscript in a safe place. As far as he was concerned, Vespasiano thought that, if Matteo had committed doctrinal mistakes, he must have done so in good faith, by allowing himself an excessive degree of poetic license. However, by the turn of the century it was a common opinion that the *City of Life* was an unorthodox work, heavily indebted to Origen.

It may appear surprising that Matteo, who was a member of the Florentine apothecaries' guild (*Arte degli speziali*) would hand the manuscript of the *City of Life* containing Dati's commentary (the Laurenziano Pluteo manuscript) to the Proconsul of a different guild, that of the judges and notaries (*Arte dei giudici e notai*). In my view, the only possible explanation of this lies in the respect that this public

figure commanded. Indeed, the guild of the judges and notaries was by far the most important in Florence, and the Proconsul who chaired it was 'the first among the *Consuli* of all guilds' [48]. The Laurenziano Pluteo manuscript was an extremely precious gift that the Proconsul was given under the condition of allowing its circulation only after the author's death, as we know once again from Vespasiano da Bisticci. The only plausible reason for this request (which the Proconsul was happy to grant) was that Matteo, by then a respected man in his advanced age, did not want to stir unpleasant theological disputes, nor to endanger the reputation of his friend and bishop Leonardo Dati. Nevertheless, by entrusting the most important Proconsul in Florence with his manuscript he was already submitting himself to the judgment of posterity.

The first two Proconsuls and keepers of the manuscript had no serious concerns about the orthodoxy of the poem. The theory of the pre-existence of a soul separate from the body was dismissed as the bizarre idea of a philosopher with no solid theological preparation. For the rest, we know that the codex was displayed with pride to visitors. About a decade after Matteo's death, Domenico da Corella (1403-1483) [49], a distinguished student of Dante and Dominican friar at Santa Maria Novella who had certainly met the humanist at the Council of 1459, mentioned the fact that the manuscript of the *City of Life* adorned the Proconsul's room [50].

The Laurenziano Pluteo, which is also known to art historians for the quality of its miniature illustrations and its exquisite design [51], did not itself circulate in Florence, but abridged copies were made of it, some of which we still have today, while others, unfortunately, went lost.

The codex Magliabechiano II. II. 41 (also known as Stroziano), now located in the National Library in Florence, is fairly simple in terms of illustrations, as it merely sports decorated initials for each of the three books [52]. An annotation on one of the concluding leaves informs us of some corrections that Matteo himself had made to the text and also mentions another copy belonging to the author, which is now lost [53].

A third manuscript, also dating from the fifteenth century, is the F. 139 sup. held at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, which I believe to be the copy that Matteo had prepared for Dati. This manuscript, which has yet to be studied, includes the unabridged text of the poem as well as two letters written by a fine humanist hand: along with the letters contained in the Laurenziano Pluteo, these letters represent the most important aid for reconstituting the genetic history of the *City of Life*. At the bottom of the page, we also find two coats of arms, Palmieri's on the right and Dati's on the left [54].

Yet another manuscript is held at the Vatican Library in Rome: it is the Barberiniano Latino 4109. Just as the Ambrosiana manuscript, this witness is still awaiting further investigation, although it was already mentioned by Kristeller at the end of the 1940s [55].

## 5. The Modena Manuscript

The recently published 211 Gamma S. 5. 28 manuscript from the Fondo Campori at the Estense Library in Modena is a late fifteenth-century abridged copy of the *City of Life* which includes a summary of the poem, a selection of passages, and Leonardo Dati's Latin commentary [56]. This manuscript, which has not yet been studied, represents a hidden gem that provides significant insights into the fortune of Palmieri's poem. The codex is composed by forty-two paper leaves in-quarto; its parchment cover bears a portrait of Palmieri very similar to that of the Laurentian Pluteo [57], under which we find the following Latin inscription: *Matteus Palmerius obit salutis anno 1472* ('Matteo Palmieri died in 1472'). Fol. 2v bears a simplified reproduction of a drawing originally found in the Laurenziano Pluteo copy: a depiction, in red and green colours, of Palmieri's cosmological system. Furthermore, a loose sheet contains the following annotation in Italian:

Questo sommario della *Città di Vita* del Palmieri fu trovato da me l'anno 1815 in pessimo stato colle sopraccarte malamente rotte, delle quali facendolo rilegare conservai la prima perché contiene l'epoca della morte del Palmieri, e il di lui ritratto benché molto svanito.

Il sommario è fatto da un Proconsole dell'arte degli Speciali contemporaneo del P.[almieri], come si vede a carta 32-33 del codice, ove si danno ancora buone notizie del Poema [58].

Abbot Luigi Fiacchi (1754-1825) [59] therefore found the codex in 1815 and took care of its restoration; the terrible conditions in which the manuscript was when Fiacchi found it were perhaps a consequence of the Arno flood of 1556. The manuscript also attracted the attention of Domenico Tordi (1857-1933), who copied part of it onto what is now the G file of XIV M 168 held in Orvieto (also known as the *Fascicolo Tordi*) [60].

Fiacchi was wrong in identifying the Proconsul of the apothecaries' guild as the author of this manuscript: this was instead the work of another Proconsul, that of the guild of the judges and notaries, who had succeeded in this charge the original beneficiary of Palmieri's gift, and whose name remains unknown. The author of the summary, who, by his own admission, had had the chance to work at length on the Laurenziano Pluteo manuscript, expresses regret for Matteo's words on the soul, but he leaves it up to not better specified expert theologians to pass a final judgment on the matter [61]. Personally, he is convinced that if Matteo seems to 'speak against our Catholic faith' (*voler tractare contro alla fede nostra captolicha*), this is just because 'he speaks as a poet. And poets sometimes speak to decorate their works with ideas in which they do not actually believe' [62]. Interestingly enough, the Proconsul also suggests that Palmieri himself might have been the author of the commentary that came along with the poem.

The summary is followed by a complete list of chapter titles, and by a selection of passages from the poem. In

addition to these materials, the Modena manuscript includes parts of Leonardo Dati's commentary—a remarkable fact, given that ever since Matteo's death the commentary appears to have been forgotten, so much so that none of the other circulating manuscripts (Magliabechiano, Ambrosiano, and Barberiniano Latino) ever even mentions it.

The rationale behind the choice of passages made by the author of the Modena manuscript clearly reveals that his interest was mostly for Palmieri's humanistic ethics: the idea that committing injustice is the greatest evil, that happiness is inseparable from wisdom, that only the philosophical life is truly praiseworthy; but also the centrality of free will, which provides man with the power and the responsibility to resist the snares of temptation (especially that of carnal love) in the name of a happy life respectful of the dictates of Christian faith. In order to celebrate and justify the search for happiness, the author decided to close his manuscript with the little-known *Canzone morale* by Leonardo Bruni.

In conclusion, the Modena manuscript can offer precious insights into Palmieri's theological outlook while also allowing us to reconstitute part of the posthumous fortune of his poem.

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## References

- [1] For an accurate reconstruction of Palmieri's life, works, and historical context, see: A. Mita Ferraro, *Matteo Palmieri. Una biografia intellettuale*, Genova 2005, which also includes a detailed bibliography. For further reference see B. Cumbo, *La Città di vita di Matteo Palmieri. Ipotesi su una fonte quattrocentesca per gli affreschi di Michelangelo nella volta Sistina*, Palermo 2006; A. Mita Ferraro, «Senza aver penne non si può volare». Un 'sommario' della Città di Vita di Matteo Palmieri, Firenze 2012.
- [2] P. O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, 6 vols, London-Leiden 1963-1997.
- [3] H. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, Princeton 1955, and *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism: Essays on the Transition from Medieval to Modern Thought*, 2 vols, Princeton 1988.
- [4] G. M. Carpetto, *The Humanism of Matteo Palmieri*, Roma 1984.
- [5] R. J. Palermينو, 'Palmieri's Città di Vita: More Evidence of Renaissance Platonism', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, XLIV, 1982, pp. 601-604.
- [6] M. Palmieri, *Libro del poema chiamato 'Città di vita'*, composto da Matteo Palmieri Fiorentino, Transcribed from the Laurentian MS XL 53 and Compared with the Magliabechiano II ii 41, ed. M. Rooke, 2 vols, Northampton (Mass.) 1927-1928.
- [7] A. Della Torre, *Storia della Accademia platonica di Firenze*, Firenze 1902, repr. Torino 1968, p. 492.
- [8] A. M. Bandini, *Catalogus codicum latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae*, vol. 5 ('Italicos scriptores exhibens'), Firenze 1774-7, pp. 81-82; also with slight differences in Palmieri, *Libro del poema*, ed. Rooke, vol. 2, p. 261; M. Martelli, *Letteratura fiorentina del Quattrocento. Il filtro degli anni Sessanta*, Firenze 1996, pp. 256-257.



- [9] For a more detailed outline, see Mita Ferraro, Matteo Palmieri, pp. 356-359; Mita Ferraro, Senza aver penne, pp. 25-67.
- [10] 'Che cosa vuoi che io faccia? / Canta come fece Dante in terza rima, quanto ti ho riferito. / Inizia e Dio ti condurrà a buon fine'. Palmieri, Libro del poema, ed. Rooke, vol. 2, p. 262; Bandini, Catalogus, p. 83.
- [11] Palmieri, Città di vita, I.XV-LXVII, Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Pluteo, XL 53, fols 70r-77v. A digitized reproduction of this manuscript is available for consultation through the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana website at: <http://teca.bmlonline.it/ImageViewer/servlet/ImageViewer?idr=TECA0000724788&keywords=palmerius#page/1/mode/1up> (accessed November 2014). Cf. B. Soldati, 'Giovanni Pontano e la confutazione del Pico', in Id., La poesia astrologica nel Quattrocento, Firenze 1906, repr. 1986, p. 203.
- [12] Palmieri, Città di vita, III.XIV.15 and 24-48, fols 247r-249v. P. Cerchi, 'Petrarca, Valerio Massimo e le concordanze storiche', Rinascimento, XLII, 2002, pp. 31-65.
- [13] For further details on Palmieri's theological outlook, see Mita Ferraro, Matteo Palmieri, pp. 375-419.
- [14] Palmieri, Città di vita, III.XXXIII.35-41, fol. 297v.
- [15] Palmieri, Città di vita, III.XXXIII.43-49, fols 297v-298r.
- [16] Palmieri, Città di vita, II.III.19, fol. 132r: cf. Virgil, Aeneid, VI.299-304. In addition, Palmieri, Città di vita, II.XV.43-44, fol. 251v: cf. with Aeneid, VI.605-607.
- [17] When Palmieri, in the chapter XXI of the first book of Città di vita, describes the influence coming from Venus, he also speaks about Love's properties in a way reminiscent of Seneca, Hyppolitus, 275-281.
- [18] Cf. Persius, Satira, VI.
- [19] The description of envy, in Palmieri, Città di vita, II.XXVI.51-55, is taken almost word by word from Ovid, Metamorphoses, II.775-781.
- [20] Palmieri's discussion of rage, in Città di vita (II.XXV.46-49, fols 188v-190v), is clearly influenced by Statius, Thebaid, I.103-113.
- [21] Palmieri, Città di vita, III.XXII.40-43, fol. 269v. See also E. Garin, Medioevo e Rinascimento, Bari 1980, pp. 234-235. For further references to Latin authors, cf. E. Frizzi, 'La Città di vita, poema inedito di Matteo Palmieri', Il Propugnatore, XI, 1878, pp. 150-166.
- [22] Palmieri, Città di vita, I.XVIII.43-49, fol. 80r.
- [23] Palmieri, Città di vita, II.III.39-45 and 49, fol. 133r.
- [24] Palmieri, Vita civile, I.132, ed. G. Belloni, Firenze 1982, p. 40.
- [25] Palmieri, Vita civile, III.136, ed. Belloni, p. 132.
- [26] F. Pintor, La libreria di Cosimo de' Medici nel 1418, Firenze 1902, pp. 8 and 13-14.
- [27] Mita Ferraro, Matteo Palmieri, p. 385; A. Dini Traversari, Ambrogio Traversari e i suoi tempi, Firenze 1912; Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo toscano: Traversari, Bruni, Marsuppini. Atti del Convegno del Comitato nazionale 6° centenario della nascita di Lorenzo Valla, Prato, 30 novembre 2007, ed. M. Regoliosi, Firenze 2010.
- [28] Dini Traversari, Ambrogio Traversari, p. 107.
- [29] Catalogo di manoscritti filosofici nelle biblioteche italiane, ed. D. Frioli and others, 2 vols, Firenze 1981, pp. 34-36; Kristeller, Iter Italicum, vol. I, p. 76.
- [30] The first printed edition of this text came out in 1605. Cf. H. Crouzel, Une controverse sur Origène a la Renaissance: Jean Pic de la Mirandole et Pierre Garcia, Paris 1977, p. 43; Kristeller, Iter Italicum, vol. I, p. 178; G. Pomaro, 'Censimento dei manoscritti della Biblioteca di S. Maria Novella. Parte II: secc. XV-XVI', Memorie domenicane, XIII, 1982, pp. 202-353.
- [31] Origen was accused of Pythagoreanism by Jerome in the first pages of his letter Ad Avitum. Such allegations are repeated in Contra Celsum (V.29) and in Commentary on St Matthew (XIII.1). However, Origen, in line with his method, proceeds by way of hypothesis and does not aim at achieving dogmatic certainty.
- [32] Origen, De Principiis, II, 8,3 and Homilies on Ezekiel, I,5.
- [33] Also see Origen's Homilies on St Luke, XXV, 15.
- [34] 'Haec intelligenda sunt secundum huius poematis argumentum, scilicet quod animae sunt ex spiritibus qui in primo bello caelesti neque deum spexerunt neque sequuti sunt Luciferum sed medii steterunt et ideo reservantur in Elysiis campis et ad tempus infunduntur humanis corporibus cum ratione et appetitu et libero arbitrio ad dignoscendum utrum Deum sequi velint an Luciferum'. L. Dati, Commento alla 'Città di Vita', Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Pluteo, XL 53, fol. 29v (available for consultation through the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana website).
- [35] Dati, Commento alla 'Città di Vita', fol. 31r.
- [36] Palmieri, Città di vita, I.V.24-27, fol. 30r.
- [37] Justin, Apology I, (XLIII.2-7), and Apology II (VII.5-6).
- [38] Dati, Commento alla 'Città di Vita', fols 31v-32r.
- [39] Augustine too, despite his devastating critique of Origen in De civitate Dei (XI.23), allows that men can make up for the damage caused by the fallen Angel: cf. De civitate Dei (XXII.1) and Enchiridion (IX.29). For Peter Lombard's opinion, see Sententiae (II.I, chapter 5).
- [40] 'Leave all hope behind you who enter / by your own fault into the third death / eternal punishment for damned souls'. Palmieri, Città di vita, II.II.1, fol. 127v.
- [41] Palmieri, Città di vita, I.XXV.42-46, fol. 101r. Here is Dati's comment on this point (fol. 101v): 'Sequitur ultima pars nostrae fidei quae est credere ipsum Christum deum iterum venturum esse cum gloria iudicare vivos et mortuos et sunt haec in fine symboli ubi dicit: "ad eius adventum omnes homines resurgere habent cum corporibus suis"' ('The last part of our faith consists in the belief that Christ himself shall come in all his glory to judge the living and the dead; and these words are to be found at the end of the Credo, where it is said: "all men shall be resurrected with their body"'). Later on Dati adds: 'Haec dixit affirmans quod resurgere debent cum corporis suis' ('He said those words claiming that they must be resurrected with their own bodies').
- [42] E.g. the idea of God as Light, a Platonic theme also present in Ps. Dionysius, Celestial Hierarchy, I.1-3, which is Palmieri's source. The same image can also be found in Palmieri, Città di vita, I.III.1, fol. 21v and I.XIX.6-8, fol. 82v.

- [43] Ps. Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*, III.2, p. 34.
- [44] 'Please clarify to me whether this obscure doctrine / is in line with what the Holy Church approves / or whether the Church itself reckons that it should be blamed and rejected'. Palmieri, *Città di vita*, I.IX.46, fol. 48v. I should mention in passing that a distorted reading of this and other chapters (in particular I.V) has fomented several legends about Palmieri: see Mita Ferraro, Matteo Palmieri, pp. 419-78, and Mita Ferraro, *Senza aver penne*, p. 16.
- [45] My reconstruction of the intellectual context is based on C. Vasoli, 'Le "Accademie". L'"Accademia Platonica", l'"Accademia Romana"' and P. Orvieto, 'Cristoforo Landino e il culto di Dante, e Marsilio Ficino, e Giovanni Pico della Mirandola', both in *Storia della Letteratura Italiana - Il Quattrocento*, ed. E. Malato, vol. 3, Roma 1996, pp. 78-79 and 320-349. Also see Soldati, Giovanni Pontano, and Crouzel, *Une controverse*.
- [46] Cumbo, *La Città di vita*, p. 11.
- [47] More on the circulation and fortune of the *City of Life* in Mita Ferraro, Matteo Palmieri, pp. 419-478, and Mita Ferraro, *Senza aver penne*, pp. 13-24.
- [48] Mita Ferraro, *Senza aver penne*, p. 19.
- [49] S. Orlandi, *Necrologio di S. Maria Novella*, 2 vols, Firenze 1955, vol. 1, pp. XXVIII and 187-190, and vol. 2, pp. 305-315. See also: I. Taurisano, *Il culto di Dante nell'Ordine Domenicano*, Firenze 1917 (also in *Memorie Domenicane*, XXXIII, 1916, pp. 29-30 and 44-46).
- [50] Bandini, *Catalogus*, p. 74; G. Richa, *Notizie Istoriche delle Chiese fiorentine*, 10 vols, Firenze 1754-1762, repr. Roma, 1989, vol. 1, p. 161; Palmieri, *Libro del poema*, ed. Rooke, vol. 1, p. XIII.
- [51] The description of the Laurenziano Pluteo MS is in I. G. Rao, Matteo Palmieri, 'Città di vita', in *I luoghi della memoria scritta. I libri del silenzio. I libri del decoro. I libri della porpora*, ed. G. Cavallo, Roma 1994. The drawings in this manuscript have been attributed to Francesco Botticini, see: L. Venturini, Francesco Botticini, Firenze 1994.
- [52] This codex was first mentioned in modern times by A. Zeno who used it as a case-study: see A. Zeno, 'Matteo Palmieri', *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia*, X, 1712, pp. 424-471; XI, 1712, pp. 289-292. Another copy, which I have not been able to view, is located among the Hamiltonian manuscripts of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, and is based on the Magliabechiano and the Laurenziano Pluteo MSS: the earliest mention of this manuscript is in P. O. Kristeller, 'Francesco da Diacceto and Florentine Platonism', in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati IV: Letteratura classica e umanistica (Studi e Testi)*, Roma 1946, pp. 260-304, repr. in *The Sixteenth Century, Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, 4 vols, Roma 1969-1996, vol. 1, p. 328.
- [53] Frizzi, *La Città di vita*, pp. 140-167 (150); G. Boffito, 'L'eresia di Matteo Palmieri', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, XXXVII, 1901, pp. 1-69; M. Martelli, 'Palmeriana', *Interpres*, V, 1983-1984, pp. 277-301 (292-293).
- [54] The only existing mention of this manuscript is in Boffito, *L'eresia di Matteo*, p. 3: the author regards this as the most elegant copy of the *Città di vita* among those that have survived. This manuscript also bears traces of underlining in different inks, which highlight the moral content of some tercets. Cf. R. Cipriani, *Codici miniati dell'Ambrosiana*, Vicenza 1968, p. 50; Mita Ferraro, Matteo Palmieri, p. 367.
- [55] Cf. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, vol. 2, p. 464; Kristeller, 'Francesco da Diacceto', pp. 260-304. Also see *Bibliografia retrospettiva dei fondi manoscritti della Biblioteca Vaticana*, ed. M. Ceresa and M. Buonocore, 4 vols, Roma 1968-1994, vol. 4, p. 149.
- [56] Mita Ferraro, *Senza aver penne*, pp. 79-181.
- [57] Palmieri, *Città di vita*, Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Pluteo XL 53: the portrait is at fol. 303r.
- [58] [Property] of Luigi Fiacchi. I found this summary of Palmieri's *City of Life* in 1815, in a poor state and with the cover pages badly torn. I bound it, and I kept the front page because it contains the date of Palmieri's death as well as his portrait, although the latter is much faded. The summary was made by a Proconsul of the apothecaries' guild, a contemporary of P[almieri], as evidenced by fols 32-33 which provide accurate information about the poem'.
- [59] F. D'Intino, Luigi Fiacchi, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 47 vols, Roma 1997, vol. 47, pp. 316-317.
- [60] Mita Ferraro, Matteo Palmieri, pp. 435-439.
- [61] Identifying the first reader of this codex appears impossible, as all the relevant documents concerning the guild went lost in the 16th-century flood.
- [62] 'La tracta come poeta. Et i poeti alchuna volta tractano cose per tessere et hornar lor opere che in verità non le sentono coll'animo'.