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***quot annos tot menses: Ovid and Poliziano in exile***

In this paper I argue that the Renaissance poet and scholar Angelo Poliziano draws heavily on Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* to shape his own experiences as a "poet of exile" during a seven-month period of self-imposed absence from Florence in 1479-80. For example, in a lengthy letter of apology to his Florentine patron Lorenzo de' Medici from March of 1480, Poliziano writes, "many things pertaining to the heart of the matter (i. e. that I have left Florence), I have to keep silent" (*multa mihi, quae maxime ad rem faciunt, necessario subtacenda sunt*). His remarks recall one of the most famous passages from Ovid's exile poetry, from the poet's own letter of apology to Augustus in which he refuses to divulge in full the reasons behind his banishment, *Tr.* 2.207-08: "though two crimes have brought me to ruin, a poem and a mistake, the fault of the latter deed I have to keep silent" (*perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error, / alterius facti culpa silenda mihi*). While Poliziano does not speak of his own *duo crimina* until later in this letter, certain parallels of verbal character and in terms of the mediating circumstances behind the composition of the two letters are immediately worthy of note. In both cases a celebrated poet writes an apology on his own behalf in seeking an invitation to return home from the most powerful political *persona* in the poet's adopted city. The differences between these two "letters from exile" may in fact outweigh the similarities, but in this paper I am concerned with *verbal* parallels and *thematic* overlaps in which Poliziano represents his own self-imposed exile with familiar motifs from the exile poetry of Ovid. I aim to show that Poliziano's appeals to Lorenzo invoke Ovid's appeals to Augustus: each poet represents his own situation as abject and recognizes that being restored home requires the direct intervention of a merciful patron towards his contrite panegyrist.

Scholars of the Renaissance are keenly aware of Ovid's influence on Poliziano, but a detailed analysis of the latter's use of Ovid's exile poetry during his own absence from Florence is lacking. In the present paper I offer an initial survey of four Latin epigrams and the above-quoted letter from Poliziano's period of exile in relation to Ovid as the exiled poet of imperial Rome. I show that Poliziano borrows closely from Ovid's exile poetry, for example, in threatening suicide to alleviate the pain of separation from homeland, in attacking his Florentine detractors *in absentia*, and in promising to sing the praises of his patron once restored home. In general, I argue that Poliziano becomes the *werbender Dichter* familiar from Roman elegy, courting good will from his Medici patron as Ovid had courted the benevolence of his de facto patron Augustus. By invoking Ovid as his model in exile, Poliziano recommends Augustus, the first and most prominent of the Roman emperors, as a model for a Renaissance ruler well aware of the importance of historical precedent. In doing so he also lays claim to a powerful poetical *exemplum* for himself in the figure of Ovid. In the end, Poliziano's appeals to il Magnifico Lorenzo de' Medici are designed not only to get himself restored to Florence with honor but also to have himself inserted directly into the poetic tradition of Rome.