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Love and Marriage: Emotion and Sexuality in the Early Medici Family

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In the spring of 1479, Clarice Orsini (1450–1488) evicted her husband's close friend, humanist Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494), from the villa of Cafaggiolo. Her husband, Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492), had sent his wife and children to Cafaggiolo for their safety during the tumult following the Pazzi Conspiracy of 1478. Poliziano, then the children's tutor, had accompanied them. Historians have generally framed this dispute as the inevitable result of irreconcilable differences between a stubborn humanist tutor and a devoutly Roman Catholic mother, but this neglects other potential household dynamics. A close, careful reading of the letters exchanged between Lorenzo, Poliziano, and Clarice in this period, alongside poems composed by Lorenzo and Poliziano, provides an alternative reading of these events. My work will demonstrate that this was not an ideological dispute, but a rivalry between the sacred, licit bond of marriage and the illicit—but not uncommon—eroticized bond between two male friends.

The language used by both Poliziano and Clarice in their contemporary letters (and, in Poliziano's case, poetry) suggests that those involved sexualized this conflict. Though Lorenzo's heteroerotic ties have been well explored, the presence of homoeroticism in his relationships has gone largely ignored since the brief analysis by Dale Kent in *Friendship, Love, and Trust in Renaissance Florence*.¹ Furthermore, while other historians have touched upon Poliziano's alleged sodomy and his homoerotic poetry, none have explored the presence of homoeroticism in his relationship with his patron.² In this article, I propose a novel interpretation of the source material surrounding the Poliziano–Clarice conflict, which explores its erotic elements and integrates them into the wider context of Quattrocento Florentine male sociability. This analysis will shed new light not only on Lorenzo and his household, but also on the intersection of homoeroticism and patronage in the Renaissance family.

THE MEDICI HOUSEHOLD, C. 1471–1478

In early modern Italy, as elsewhere, a household's slaves, servants, apprentices, employees, and sometimes even guests could be defined as part of the family.³ The Medici used the word flexibly, sometimes referring to a travelling group of women, children, and servants, and at other times describing the household

of a cardinal.⁴ More recently, historians have begun analyzing households and families as emotional communities. In other words, members shared in a family's emotional norms and the personal investment of keeping the household functional.⁵ Because these families contained such a diverse group of people in close proximity, conflicts were rarely limited to blood relatives. Secretaries, servants, and other employees were often involved in these conflicts and had their own stakes in these altercations.

However, any power that non-kin members might have held was conditional, making their positions precarious and their power generally dependent upon the status of their occupation. Status played a major role in determining emotional expression among premodern family members. The *paterfamilias*, for example, had more freedom to express his emotions than did tutors, who in turn had more freedom than servants.⁶ The less power a family member had, the simpler their emotional displays had to become. While this does not preclude their ability to feel complex emotions internally, they lacked the privilege to freely express them.⁷ The conflict between Clarice and Poliziano offers an example of this emotional inequality; when Clarice felt humiliated by her husband's apparent favoritism towards Poliziano, she reacted with righteous fury. Poliziano, meanwhile, felt the need to approach his employer indirectly and submissively despite their long-standing friendship and emotional intimacy. This seems to contradict the stereotypical images of the cowed Renaissance wife who had little influence over the homosocial camaraderie between Florentine men.

Both Poliziano and Clarice entered the Medici family during the same transitional period. Lorenzo officially celebrated his marriage to Clarice in June of 1469, and, between 1470 and 1473, he welcomed the precocious young scholar into his home.⁸ Between the entrances of these two members, there had been a significant exit. In December 1469, Lorenzo's father, Piero, had passed away. Becoming the new *paterfamilias* brought the power to personally appoint new household members, so it is no surprise that the poetry-loving Lorenzo soon invited in the ambitious young poet-scholar, who quickly became one of his most trusted companions. He joined his patron in all aspects of daily life, and the letters exchanged during their separations demonstrate their emotional intimacy. In one exchange, angered that Poliziano had not informed him about his children's illness, Lorenzo passionately reproached him:

Do you think I am of such a weak nature that such a small thing would disturb me? Suppose that Our nature truly is [made] in such a manner, so that I'd easily be driven hither and thither by troubles; would not a strengthened soul have already learned to be consistent from experiencing so many things? I have been as greatly tested by the death of my children as often as by their ill health; my father was snatched away by an early death, with me in my twenty-first

year—thus I was exposed to fortune’s blows, so that I sometimes regretted my own life.⁹

The rare openness Lorenzo shows seems to indicate that he saw Poliziano as a close confidant, yet this freedom of emotional expression was not two-sided. That Poliziano felt it inappropriate to express strong emotions to his employer is made clear in one apologetic letter, in which he writes, “Desidero assai che la Magnificentia Vostra non si sia turbata d’una mia li scrissi stamani, dettatami dalla passione.”¹⁰ Poliziano’s apology for his overly emotional letter reflects the expectations regarding correspondence between a *paterfamilias* and his subordinates; while a *paterfamilias* might vent his frustrations, others had to carefully guard their words. Nevertheless, even if the relationship was lopsided, Poliziano shared deeply in his patron’s emotional world.

If Poliziano was chosen by Lorenzo, Clarice was chosen for him, as he writes in his *Ricordi*: “Io Lorenzo tolsi per moglie la Clarice figliuola del Signore Jacopo Orsini, ovvero mi fu data.”¹¹ Lorenzo’s early letters to Clarice were infrequent, short, and to the point, giving the impression of a young man uncertain of how to relate to his new wife.¹² In fact, his letters throughout their marriage are remarkably terse compared to his correspondence with his parents, children, and other relatives. Overall, their correspondence suggests a relationship based more on obligation than passion.

HOMOEROTIC SOCIABILITY

Passion—or a lack thereof—could further complicate household relationships. Most recent works on the subject focus on illicit heterosexual master-servant interactions and their effects on the familial emotional community.¹³ However, this research fails to address queerness, an important facet of Renaissance Florentine culture. Legally and theologically classed as sodomy, queerness was not considered an identity but “a set of behaviours” deemed inimical to social order.¹⁴ The degree to which it was tolerated varied across time and place, but it was almost always fully enmeshed with premodern male sociability. This was especially true of the highly homosocial networks that made up Florentine society. As entangled as the public and private were in Quattrocento Florence, it is reasonable to assume that homoeroticism was also, to at least some extent, woven into household relationships. To fully understand the emotions surrounding sexuality in the household, therefore, it is important to take this aspect of male sexuality into account.

Most Florentine evidence on sodomy comes from the records of the Ufficiali di Notte, the administrative body in charge of prosecuting such behavior. These records reflect both the widespread nature of sodomy and its quasi-pederastic attributes.¹⁵ In his seminal study of Florentine sodomy, Michael Rocke uses quantitative evidence from the Ufficiali records to claim that it was characterized by a

“rigid adherence” to a pattern of active “youths” (*giovani*, aged roughly eighteen to thirty) pursuing passive boys (aged roughly thirteen to eighteen).¹⁶ Because sodomy was associated with the overheated humors of youth, it was expected that most men would lose interest in it as maturity cooled their blood. Those who did not were harshly punished compared to the relative lenience shown to boys and youths.¹⁷ Dependence upon the Ufficiali records has certain shortcomings. First, these records reflect only reported incidents. There is no way to survey the demographics of the unreported. Secondly, in lawmakers’ efforts to codify the boundaries of acceptable behavior, they inevitably distort an ambiguous social reality. Finally, legal records generally reflect concrete actions, not emotions. We have no means of measuring unrequited loves or nonsexual romances, much less the charged moments, what-ifs, and almos that so often find their way into friendships.

Alan Bray correctly observes that defining premodern queerness within legal or theological parameters limits our perspective. Quite simply, most queer premoderns often did not view their behavior as legally counting as sodomy.¹⁸ Bray’s suggestion that premodern queerness was broader than sodomy has had considerable influence. Giovanni Dall’Orto specifically suggests “looking for testimonies of homoeroticism” rather than testimonies of sodomy, as “many sodomites made every possible effort to avoid self-labelling as such” even as they embraced and defended homoeroticism.¹⁹ This group of not-quite-sodomites included prominent figures such as Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), the Medicean philosopher who exerted great influence on the young Lorenzo and Poliziano and used Plato to sanctify homoerotic love.²⁰ Building on Bray’s work, Jonathan Goldberg proposes reading texts for “the ways in which normative bonds that structured society also allowed for sexual relations.”²¹ These “normative bonds” were the homosocial networks that held up much of Renaissance Europe. Premodern queerness has remained easily disguised from modern readers precisely because it fit so seamlessly into everyday relationships and behaviors. As several historians have demonstrated, the passionate language sometimes used between male friends could be intentionally fused with homoerotic significance, flirting with the often hazy boundaries between friendship and romance.²²

While male friendship provided the most fertile soil for homoeroticism, it could also flourish in other relationships between men, especially that of patron and client. The charged language of patronage, often infused with a vocabulary of love and dependence, meant that patrons and employees were constantly treading a line between patronage and eroticism.²³ Patronage relationships often developed into friendships, thus making the boundaries between patronage, friendship, and sodomy ambiguous. As Dale Kent has noted, these lines could be especially blurred for Lorenzo, who often played a dual role of patron and friend.²⁴ In the following pages, my “emotional excavation” (to borrow Bradley Irish’s term) of Lorenzo’s relationship with Poliziano relies on a subtle reading of a variety of

source material, notably letters and poetry.²⁵ These sources, like the relationships themselves, reveal the complexity and ambiguity that existed beneath the surface of legal distinctions. This analysis requires careful deconstruction of linguistic choices, implicit assumptions, cultural encoding, and what goes unsaid.

Even though premodern male sociability embraces the homoerotic, it “excludes even as it invites” since the “conjoined heart” of perfect friendship requires that both participants be men.²⁶ Women were thus barred from the kind of pure *amicizia* that could exist between men just as they were barred from much of the public, civic life that revolved around homosocial ties. According to Ficino, men were best suited for other men “since they are more like men than women are.”²⁷ This similarity not only made men ideal friends, but ideal lovers. Wives were hardly sheltered from the knowledge of their own exclusion or of the homoerotic potential of their husbands’ friendships. It was not unheard of for marriages to break down because husbands had neglected their wives to pursue men, or even for women to be driven from their marital homes.²⁸ As we shall see, there was even an assumption that women and youths were natural rivals for the love of men. Clarice was no doubt aware of these norms and assumptions and of the specifically Florentine sin that permeated her husband’s *patria*. The mere suggestion of homoeroticism thus presented her with a possible source of worry. As I shall argue in the following section, her continued anger at Poliziano likely stemmed from her anxiety over his friendship with her husband.

BEDROOM RIVALRIES

Other than a letter of 6 April 1479, which mentions a disagreement over teaching, there is no definitive written statement about what caused Clarice to drive Poliziano from his position.²⁹ In the years since, their argument has been reduced to a symbolic struggle between pious ignorance and humanist enlightenment under the assumption that Clarice took issue with her sons being taught Latin from classical literature.³⁰ Though Clarice has been treated more gently of late, the narrative of an overly traditional wife at odds with humanism has generally gone unchallenged. More recently, Natalie Tomas has defined the conflict as ideological, though certainly “made worse by Poliziano’s rather difficult temperament.”³¹ However, contextualizing the letter of 6 April among other contemporary letters suggests that pedagogical disagreements were a symptom, rather than a root cause, of Clarice’s hostility towards Poliziano.

Over the year following the Pazzi Conspiracy, letters from both parties tell a story of rising strain. Clarice’s correspondence expresses a constant yearning for Lorenzo. Far from home, newly pregnant, and shaken from the recent events, Clarice worried about her husband’s safety.³² Meanwhile, Poliziano had been removed from his enviable position at Lorenzo’s side. In a letter to his friend, Poliziano makes clear his dissatisfaction: “Io aspetto con desiderio novelle [. . .] per tornare a servire Voi: chè con Voi volevo e credevomi stare.” This same letter

also hints at growing interpersonal problems: “Governiamoci il meglio possiamo; ma a me toccano tutte le botte.”³³ Clarice, too, openly articulated her feelings and desires, directly telling Lorenzo that she could not feel “contenta” without news from him.³⁴ In contrast, Poliziano approaches his feelings indirectly, quoting Virgil (“te propter Libycae,” *Aeneid* 4.320) in reference to the humiliating “botte” he was receiving in the household.³⁵ This reference to Queen Dido is noteworthy in its erotic context, and Lorenzo would have been well aware of her story. Dido thought of her lover Aeneas as her husband and sacrificed everything for him, but he abandoned her, leaving her furious, heartbroken, and suicidal. By specifically choosing these words, Poliziano implicitly casts himself as Dido and Lorenzo as Aeneas, inviting the comparison of his and Lorenzo’s relationship to a marriage while simultaneously reminding the reader that such a marriage is illicit and imbalanced. Poliziano, like Dido, can make no claim to, or demand on, Lorenzo. As we shall see later, the erotic subtext was probably not incidental.

After a long winter, the tension in the lonely mountain villa rose to a boil. On 6 May 1479, Poliziano wrote:

Magnifice mi Domine, Io sono qui a Careggi, partito di Cafaggiuolo per comandamento di madonna Clarice. La cagione et il modo di questa mia partita, desiderrei [. . .] di potervela dire a bocca; perché è cosa pur lunga. Credo, quando m’avete udito, vi accorderete che io non abbi tutto il torto. In effetto, per migliore rispetto e per non venire a Firenze praeter iussa tua, io sono qui, et aspetto che Vostra Magnificentia mi dica quello abbi a fare; perché sono vostro, se il mondo ci si impuntassi: e se io ho poca ventura in servirvi, non è però che sempre non vi abbi servito con quanta fede ho avuta.³⁶

Soon after, Lorenzo wrote a short message to Clarice informing her that Poliziano would be resuming his duties. Lorenzo seems primarily interested in placating his wife; “confortoti,” he says, and assures her that Poliziano will only be staying “poco di tempo.” He reminds her of their son Piero’s hard work in his studies and asks Clarice to bear Poliziano’s presence: “sia contenta farlo, se non per amore suo, almanco per mio, che me ne farai grandissimo piacere.”³⁷ Loving Piero, Lorenzo implies, means she must tolerate her husband’s favorites. Clarice, apparently, was unconvinced; Poliziano did not return to Cafaggiolo. Neither did Lorenzo bring him back to his side in Florence. Instead, Poliziano was moved to the Medici villa in Fiesole.

Poliziano’s behavior in Fiesole infuriated Clarice: “Messer Agnolo possa dire che starà in casa vostra a mio dispetto; et anche l’habbate facto mettere in camera vostra a Fiesole [. . .] non che lo possa credere.”³⁸ Clarice’s anger reveals an interesting point of tension. According to her, Poliziano bragged that he was not only staying in Lorenzo’s villa, but in Lorenzo’s own room. This was, moreover,

because Lorenzo *himself* placed (“facto mettere”) him there. By adding “facto,” Clarice emphasizes Lorenzo’s agency and thereby his responsibility for Poliziano’s audacious behavior. By allowing Poliziano to sleep in his bedroom, Lorenzo was permitting him to claim a kind of symbolic authority. The master bedroom was the “nucleus of the Italian Renaissance house,” where the *paterfamilias* held important meetings, greeted dignified visitors, and kept his most treasured possessions.³⁹ By placing Poliziano in the villa’s equivalent of his room, Lorenzo was identifying Poliziano with his own role as *paterfamilias*.

The bed was the locus of the *camera* and had, in addition to the connotations of authority, a distinctly sexual symbolism.⁴⁰ It acted as a euphemism for both conjugal relations and for adultery, and Clarice may have seen Poliziano and Lorenzo’s interactions in this light.⁴¹ Friends often shared beds in this period, and the erotic potential of these arrangements was not lost on contemporaries. Rocke mentions at least two instances in which bed sharing among a group of friends ended in sex.⁴² Poliziano himself recounts how a man sharing galley quarters with youths began fondling (“manomettendo”) his bunkmate before being humorously rebuffed.⁴³ Often, Florentines framed queer relationships in terms of sleeping together or sharing beds. Understanding families might even accommodate their sons’ lovers, providing them with their own bed to share.⁴⁴

Queer relationships were sometimes associated with financial support, often with the dominant partner being said to keep his lover like a wife or woman, implying that the passive partner was usurping the “natural” place of women.⁴⁵ When a husband openly flaunted his affairs, he openly shamed his wife. Clarice’s letter invokes this fear of public shame. She writes that Poliziano was saying these things to spite her (“a mio dispetto”).⁴⁶ “Dispetto” here is heavily honor coded. It is not simply associated with personal contempt, but also with disparagement and shame.⁴⁷ This implies that there is at least a danger of publicity. Her embarrassment is doubled by Poliziano’s claim that all this was instigated by Lorenzo himself. Though he did not sleep in the villa’s bedroom with Poliziano, his behavior mirrored other homoerotic dalliances; while his wife was away, he was maintaining a dependent in his own bedroom, just outside the city.

VIRILE POETRY

As stated above, homoerotic behavior was woven into existing networks of patronage. It is therefore especially important to consider the homoeroticism present in the relationship between the poet and his patron if one is to fully understand this period of conflict. For these purposes, I plan on shining new light on homoeroticism in the poetry both men produced. A deep love of poetry was something both men had in common, and was indeed what had drawn them together. Though Lorenzo’s letters contain few references to his sexual interests, his poetry is quite another story. One youthful poem, the “Uccellagione di starne,” has often been praised for its richly descriptive language, realism, and

characterization.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, it has been overlooked as a source for the young Lorenzo's views and experiences of male sexuality.

Birds were (and are) a popular Italian metaphor for the phallus, and falconry thus easily developed into a metaphor for sexual conquest.⁴⁹ Partridges could symbolize women, particularly sex workers, though in the male diminutive it could also be used to refer to catamites.⁵⁰ Birds could, moreover, indicate either adolescent boys or the anus itself.⁵¹ In this light, the details of Lorenzo's "Uccellazione" take on a clear double entendre, including the moment one sorry hunter falls upon his hawk and cannot get it to stand up straight again.⁵² This poem illustrates the role sexual activity played in building camaraderie within all-male travelling groups. Lorenzo's attention is not on the prey's gender, but on the boisterous, aggressive, and often humorous behavior of other men in sexual situations. This especially comes into play when, instead of chasing a partridge, one man's hawk attacks another. This causes a great deal of embarrassment between the two men, one of whom shouts: "Credo che 'l tuo sparvier massiccio scorga/ a sparvier certo; e, per la fede mia,/ tu pigli assai villani e stran' trastulli;/ ma io pazzo a 'mpacciarmi con fanciulli!"⁵³ These lines suggest that one of the young men had approached another, and thereby insulted him. This sort of behavior is immature and juvenile, better suited to "fanciulli" than the growing youths who are eager to prove their manhood. Other hawks are described with equal humor: one is ridiculously small, and yet another makes its prey bleed because it is too inexperienced.⁵⁴ The poem's resolution comes not when all the hunters have been successful, but when, despite heated competition and misunderstandings, they make peace amongst themselves. They feast together, a common activity for male *brigade*, and then all go off to have an afternoon rest, their friendships mended and even strengthened. When night falls, the adventures will begin anew with cave exploration, likely a metaphor for female anatomy.⁵⁵

My analysis of the partridge hunt reflects the collective nature of Florentine male sexuality in which Lorenzo participated as a young man. Sex was a group activity; young men went looking for conquests together. They compared experiences, and bragged about their accomplishments. This was an important aspect of male sociability. Sexual performance in front of peers "helped validate one's virility in the eyes of a comrade, and in the shared act created complicity and solidified friendships."⁵⁶ In focusing so much on the description and activity of his friends' phalli, Lorenzo's poem contains a sense of homoeroticism regardless of the gender of the partridges. The colorful descriptions reflect some very close observance of one's fellow man, not to mention more than a little comparison.

Lorenzo's later poetry contains regular references to sexuality, especially his nearly pornographic carnival songs. These use a variety of metaphors to graphically celebrate several sexual activities, sodomy included. The sodomy in these poems is primarily heterosexual, but "Canzona de' Visi Addrieto" is devoted entirely to same-sex sodomy.⁵⁷ Lorenzo humorously characterizes passive partners

as “port[ando] / gli occhi drieto e non davanti” so that they can see the active partner approaching!⁵⁸ This song was likely performed at carnival by men in masks, and it is fairly easy to imagine the humorous visuals that might have been employed.⁵⁹ Lorenzo’s language is humorous but not condemning; rather, he portrays sodomy as a perfectly acceptable alternative for men when women are not available. He was also, at the very least, familiar with the technicalities. Portions of the above song are practically an advice manual on how to go about it with minimal discomfort to the passive partner.⁶⁰ He furthermore appears to have participated in, or at least been highly familiar with, the common experiences of sexually active young men. These experiences usually included at least some level of same-sex experimentation, either as the passive or active partner, and his poetry demonstrates a familiarity with the behaviors of both roles.

Poliziano’s poetry, too, indicates that he was also deeply engaged in homoerotic culture. However, while Lorenzo wrote poems *about* males, Poliziano wrote poetry *to* males. In one such poem he describes the pleasure he takes in gazing upon a beautiful bird.⁶¹ As mentioned previously, birds were sometimes used to signify a phallus or an attractive boy. When he can no longer resist, he attempts to catch the bird, “per l’aria a volo / ritornassi al nido ove si nacque.”⁶² This “nido” is a clear metaphor for the vagina, suggesting that the “bird” left him to chase after girls. Poliziano’s exchanges with Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), in which the two discuss Pico’s love poetry, also contain deliberately homoerotic references. Pico, sending his poems to Poliziano for his feedback, suggestively asks the older poet to castigate and spank them.⁶³ In response, Poliziano playfully builds on the metaphor, calling them beautiful boys, and admits to having stabbed them.⁶⁴ In this ever-increasing erotic wordplay, Pico asks, “who does not want to die by [your] sword?”⁶⁵

More significant for our purposes, however, is the poetry Poliziano directed to Lorenzo during the late 1470s and early 1480s. These works employ a Petrarchan vocabulary of desire and suffering caused by an idealized figure. While Florentine men often used loving vocabulary in letters exchanged within patronage networks, it was rare for them to use love poetry in the same context.⁶⁶ Comparing the poems Poliziano wrote for Lorenzo to his love poetry (addressed to both men and women) suggests that he was intentionally framing this patron-client relationship in eroticized terms, deliberately pushing the unclear boundaries between friend, patron, and erotic desire. An example is his poem about the boy-bird where unsatisfied desire is both soothed and intensified by sight. In one epigram addressed to Lorenzo, Poliziano envisions himself separated from his patron by a great crowd. Unable to touch or speak to Lorenzo, he can only behold him.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, he is inflamed by jealousy upon seeing Lorenzo touch and greet others and yearns for such an interaction himself.

Much of Poliziano’s amorous poetry focuses on seeing the beloved’s eyes. In one poem the coldness of his beloved tortures him, and he begs her to turn her

starry eyes toward him: “e poi contento son se ben m’uccidi.”⁶⁸ Similarly, he celebrates Lorenzo’s eyes and gaze, both of which are portrayed as divine light, echoing the stars of the woman mentioned above or the stars, not eyes (“sidera non oculi”) of a golden-haired youth.⁶⁹ As he yearns to be seen by his beloveds, Poliziano yearns for Lorenzo’s gaze: “Why, Lorenzo, do you avert your eyes? Restore, / Restore, I pray, the light of my eyes.”⁷⁰ The eyes of the beloved must meet the eyes of the lover, and in this way, he is healed by the light flowing between them.

The beloved has the power to wound or heal the lover as they please. They can hold the lover “in pianti e in sospiri” or conquer him in warfare.⁷¹ In one of many romantic epigrams to a boy nicknamed Chrysocomus, he likewise claims his beloved can both torture and love him.⁷² The lover begs his beloved to give him succor for she has his fate in her hands.⁷³ Being ignored causes a suffering that is deeply physical, while receiving the attention of the beloved brings relief and joy. Similarly, in an epigram addressed to Lorenzo (likely written from Fiesole), Poliziano claims his hoarsened voice would again become melodious “If only you’d say: ‘Poliziano, come.’”⁷⁴ His next epigram is worth quoting in its entirety: “I am yours, O Medici; I confess it, you yourself confess it: / I am yours always; I beg you to have a care. / Oh, I perish! oh, my heart is lacerated by twin lions! / Rescue me, my only hope, from raging beasts.”⁷⁵ Here, Poliziano portrays himself as a helpless and passive victim in need of Lorenzo’s rescue. There is an overtly romantic tone in this poem; he is entirely Lorenzo’s, to the point that he entrusts his very heart to Lorenzo, as he can to no one else.

Poliziano’s most revealing composition in this period, his play *La favola di Orfeo*, has been largely overlooked as a source for his point of view of the situation with Lorenzo and Clarice. As I shall argue in the next section, Poliziano chose to retell the story of a notoriously queer character in a way which reflected his own recent experiences. By playing with both a Classical Ovidian tale and Renaissance homoeroticism, he vented the grief and hurt that had been building for months.

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

In the winter of 1479, Lorenzo received word that King Ferrante of Naples was open to considering a peace treaty with Florence. That December, Lorenzo resolved to undertake the dangerous journey himself, with a small entourage of trusted men. Poliziano was informed that he was to accompany Lorenzo on his journey, but only so far as Pisa.⁷⁶ Upset and incredulous, Poliziano waited for hours to discuss this decision with Lorenzo, who avoided him entirely. Others eventually had to break the news to Poliziano that Lorenzo did not want his companionship in Naples.⁷⁷ Wounded, Poliziano left Florence without his patron’s permission. He had lost his position as family tutor, been kept outside the city for months without answers, and was now left behind by Lorenzo, who refused to discuss the decision in person. In an apology letter sent to Lorenzo three months later from Mantua, Poliziano

provided his account of events. He describes himself as “rejected by you [Lorenzo], even with dishonor” and being “thrown out not only of your house [Lorenzo’s] but also far from the protection of your intimacy.”⁷⁸ By leaving him behind, Lorenzo had not only rejected Poliziano’s company, he had left him exposed to the rumors and scorn of his rivals. Poliziano had already been separated from the rest of the household while Lorenzo kept him in Fiesole, and now Lorenzo’s actions appeared to be a public demonstration of abandonment.

Whether out of distraction or anger, Lorenzo was slow to respond. Believing Lorenzo was enraged, Poliziano remained in Mantua where he wrote his *Orfeo*.⁷⁹ This violently emotional play, composed hastily within only a few days, reflects the turbulence in Poliziano’s life over the preceding year.⁸⁰ The chief theme of *Orfeo* is tragically ironic, namely that loss is the necessary result of overly passionate love. At the climactic moment of the play, when Eurydice is snatched back to hell, she cries out, “Oimè, chè ‘l troppo amore / N’ ha disfatti ambe dua.”⁸¹ Her reference to “‘l troppo amore” reflects the premodern belief that too much love was considered dangerous to both body and soul. Excessive passion marked the boundary between healthy and unhealthy love, and when it came to male relationships in particular, excess marked the boundary between holy platonic love and sodomy. In Ficinian terms, homoerotic chastity was an ideal that could lift men heavenward, but the temptation to overindulge via carnal lust could change manly love from divine to damned. Sodomy was thus marked by an “immoderation and excess” of passion in an otherwise healthy male friendship.⁸² The healthy dynamics of a friendship could be permanently lost if emotions overcame reason, as with Orpheus looking back at Eurydice. If Poliziano was using the Orphic journey to wrestle with his own demons, his climactic use of “‘l troppo amore” may reveal something of his reflections about what had gone so terribly wrong in his own life.

Poliziano also gives Orpheus a final monologue that is infamously colored by both misogyny and homoeroticism. Women should be avoided, for a man can never “crede a suo’ sembianti o sue parole!” Women torment men: “Segue chi fugge: a chi la vuol s’asconde.” Moreover, Orpheus, stung by his loss of Eurydice, attacks marriage and women: “Conforto e’ maritati a far divorzio, / E ciascun fugga il femminil consorzio.” He will no longer pursue ladies, but instead will chase younger men: “Da qui innanzi io vo corre i fior novelli, / La primavera del sesso migliore, / Quando son tutti leggiadretti e snelli: / Quest’ è più dolce e più suave amore.”⁸³ Poliziano is here adapting the words of Ovid, who presented Orpheus as the *auctor* of pederastic sex in *Metamorphoses* 10.83–85. Many medieval writers who had retold the Orphic story couched this part of the myth in moralistic warnings, while others had either tried to explain it away or ignored it outright.⁸⁴ Poliziano, in bold contrast, embraces Orpheus’s pederastic turn fully, and in fact allows Orpheus to defend himself in his own words. Because he recently lost his position due to the interference of Clarice, Poliziano’s screech against women and marriage comes as no surprise.

In contrast to the love of fickle women, when Poliziano's Orpheus lists the mythical boys loved by gods and heroes he describes nothing but bliss. His language flirts with our modern understanding of kink by stressing the bliss that can be achieved through dominance and submission. For instance, Poliziano describes the relationship between Jupiter and Ganymede in the following manner: "dal dolce amoroso nodo avvinto / Si gode in cielo il suo bel Ganimede."⁸⁵ Poliziano contrasts "avvinto" with "gode." Moreover, the etymology of "avvinto" comes from the Latin verb *vincere*, meaning "to vanquish," illustrating the way Ganymede defeats mighty Jupiter. Meanwhile, *gode*, generally signifying pleasure and enjoyment, has the additional meaning of "exult" or "triumph."⁸⁶ Unlike bending to the illogical demands of a woman, Jupiter's defeat at the hands of a boy is victorious in Poliziano's depiction. This love is a "santo amore" whose conquest is joyful.⁸⁷

Poliziano's above implication that there was a natural rivalry between male and female love was a recurrent assumption in other Italian Renaissance texts on homoeroticism and sodomy. As mentioned above, Ficino believed that men were most adept at ensnaring other men due to their inherent similarity. Bernardino da Siena, meanwhile, preached that sodomites acted out of a hatred for women, and that it was therefore more than reasonable for women to hate them in return.⁸⁸ This theme of gendered rivalry is present throughout Orpheus' monologue, and it is driven home by the play's end. Having overheard Orpheus' misogynistic speech, enraged Bacchantes tear him to shreds. This is not a moral victory, but a disordered one; the play ends in a song of gruesome frenzy. Here, Poliziano makes a striking break from Ovid's narrative. While Ovid reunites Orpheus and Eurydice happily in the afterlife and punishes the Bacchantes for their crimes, Poliziano cuts the narrative off abruptly with the Bacchantes soaked in blood and wine. Female irrationality has triumphed with Orpheus as its victim.

This gory, dark ending reflects, I believe, the mood of its author at the time it was written. Poliziano, far from his home, had perhaps found kindred spirits in both Orpheus and Ovid, themselves both exiles. However, for someone who had so faithfully followed Ovid's text, without any attempt to moralize its most problematic elements, his divergence from Ovid's ending is telling. By tampering with the narrative, he bends Orpheus' story to his own image. Just as Orpheus was ripped to shreds by wild, frenzied women, so had Poliziano been, from his perspective, victimized. Through eroticized competition with his patron's wife, he provoked her womanly rage, until, like the lions of his earlier epigram, she ripped him apart by interrupting his work and coming between himself and Lorenzo.

HUMAN HEARTS, REARRANGED

Between June and August of 1480, Lorenzo called Poliziano home. However, Poliziano did not return to stay in the Palazzo to live there as Lorenzo's clerk. Rather, Lorenzo gave him a small villa of his own in Fiesole, near the Medici

villa.⁸⁹ He resumed his position as tutor to Piero, and likely had a position of influence in the education of Lorenzo's two other sons as well. *The Confirmation of the Rule*, part of a fresco cycle by Domenico Ghirlandaio in the Sassetti Chapel of Santa Trinità, depicts Poliziano accompanying all three boys as their most important teacher.⁹⁰ Just as the Pope raises his hand in blessing of the Franciscan order, Lorenzo raises his hand in greeting to Poliziano, allowing Poliziano to take his sons out into the world to do the work of the Medici. Thus, this scene effectively canonizes Poliziano as a representative of Medicean values. Painted in the mid-1480s, it advertises the prestige and influence Poliziano enjoyed. As one of Poliziano's correspondents wrote, "puoi muovere con la voce il gran Medici a qualunque cosa tu voglia."⁹¹ Poliziano would remain a close friend to Lorenzo, even staying by his patron's side at his death, but the boundaries between friendship and eroticism were now far more firmly established.

But what of Clarice? Giovanni Battista Picotti believes that Poliziano's continued removal from the Palazzo indicates a concession on Lorenzo's part.⁹² At the very least, Poliziano having his own permanent residence must have helped things, as his separate sleeping quarters no longer presented a possibility of intimacy. It is easy to conclude, as Picotti does, that Lorenzo had bent to Clarice's will. However, Lorenzo's decisions in the way he handled Poliziano were probably made for his own sake as much as out of respect for his wife. Because Poliziano's membership in the family entirely depended upon his employment, the demands he could make on the relationship with his patron were limited. Lorenzo, in turn, had far looser obligations to his family tutor than he did to his wife who was tied to him by both holy matrimony and the children they shared.

Regardless of whether Lorenzo and Poliziano ever had a physical affair, their early friendship was deeply colored by homoeroticism. Like so many friendships and patron-client relationships of the period, the emotional language in their correspondence was tinged both with the romantic and the erotic. Poliziano especially used language to explore and push the boundaries of his and Lorenzo's bond, and for his part Lorenzo seems to have accepted these occasional transgressions and even encouraged them. While Lorenzo may have seen his close friendship with Poliziano as reconcilable with his marriage, both Clarice and Poliziano seem to have viewed the homoerotic entanglement between poet and patron as a natural rival to marriage. While Clarice, secure in her position as a wife, felt the freedom to assert boundaries for herself and her children and approach Lorenzo with her grievances, Poliziano had no such privilege. His *Orfeo* thus became an indirect means for him to express his frustration and hurt in ways which his position otherwise forbade. The conflict between these three persons, far from being a difference of pedagogical opinion, rather reflected commonly perceived threats to normative Renaissance family relationships.

Notes

1. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust in Renaissance Florence* (London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 172–178. For Lorenzo's heterosexual relationships, see Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); F. W. Kent, "Lorenzo de' Medici and the Love of Women," *Spunti e ricerche* 22 (2008): 28–49.

2. See Andrea Dazzi, "Ad Ang[elum] Politianum" and "Ad Iacobum," *Saggi di storia gay*, Giovanni Dall'Orto, accessed 29 January, 2017, www.giovanndallorto.com/biografie/poliziano/dazzi.html; Isidoro del Lungo, *Florentia: Uomini e cose del Quattrocento* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1897), 255–257; Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 317n11.

3. "Famiglia (1) s.f.," *Tesoro della lingua Italiana delle Origini*, accessed 25 June, 2018, <http://tlio.oiv.cnr.it/TLIO/>. See also Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, 111–112. For England and France, see Sarah Gordon, *Humour and Household Relationships: Servants in Late Medieval and Sixteenth-Century French Farce* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008) and the following three works by Naomi Tadmor "The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England," *Past & Present* 151, no. 1 (1996): 111–140; "Early Modern English Kinship in the Long Run: Reflections on Continuity and Change," *Continuity and Change* 25 (2010): 15–48; *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

4. See Lorenzo de' Medici to Giovanni de' Medici, 1492, in *Lawentii Medicis Magnifici Vita*, ed. Angelo Fabroni (Pisa: J. Gratiolius, 1784), 2:31; Clarice Orsini to Lucrezia Tornabuoni, June 2, 1479, in *Lettere*, ed. Patrizia Salvatore (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993), 156.

5. See the essays collected in Susan Broomhall, ed., *Emotions in the Household, 1200–1500* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008). For the concept of the emotional community, see Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

6. Caroline R. Sherman, "Resentment and Rebellion in the Scholarly Household: Son and Amanuensis in the Godefroy Family," in Broomhall, *Emotions in the Household*, 153–169.

7. Sherman, 155.

8. Paolo Orvieto, *Poliziano e l'ambiente medico* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2009), 54.

9. "Existimasne me adeo natura imbecillum, ut tam parva re movear? Si vero eiusmodi nostra natura est, ut facile huc atque illuc perturbationibus agatur, at multarum rerum experientia confirmatus animus sibi constare iam didicit. Ego filiorum non valitudinem tantum, sed fatum quandocumque expertus sum; pater immatura morte praereptus, cum annum agerem primum et vigesimum, ita me fortunae ictibus exposuit, ut quandoque me vitae poeniteret meae." Lorenzo to Angelo Poliziano, March 31, 1477, in *Lettere*, ed. Riccardo Fubini (Florence: Giunti, 1998), 1:343–344. The mention of dead children is likely referring to the miscarriage of a pair of twins that occurred in the spring of 1471. See Luigi Pulci to Lorenzo, March 27, 1471, in *Morgante e opere minori*, ed. Aulo Greco

(Milan: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 2006), 2: 1255–1257. In 1474, a third infant, Contessina Beatrice, apparently lived long enough to be baptized but died soon afterwards.

10. Poliziano to Lorenzo, August 25, 1478, in *Prose volgari inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite*, ed. Isidoro del Lungo (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1867), 57.

11. Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis Magnifici Vita*, 2:40.

12. See the letters from Lorenzo to Clarice, July 22, 1469 and July 24, 1469, in Fubini, *Lettere*, 1:41–43.

13. For Italy, see Dennis Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice, 1400–1600* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). More generally, see also Tovi Bibring, “Love Thy Chambermaid: Emotional and Physical Violence against the Servant in *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*,” in Broomhall, *Emotions in the Household*, 53–68; Marko Lamberg, “Suspicion, Rivalry and Care: Mistresses and Maid-servants in Early Modern Stockholm,” in Broomhall, 170–184; Stephanie Tarbin, “‘Good Friendship’ in the Household: Illicit Sexuality, Emotions and Women’s Relationships in Late Sixteenth-Century England,” in Broomhall, 135–152.

14. Jody Greene, “‘You Must Eat Men’: The Sodomitic Economy of Renaissance Patronage,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no.2 (1994): 166.

15. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 150; James M. Saslow, “Homosexuality in the Renaissance: Behavior, Identity, and Artistic Expression,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman (New York: Meridian, 1989), 91.

16. Roche, 12.

17. Roche, 51–52, 230.

18. Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1982), 68.

19. Dall’Orto, “‘Socratic Love’ as a Disguise for Same-Sex Love in the Italian Renaissance,” in *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe*, eds. Kent Gerard and Gert Hekma (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1989), 34–35.

20. Armando Maggi, “On Kissing and Sighing,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 49 (2005): 324.

21. Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 23.

22. See Bray, “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England,” *History Workshop* 29, no.1 (1990): 1–19; Steve Patterson, “The Bankruptcy of Homoerotic Amity in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1999): 9–32; Bradley J. Irish, “Friendship and Frustration: Counter-Affect in the Letters of Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 57, no. 4 (2015): 412–432.

23. Greene, “‘You Must Eat Men,’” 177.

24. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, 175.

25. Irish, “Friendship and Frustration,” 412.

26. Patterson, “The Bankruptcy of Homoerotic Amity,” 22–23.

27. Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. S. Jayne (Woodstock: Spring Publications, 1985), quoted in Maggi, 321–322.
28. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 130–131.
29. Poliziano to Lorenzo, April 6, 1479, *Laurentii Medicis Magnifici Vita*, 2:187.
30. See Yvonne Maguire, *The Private Life of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (London: A. Ouseley, 1936), 75.
31. Natalie Tomas, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 24.
32. See Clarice to Lorenzo, 20 August 1478, Mediceo Avanti il Principato (MAP) XXXI, Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), n.188; Clarice to Lorenzo, 23 August 1478, n.204.
33. Poliziano to Lorenzo, August 24, 1478, *Prose volgari*, 58.
34. “Adviso, come voi state: che no[n] posso stare contenta senza.” Clarice to Lorenzo, 20 August 1478, MAP XXXI, ASF, n.188.
35. Poliziano to Lorenzo, August 24, 1478, *Prose volgari*, 58. Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, ed. G. P. Goold, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4.320.
36. Poliziano to Lorenzo, May 6, 1479, 70.
37. Lorenzo to Clarice, May 1479, in *Lettere*, ed. Nicolai Rubinstein (Florence: Giunti, 1998), 4:80.
38. Clarice to Lorenzo, May 28, 1479, *Laurentii Medicis Magnifici Vita*, 2:288.
39. Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior: 1400–1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 285, 290.
40. See Brenda Preyer, “The Florentine *Casa*,” in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, eds. Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis (London: V&A, 2006), 34–49.
41. “Lètto²,” Treccani, accessed 27 November, 2018, <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/letto/>.
42. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 304n43.
43. Poliziano, *Dette piacevoli*, ed. Tiziano Zanato (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1983), 85.
44. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 167, 176, 179.
45. Roche, 167. See also Poliziano, *Dette piacevoli*, 113.
46. Clarice to Lorenzo, May 28, 1479, *Laurentii Medicis Magnifici Vita*, 2:288.
47. “Dispetto,” Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca, accessed 29 January, 2017, http://vocabolario.sns.it/html/_s_index2.html.
48. For a good analysis of the literal contents of the poem, see Sara Sturm, *Lorenzo de' Medici* (New York: Twayne, 1974), 35–48.
49. See the list of examples cited in Jean Toscan, “La carnaval du langage: le lexique erotique des poetes de l'equivoque de Burchiello a Marino (XV^e–XVII^e Siecles)” (PhD diss., University of Paris, 1978), 4:1762.

50. Toscan, 1:605. See also Allen J. Grieco, “From Roosters to Cocks: Italian Renaissance Fowl and Sexuality,” in *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy*, ed. Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 99–100.

51. See the list of examples cited in Toscan, “La carnaval du langage,” 4:1762.

52. Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Uccellagione di starne,” in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Paolo Orvieto (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1992), 2:658, 9.1–4. References are to volume, page, stanza, and line. “Far l’erta” literally means “make the rise,” referring to the way in which a hawk stands upright on a hawker’s fist.

53. Lorenzo de’ Medici, 2:665, 29.5–8.

54. Lorenzo de’ Medici, 2:663, 24.1–2; 2:664, 26.1.

55. Lorenzo de’ Medici, 2:670, 45. 5–6.

56. Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 183.

57. Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Canzona de’ visi addietro,” *Tutte le opere*, 2:806–809. For poetry in which Lorenzo describes heterosexual sodomy, see “Ragionavasi di sodo,” 2:738–2:740; “E’ non c’è niun più bel giuoco,” 2:744–746; “Tra Empoli e Pontolmo,” 2:747; “Canzona degli Innestatori,” 2: 786–789; “Canzona de’ Fornai,” 2:794–797.

58. Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Canzona de’ visi addietro,” 2:807, 2.5–6.

59. Lorenzo de’ Medici, 2:806nXI.

60. “Con man tocca, pria ch’alloggi, / poi non ha vergogna o danno.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 2: 808, 4.21–22.

61. Poliziano, “I’ mi trovai un dì, tutto soletto,” in *Rime*, ed. Daniela Delcorno Branca (Venice: Marsilio, 1990), 94, 2.12.

62. Poliziano, 95, 3.16–17.

63. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola to Poliziano, March 12, 1483, in Poliziano, *Letters*, ed. Shane Butler (London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1:16.

64. Pico to Poliziano, 1483, 1:18. The poems have unfortunately not survived; in a fit of guilt, Pico burned them all.

65. “Quis enim nolit ab isto ense mori?” Pico to Poliziano, 1483, 1:20.

66. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, 57.

67. Poliziano, *Epigrammata Latina XXIV*, in *Prose volgari*, 127.

68. Poliziano, “Non creder, donna, per essere crudele,” in Delcorno Branca, *Rime*, 70, lines 5–8. For other poems in which Poliziano explores this theme, see Poliziano, “Benedetto sie il giorno, l’ora e ’l punto,” 100; “Chi non sa come è fatto el paradiso,” 97; “Da poi ch’io vidi el tuo leggiadro viso,” 58; “E tuo begli occhi m’han furato el core,” 60; “I’ non ardisco gli occhi alti levare,” 54.

69. Poliziano, *Epigrammata Latina LXII*, in *Prose volgari*, 144, line 8.

70. “Cur ergo avertis, Laurenti, lumina? Redde / Redde meis, quaeso, lumina luminibus.” Poliziano, *Epigrammata Latina XXXV*, 128, lines 11–12.

71. Poliziano, “Rispetti XXXVII,” in Delcorno Branca, *Rime*, 70, line 2; “Pietà, donna, per Dio, deh non più guerra!” 55, lines 1–2.

72. Poliziano, *Epigrammata Latina LXIV*, in *Prose volgari*, 144, line 2.

73. Poliziano, “Rispetti LXIX,” *Rime*, 81, lines 1–3.

74. “Si modo tu dicas: Politiane, veni.” Poliziano, *Epigrammata Latina* XXVIII, 124, line 8. Del Lungo notes the link between this line and Poliziano’s letter of 6 May. See 123nXXVIII.

75. “Sum tuus, o Medices; fateor, tuque ipse fateris: / Sum tuus usque; tui sit tibi cura, precor. / Heu pereor! heu lacerant gemini mea corda leones! / Eripe me a rabidis, spes mea sola, feris.” Poliziano, *Epigrammata Latina* XXIX, in *Prose volgari*, 124, lines 1–4. Del Lungo suggests that one of these lions may have represented Clarice. See 124nXXIX.

76. Poliziano to Lorenzo de’ Medici, March 19, 1480, in Giovanni Battista Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1955), 79.

77. Orvieto, *Poliziano e l’ambiente mediceo*, 95–96.

78. “Repulsus a te etiam cum ignominia, Laurenti, dicebar: quid facerem istic a tua non solum domo sed etiam familiaritate praesidio eiectus.” Poliziano to Lorenzo, March 19, 1480, in Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche*, 81.

79. Picotti, 82. Del Lungo and Juliana Hill Cotton date the *Orpheus* at 1471, but the dedication to Francesco Gonzaga and its 1480 performance suggest that it was written while Poliziano was at the Mantuan court. Vittore Branca meanwhile believes that the *Orpheus* was composed to celebrate Isabelle d’Este’s 1480 visit to Mantua, and that it was likely composed sometime in early June. See Vittore Branca, *Poliziano e l’umanesimo della parola* (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), 61; Juliana Hill Cotton, “The Life and Works of Politian” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1932), 9; del Lungo, *Florentia: Uomini e cose del Quattrocento* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1897), 320.

80. Picotti, 61.

81. Poliziano, *La favola di Orfeo*, in *Le Stanze, L’Orfeo e le Rime*, ed. Giosue Carducci (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1863), 108, lines 306–307.

82. Greene, “You Must Eat Men,” 177. See also Steven Soebbing, “The Fine Line of Friendship: Male Homoerotic Relationships in Mozart’s *Apollo et Hyacinthus*,” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 23, no. 1 (2015): 94.

83. Poliziano, *Orfeo*, in *Le Stanze, l’Orfeo e le Rime*, 110, lines 341, 344, 352–353; 109, lines 330–333.

84. Robert Mills, *Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 138–143.

85. Poliziano, *Orfeo*, in *Le Stanze, l’Orfeo e le Rime*, 110, lines 347–348.

86. “Godere v.,” TLIO, accessed 17 February 2017, <http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/TLIO/>.

87. Poliziano, *Orfeo*, in *Le Stanze, l’Orfeo e le Rime*, 110, line 350.

88. Bernardino da Siena, *Le prediche volgari*, ed. P. Bargellini (Milan: Rizzoli, 1936), 910–911, quoted in Rocke, “Sodomites in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany,” in Gerard and Hekma, 20. Translation by Rocke.

89. Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche*, 68–69.

90. Orvieto and Picotti disagree about whether Poliziano taught the two younger boys directly. See Orvieto, *Poliziano e l’ambiente mediceo*, 98; Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche*, 68.

91. Naldo Naldi to Poliziano, Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche*, 68.

92. Picotti, 69.