

INVESTING IN INFIDELS: SLAVERY IN TRECENTO
AND QUATTROCENTO FLORENCE

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Abstract

In the intake records of the Foundling Hospital in Florence between 1450 and 1453, only two infants, out of the almost three hundred, were marked as “ghezzo” and “nero”, meaning dark-skinned and black. At the same time, about fifty percent of the children left there were the children of enslaved women who accounted for 92% of the enslaved population of Florence. These numbers demonstrate the large role gender, sexual violence, and race formation played in Florentine slavery. My dissertation examines the integration and explanation of slavery in Florence following its revival in the fourteenth century, with emphasis on lived experiences and visible minorities in the enslaved population. In archival sources, including letters, sermons, court records, account books, notarial documents, legislation, and slave and orphan registers, descriptions of enslaved peoples emerge within fluid categories that were placed in hierarchical relationships based on perceived otherness.

My study provides an analysis of the experiences of slavery and its implications in wider Tuscan society. The first chapter focuses on the perception and prejudices of Italian intellectuals against slaves, as well as the formation of identity in Florence against the backdrop of enslavement. I also examine the creation of the Tuscan identity in Florence to reveal how humanism and the revival of classical antiquity was used in rhetoric to justify the ownership of slaves. The second chapter examines letters of women in the domestic sphere for insight into the interactions between enslaved and enslavers in Florentine households as well as in Florentine institutions and society. In the third chapter, I discuss how use of epidermal descriptors and gender divides reveal new possibilities for the study of race and enslavement in the premodern and early modern Mediterranean. My last chapter focuses on the interactions and negotiations between enslaved peoples and legal and government entities and what they reveal about social and cultural ideas on enslavement using court records and legislation. These four chapters argue that slavery in Florence was both distinct and inseparable from the wider narrative of Mediterranean enslavement in the medieval and early modern period.

Dedication

To my grandparents
于文巧 and 王相钧
With my eternal love
我会永远爱你

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Introduction

Would that I was granted the eloquence worthy of the enslaved women of Florence in this study. Or possess the ability to do enslaved women justice since Florence became synonymous with splendour and magnificence. Writing about enslaved peoples, especially those who were often ignored and erased by both contemporary and subsequent writers, is a monumental task, one that I have chosen to shoulder not because I believe I have the ability, but because the intervention of slavery in the study of Florentine history is necessary for the city to continue to be a viable subject of study.

I use Leonardo Bruni's language as a rhetorical exercise to highlight the role that enslaved women had in Florence and to place them in the narrative of the history of Florence. By borrowing his language, I place the study of enslavement at the centre of discussions on Florence. The use of Bruni's vocabulary also constitutes a critique of the Florentine narrative as written by Bruni. Bruni's *Panegyric to the City of Florence* highlighted Florence as a city worthy of study and is a key text for historians discussing representations of Florence in the fifteenth century. By focusing on Florence as an ideal, enslaved women have, whether consciously or unwittingly, been either erased or brushed over in historical overviews of the city. Nevertheless, enslavement was a part of the history of the famous republic. Enslaved people participated in and inspired some of the fundamental systems in Florence that Bruni, and subsequent historians, so praised.

Writing the history of slavery by presenting the enslaved as people and actors rather than objects cannot be done without careful analysis and consideration of their lived experiences. The history of oppressed peoples requires a theoretical framework that reads against the grain of established sources for both their words and their silences. This study benefits from the

methodologies created by social historians and critical theory in its discussion of the lived experiences of enslavement through various hierarchies and cultural systems. Enslaved peoples must be seen not just as a part of the economy but with sensitivity to their influence on the identity and society of Europe, and thus as building block of the contemporary world system.

This study is an explication and an intervention into the history of Florence and of the European narrative, one that centres Florence as an artistic and intellectual centre and takes advantage of its detailed recordkeeping. The necessity of involving Florence in the study of enslavement is not just because of the city's concealment of its practise but also because Florence is the first step to inserting enslaved peoples into the wider history of premodern and early modern Europe. This study will consider the social and cultural aspects of slavery in Florence through a close engagement with archival sources to put Florentine enslavement practises into conversation with the wider European and Mediterranean narrative.

Historiography

The study of slavery in Europe, in particular Italy, after the fall of the Rome in the fourth century has come with waves of interest and sporadic articles starting in the nineteenth century. Its study has been troubled by ideology and the pervasiveness of a narrative that hid its existence until the twentieth century and beyond, along with a generally unsympathetic view of enslavement in the late Middle Ages as a benign practise of domestic service.¹ The earliest academic work about enslavement in Florence came from Salvatore Bongi and Agostino Zanelli in the nineteenth century.² Their two works, a short article by Bongi and a monograph by

¹ Examples include Iris Origo "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Speculum* 30, no. 3 (1955) 321–66 and Ridolfo Livi, *La schiavitù domestica nei tempi di mezzo e nei mode*. (Padua: CEDAM, 1928).

² Salvatore Bongi "Le schiave orientali in Italia" *Nuova Anthropologie*. 1 (1866): 215-246; Agostino Zanelli, *Le Schiave orientali in Firenze nei secoli XIV e XV*, Firenze 1886.

Zanelli, outlines the sources and the state of eastern enslavement in Italy and Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Since their focus was only on eastern slaves, they provided a partial picture of the realities of enslavement in Florence, writing North and West Africa completely out of Italy's enslavement practises.

Other scholars, such as Cesare Guasti, who transcribed the letters of Alessandra Strozzi, Lapo Mazzei, and Caterina Ricci along with multiple volumes of archival documents from Florence and Prato, left out any mention of the sexual abuse of enslaved peoples and the children that resulted from such abuse. Whether Guasti was trying to make Tuscan enslavement seem more benign or to hide evidence of a “*mestizo*” population, his authority on these transcriptions was taken for granted.³ Such censorship obscured the true nature of enslavement for scholars who relied on Guasti's transcriptions and affected scholarship afterwards.

Before the Second World War, two important studies on enslavement in Italy and Florence provided more context but were also very much a product of the times they were written. The first is one of the most in-depth studies of enslavement in Florence by the Fascist anthropologist Ridolfo Livi. His monograph *La schiavitù domestica nei tempi di mezzo e nei moderni* is a detailed overview of the *Registro degli Schiavi*.⁴ His work also contains a partial transcription of the *Registro*, and other records such as the *Balie e Bambini* (wetnurse and children) register from the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* foundling hospital. However, none of his transcriptions are complete and his main inquiry, where he looks for traces of these enslaved peoples in the soldiers of Mussolini's armies through their physical features, must not be taken seriously as not to reproduce his racial stereotypes.

³ See note in Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to her Sons*, trans. Judith Bennet, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

⁴ Ridolfo Livi, *La schiavitù domestica nei tempi di mezzo e nei moderni*.

The second study was the interjection of the Annales school through Marc Bloch's overview on serfdom in the Middle Ages and Ferdinand Braudel's history of the Mediterranean during the reign of Philip II.⁵ These two works pioneered the focus of the *Annales* school of history from below and the *longue durée*. Bloch's assertion that enslavement ended and became serfdom in Western Europe has been proven to be erroneous, but the tremendous influence of his otherwise brilliant oeuvre meant that many historians after him took these statements to be truths.⁶ Braudel's large overview of the shifting Mediterranean world from North Africa and West Asia to West Africa has provided a large narrative of the economic and social systems of early modern Europe. However, his study, like comprehensive studies of such ambitious size, overlooks the exchanges of money and people from the Italian Peninsula to and from the markets of the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic, in particular the West African trades, that historians have since uncovered. The influence of the Annales school and the comprehensive archival overview of Ridolfo Livi meant that the study of slavery was filtered through an ideological lens of a European narrative.

In 1955, Iris Origo published what is still used as the primary source on Tuscan slavery in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁷ She also makes use of the *Registro degli Schiavi* to calculate numbers, races, and origins of the enslaved in Florence, pointing out that 90% of the enslaved were women. Her work's central argument stressed the untrustworthiness of enslaved peoples as enemies and foreigners who brought conflict into Tuscan households. She also attests that enslaved women were treated in the same way as poor servant girls in noble households - a

⁵ Marc Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages: Selected Essays* (LA: University of California Press, 1975), and Ferdinand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II. Vol. 1 and 2*. Translated by Reynolds Slân. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972).

⁶ See Marc Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages* and *La Société féodale*. (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), 272.

⁷ Origo, "Domestic Enemy".

claim that ignored the social consequences of enslavement. Her work's importance lies in that Origo provided a comprehensive overview of the legal, social, and economic consequences of enslavement with an extensive array of archival documents. However, she wrote before the social turn in history and its accompanying methodological changes with regards to gender, race, enslavement, and history from below.

The turn to digital humanities in the 1970s and big data analysis of history led scholars such as Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy to compute the Florentine Catasto of 1427 into a large database of general demographic material.⁸ Their work calculated the number of enslaved people in Florence to be about 300 in 1427. This number cannot be taken as an authoritative account due to the nature of the Catasto as a snapshot and a tax document that left ambiguities about the reporting of enslaved peoples as investments. This demographic work is a snapshot of Florence in 1427 through individual households, leading to conclusions about life-cycles, gendered experiences, and wealth disparities. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber's work on women, stemming from these demographic studies and her extensive archival expertise, also places enslaved people with servants in the social context.

Another extremely important but quantitative survey of slavery in the European Mediterranean comes from Belgian historian Charles Verlinden, whose work relied on an extensive array of sources.⁹ His massive two volume study spans most of Western Europe geographically, with a particular focus on the Mediterranean. He spends a section on Florence, but due to the breadth of his study, offers only a broader overview of the types of sources and a

⁸ Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy, *Tuscans and Their Families*. (Westford, CT: Yale University Press, 1978.)

⁹ Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale, 2 vols. 1955–77*. Bruges: De Tempel.

general overview of enslavement. His work is a synthesis rather than an analysis. However, he provided the overview from which historians could attempt a deeper qualitative analysis.

In the next few decades, historians focused on different areas in Italy with regards to enslavement, with only Jacques Heers and Susan Mosher Stuard attempting an overarching Mediterranean overview.¹⁰ Other historians who have worked on slavery were concerned with the economic consequences.¹¹ With the claim that at no point, even in Genoa or Venice, was enslavement a large enough endeavour to have economic significance, slavery often became a side topic in larger discussions of social histories and economic histories. Other studies of enslavement focus on the sixteenth and seventeenth century where the establishment of galley slaves and the focus on ransom changed the nature of European enslavement.¹² These important works focus on the Tuscan port city of Livorno, when discussing the Florentine context in the time of the Duchy of Tuscany.¹³ In the premodern period, recent studies on Italian slavery include scholars such as Sally McKee, Stephen Epstein, Kate Lowe, Thomas Foster Earle, Christopher Cluse, Reuvin Amitai, and Hannah Barker.¹⁴ Christopher Paoella recently has published a Verlinden-esque overview of enslavement from the end of Rome to the end of the

¹⁰ Jacques Heers, *Esclaves et domestiques au Moyen Age dans le monde méditerranéen*. Paris: Fayard, 1981 and Susan Stuard Mosher, “Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery.” *Past & Present* 149 (November 1995): 3–28.

¹¹ Henri Bresc, *Un monde méditerranéen: économie et société en Sicile, 1300–1450*. (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1987).

¹² Robert Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800*, (Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave, 2003); “The Geography of Slaving in the Early Modern Mediterranean, 1500–1800.” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 1 (2007): 57–74.

¹³ See Tamar Herzig, “Slavery and Interethnic Sexual Violence: A Multiple Perpetrator Rape in Seventeenth-Century Livorno.” *American Historical Review* 127. 1 (2022), 194–222 and Lucia Dacome *Malleable Anatomies: Models, Makers, and Material Culture in Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017).

¹⁴ Sally McKee, Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy.” in *Slavery and Abolition*. (Vol. 29, No. 3. Routledge: 2008); Stephen Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*. Ed. Kate Lowe and T. P Earle. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1000–1500 ce)* ed. Reuvin Amitai and Christoph Cluse. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017); Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: the Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260-1500*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

Middle Ages across differing sections of Europe as a function of human trafficking.¹⁵ Although his work is a synthesis, it also follows a thread of his major argument on the recurrence of the patterns of enslavement and its sexual nature for women and children. His discussion of human trafficking, gender, and the linking of these themes across time paves the way for case-studies of enslavement to fit into his larger intersectional thread.

For Tuscany, the only large interjection since Iris Origo has been Monica Boni's thesis on servitude and enslavement in premodern Tuscany, defended in 2006. However, her treatment encompasses all of Tuscany and focuses also on numbers. No comprehensive overview of enslavement in Florence has appeared in the English language since Iris Origo's article, especially not one that works within the gender, race, microhistorical, and philosophical interventions of new scholarship since 2006. My work uses the documents previously used by historians and new archival finds in an in-depth study of the social, cultural, and political consequences of enslavement in Florence, arguing that historians must grapple with the story of enslavement for any comprehensive overview of Florentine history in general.

Slavery/Race: an overview

The study of slavery has been subject to many theories, interventions, and definitions. The most important of these has been Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death*, where he asserts that slavery meant a social death devoid of social connections with others outside of the master.¹⁶ However, more modern historians of enslavement, especially in the Atlantic slave trade have successfully refuted and restructured this argument.¹⁷ Currently, studies of slavery are

¹⁵ Christopher Paoletta, *Human Trafficking in Medieval Europe: Slavery, Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

¹⁶ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2018).

¹⁷ See *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death*. Ed. John Bodell and Walter Scheidel (Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

reclaiming the agency and humanity of enslaved peoples as active persons through a close reading of the texts in which they are mentioned, as well as reconstructing their lives through minute details using theoretical frameworks and new historical methods.

The most recent interjection of the study of slavery comes from intersectional approach first coined by Kimberle Crenshaw.¹⁸ She argues for the importance of positionality for the different forces of oppression. This approach is one of the building blocks of critical race theory that understands race as one of the factors in the differing experiences of peoples based on their positionality and identities. Enslavement requires an intersectional approach that considers the race, gender, age, and religious affiliations of those enslaved and enslaving.

Defining race as a power relationship of selective essentialized traits, rather than a biological or inherited phenomenon, allows for a more thorough understanding of the dynamics of historical concepts of racialization. As a systemic reinforcement of hierarchy, race could then be traced across the *longue durée* through its various changes in context.¹⁹ Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence offers a point of transition in the understanding and reinforcement of racialized differences through its vocabulary of enslavement. The enforcement of hierarchy through essentializing traits and relationships allows other intersections such as gender, sexuality, and geographic relationships to become part of the biopolitical structure. To state differently, race is the result of the *biologification* of traits such as gender, sexuality, geography, inheritance, and religion that stems from social and cultural experiences and conveniences. These traits are selected as markers of difference in a hierarchical relationship that reinforces itself and

¹⁸ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*. Eds. Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 279-309.

¹⁹ See Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

its ideology. Perceptions of difference are a reflection of the social and cultural conceptions of hierarchy and importance, rather than one that was predicated on genealogy.

Building on the groundwork on intersectionality and critical race theory, this study will consider the overwhelmingly female representations of enslavement, especially with regard to the expectation of sexual slavery that was a primary experience for enslaved women and children.²⁰ I approach the ethnic terminologies, colours, and religious origins of these enslaved peoples as sources of knowledge creation and entangled aspects that make up an identity. As a result of the fifteenth century, this study considers how the switch from West Asian enslavement with Black Sea merchant networks to West African networks affected the perceptions of the traits deemed enslaveable.

The Sources

Historians of premodern slavery can find its mention in a wide variety of sources, but details are sparse in these documents. Sources come from disparate records, making it difficult to create a single narrative. The reasons people wrote sources were often different. More often, notice of enslaved people appeared among hundreds of other records, and seldom more than once. One of the reasons Florence is so well positioned for a study of slavery is that it has an abundance of sources, both specifically about enslavement practises and day-to-day records. The provenance of each source will be discussed in the chapters where they are analyzed, but a quick overview of the breadth of sources which discuss slavery will demonstrate how enslavement permeated the records of late medieval Florentine society.

Before dealing with the specific law that legalized enslavement in Florence, this study uses legal writings to trace the idea of enslavement both theoretically and in practise through the

²⁰ See Christopher Paoletta, *Human Trafficking in Medieval Europe* and Jennifer Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*. (Duke University Press, 2020).

culture of the European Mediterranean. These ideas were compounded by two different but intersecting frameworks and types of sources: Christian theology and Roman law. While classical Roman slavery, the ideology of the Crusades, and the development of canon law are outside the scope of this study, an overview of these sources provide the background to the regulation of slavery in Florence.

The records of the regulation of slavery and of the subsequent registration and taxation of enslaved peoples in Florence are the key sources for enslavement in the late fourteenth century. As one of the most comprehensive overviews of enslavement between 1364 and 1397, this register tellingly reveals the sources of enslaved people and the details of the body that Florentines paid attention to in order to identify enslaved peoples. It also demonstrates the linguistic differences in race, geography, and colour that Florentines had adapted from their Genoese and Venetian counterparts in slavery. This document, however, only reveals details of enslavement at the beginning of a person's entry into Florence. It is supplemented by other state records that reveal the lived experiences of enslaved peoples, especially with the proliferation of a variety of civic institutions in Florence with detailed records that portray enslaved peoples as part of the social fabric of Florentine society.

The reliance of Florence on notarial documents to validate all legal transactions means that the some of 20 000 notarial documents in the Florence state archives display the variety of functions enslaved peoples had in the various day-to-day transactions of Florentines.²¹ In addition, the multiple state institutions and the efforts the Florentine government put into taxation mean that enslaved peoples appeared in official registers as both property and as

²¹ See the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Notarile Antecosimiano 9039-9042.

persons. These contradictions in the placement of enslaved peoples in official sources - both public and private - are further discussed in this study.

The numerous private account books, letters, and diaries written by Florentines demonstrate their participation in enslavement and its trade. Whether company, or private household ledgers, these accounts demonstrate both the economic considerations of enslavement, and show how enslaved peoples were used and treated in Florentine households. Alternatively, the silences in the formal private writings such as Giovanni Rucellai's *Zibaldone* (commonplace book), as an exercise in familial history and civic pride, are telling in the absence of enslaved peoples - especially when authors were known to have had offspring with enslaved peoples in Florence.²² Investigating the silences of letters when discussing (or *not* discussing) enslaved peoples and their perceived differences is a necessary way to engage with the lack of detail in the private and public narrative records and accounts.

The record of one of Florence's most celebrated institutions, the *Innocenti* hospital, demonstrates how Florence's fifteenth-century interest in charity and the protection of its innocents was also a by-product and a function of slavery. These records reveal not only the interest the members of the *Por Santa Maria* (more commonly known as the *Arte della Seta*, the Silk Guild) had in the slave trade out of West Africa while patronizing the foundling hospital, but also show such commercial interests were interrelated to the demographics of the hospital. In the first decades of the operation of the *Innocenti*, 50% of the children left there were the children of Florentines and enslaved women. Such a large ratio for a small population of

²² Giovanni Rucellai himself appears in the *Balie e Bambini* records for abandoning the children of enslaved women in his household. Archivio di Ospedale degli Innocenti, 487 fol. 237r, 489 fol. 92r, 494 fol. 73v. See also Giovanni Rucellai, *Zibaldone*. ed. Gabriella Battista, (Firenze: Sismel, 2013).

enslaved women has broad consequences for our understanding of the nature of slavery in Florence.

Sources will be used for their discussion on slavery and also their silences about the practises of enslavement in Florence. This study argues that silences are as powerful as direct acknowledgement of enslavement in Florence. The genre and purpose of each source will be considered in the ensuing chapters of this study.

Chapter Summaries

This study is comprised of four chapters which will discuss aspects of Florentine slavery that relate to the lived experiences of enslaved peoples and their interactions with Florentines. The first chapter lays out the theoretical groundwork for enslavement in Florence that allowed them to reconcile slavery with their political and intellectual developments. It also emphasizes the importance of the regulation of the slave trade to the developing humanistic ideas of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence. As members of a society that allowed slavery, Florentines had to reconcile their own philosophies of self with the concept of unfreedom. The first chapter uses the humanistic frameworks to look at how enslavement formed and was formed by the identities of Florentines and their philosophies of self.

The second chapter reads against the grain of the various private records of enslavement to discuss the lived experiences of enslaved women in Florence. It looks at their interactions with the households, neighbourhoods, and the various institutions around Florence that were engaged in the slave trade. While this chapter discusses the atrocities of enslavement and sexual service, it also finds areas of agency and sometimes cooperation between enslaved peoples and other Florentines. This chapter also discusses the children of enslaved women and their treatment by Florentine fathers and kin. In particular, their adoption by Florentines and their abandonment at the Florentine hospital reveals prevailing attitudes about enslaved heritage and its erasure.

The third chapter delves into the theoretical conceptualizations of difference that Florentines used to highlight the enslavability of persons and the hierarchies of their society with the introduction of foreign women into their households. I argue for the coalescence of religious affiliation, physical features, and geographic identities as selected criteria for race-making. Using language from the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, the Florentine Foundling hospital, I will also discuss the inheritability of enslaved status and ideas of otherness and its mitigation by the *Innocenti*. This chapter also discusses the changing language of embodied othering with the political developments of the Mediterranean world. As a theoretical opening to the ideas of race and race-making, this chapter will bring the Florentine slave trade in conversation with critical race theory and premodern critical studies.

The last chapter explores the interactions of enslaved people with state systems, including legal systems. First, it discusses the legislation relating to enslavement in Florence, and its redactions and revisions through the fifteenth century. Then, through the lens of criminal law, this chapter will analyze how enslaved peoples interacted with these systems and their society through summaries of their court cases and their punishments. It argues for a liminal space between property and personhood that enslaved peoples occupied in Florence. The chapter also addresses how various governmental records dealt with enslaved peoples in their recording, revealing that enslavement was categorized differently based on the needs of the particular record.

Thesis

The purpose of this study is to provide a social and cultural overview of enslavement, especially that of foreign women, in Florence. It argues for the permeation of the ideas and practices of enslavement into every facet of Florentine society and politics. The relatively low number of enslaved peoples in Florence has been a reason for its lack of study, but despite the

low number of slaves in Florence, they were a notable part of the fabric of the society and inherent to the developments of Florence that so characterize early modern historiography.

I hope to insert the concept of enslavement into future studies about the social, and cultural development of Europe as a continuous phenomenon within and without its porous borders. I place Florentine enslavement in the wider context of premodern race-making by analyzing the development of the vocabularies that Florentines applied to enslaved peoples and their offspring. By examining a mix of the institutional, social, critical, and cultural participation of enslavement in Florence, this study argues that the enslavement of foreign women was not just a legal possibility and a cheap supply of permanent labour, but also a phenomenon that permeated the various levels of Florentine society and underlined the ideologies of the self and the state in the city.

Chapter 1: Humanism and the State

Introduction

The city of Florence during the period between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries was one that historians, since Burkhardt, have argued for as a place of the glorification of liberty and civic duty. While historians are now arguing about Florence's uniqueness in the creation and dissemination of new ideas, the rhetoric promoted by the Florentines still emphasizes a commitment to the ideals, if not the reality, of the glorification of the commune and its liberty. To conceptualize these ideals, however, requires insight into how their underlying ideas were created, perceived, and weaponized by individuals and the commune during the fourteenth and fifteenth century. It is also necessary to look at how the foils to these ideas – that is enslavement and foreignness – were defined and combined to solidify the identity of Florentines in both their geographic territory, historical contingency, and ideas of the self. An overview of the state structure and its institutions also builds the groundwork for understanding how enslavement functioned in Florentine society. This will lay down the foundations for Florence's political identity and structure for closer examination and demonstrate how Florentine slavery was instrumental to creating this political identity and its institutions.

A study of Florentine slavery is crucial to understanding the many political and intellectual developments of Florence and its territorial state in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, collectively known as the "Renaissance". The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the socio-cultural norms of enslavement affected state developments, including using the vehicle of enslavement legislation to reinforce the powers of the commune in Florence. Existing outside of a theoretical framework for liberty, enslaved women had very real effects on relationships of property, citizenship, and family. Insofar as humanistic ideas enabled the

regulation and recording of slavery in Florence, enslavement also provided the lived experiences that helped shape the ideologies of state.

This chapter will examine the political philosophy and institutions of Florence and its slave trade through three sections, arranged somewhat chronologically. They will treat the legal institutions, the humanist intervention, and the political and ideological culture of Florentines. I will start with an overview of the political developments and of the theological perspectives on slavery, including its categorization of the difference between different peoples. The underlying conflict between the adoption of Roman laws surrounding slavery and the theological principles that nominally banned enslavement led to the reframing of the ideology behind conversion and enslavement on the Italian peninsula. I will also look at how the practises of slavery reinforced and demonstrated the strength of state institutions in Florence at the end of the fourteenth century. Then I will look at the role these institutions played in the governance of freedom and unfreedoms that are associated with the practices of enslavement.

Section two will look at the role humanism played in the Florentine state and its relationship to enslavement. This section highlights the fact that enslavement, and its concepts, exist within the ideas of the text even though they are missing from direct mention, through the writings of the leading humanist, Leonardo Bruni.¹ It will also discuss how these ideas permeated through the merchant classes, who bought into the ideals of humanism. Humanism was fitted to suit both their lives and a tool to guide their relationships to the state and its legal systems. Thus, humanism controlled and helped to maintain the peace through an ideology of peaceful class relationships and civic institutions within the guild classes - the same classes that would participate in the slave trade. This section will also talk about the Florentine ideas of

¹ For an explication of how ideas of race and hierarchy exist outside of its direct mention, see Cord J Whittaker, *Black Metaphors*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

empire, and how they played out in the state galley of Florence undertaken after its conquest of Pisa. Despite the failure of this project, its participation in the eastern and western Mediterranean trade was an important part of the creation of the concepts of statehood.

The last section will focus on the culture surrounding identity. Four different but intersecting categories of self-identification will be discussed in relation to slavery. A section on civic identity will discuss how the commune of Florence attempted to control and regulate the identities of its citizens and trace the liminalities of identification in the premodern period. Then, a section on religious identity will discuss the city's fraught identification with the Latin-Christian church and the faith's transition into a quasi-hereditary and geographical relationship with the commune. A discussion of neighbourhood identity will highlight the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century transition of power as an oligarchical model that eventually resulted in the Medici duchy. It will follow the practice of oligarchical families in subordinating the city-wide relationship of associations to ones of neighbourhood paternalism that bolstered the power of elites through the support of the masses. At last, a discussion of Florentine identity evaluates the fixity of ideas of Florentine-ness outside the commune. Each section will discuss how these aspects of identity reinforced, and were reinforced by, identities coming out of the institutionalization of enslavement during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Understanding the influences behind the development of the state and its republican ideology will highlight how the intellectual world was in part built on both the ideas and practises of enslavement. The role slavery played in these institutions also underscores the continuity of slavery as an idea that carried beyond the innovation of humanism for Florentine statecraft. Using enslavement as a necessary category for analysis of the intellectual and political

history of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence offers a deeper insight into the processes of state creation and republican values.

Historiography

The history of Florentine political ideology has been a main topic of discussion for Renaissance intellectual historians of the twentieth century. Among the numerous studies on the lineages and breakages of western Europe's political development in Florence, three major thinkers stand out: Hans Baron, Quentin Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock were instrumental in creating the current framework for studying humanism, political philosophy, and the communal government in Republican Florence. While these authors' ideas have been continuously debated and critiqued, their works are still necessary to understand the scholarship on Florentine political philosophy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This chapter will build on these major theories of intellectual history, contending that enslavement both fit into these developments in intellectual history and acted as the catalyst for many of these new ideas in Florentine society. Any work on the humanist and political world of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence builds upon previous political theories of state development. Thus, this section first provides a necessary overview of these three theoretical frameworks that have dominated the scholarly discussion.

Hans Baron's monumental thesis, published in 1950, created the idea of "civic humanism". He argued that the war against Giangaleazzo Visconti, the Duke of Milan, where Florence's imminent conquest was thwarted by the outbreak of plague in the duke's camp in 1402 was a watershed moment where humanism was applied to save the commune rather than for personal contemplation. According to Baron, Leonardo Bruni, a Florentine humanist from Arezzo, revived the concept that any rule other than public rule was tyrannical, adopted from the

Roman Republic.² This idea focuses on individuals who were to serve the state through their engagement with humanistic thought and philosophies of state, applying lessons learned from antiquity to the politics of the day. Baron saw a fundamental change in the teachings of humanists in the fifteenth century where the literary humanism of Petrarch is replaced by the political ideology of humanism as employed by Florentine chancellors Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni.³ Hans Baron's thesis has been critiqued for its timeline, its take on the sincerity of Bruni, and its sense of the realities of the political world.⁴ Through these continuous debates, scholars have continued to build on Baron's idea of a fundamental change in the values of Florentine society.

About twenty years after Hans Baron's thesis, Ronald Witt took the civic notion of humanism further with his emphasis on consent to govern and on the equality of individuals that Bruni articulated in his writings.⁵ The application of these ideas of freedom and equality to individuals demonstrate the importance of understanding the intellectual movements within Florence. While the dating, the catalyst, and the sincerity of this transformation have been called into question by subsequent scholars, civic humanism continues to be one of the most important ideas for the merging of the literary and contemplative model of humanism with the politics of the late-medieval and early modern period.⁶ A scholarly consensus for the change in the nature of humanism emerged through this debate, while the specificity of such a change is still contested.

² Hans Baron. *The crisis of the early Italian Renaissance; civic humanism and republican liberty in an age of classicism and tyranny*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), 40.

³ Hans Baron, *Crisis*, 382.

⁴ Jerrold Seigal. "Civic Humanism" Or Ciceronian Rhetoric?: The Culture Of Petrarch And Bruni." *Past & Present*, Vol 34.1 (1966), 3.

⁵ Mark Jurdjevic. " Chapter Five: The Guicciardinian Moment: The Discorsi Palleschi, Humanism, and Aristocratic Republicanism in Sixteenth-Century Florence". In *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 124.

⁶ Ronald Witt, "The *Crisis* after Forty Years" *American Historical Review* Vol. 101, Issue 1 Feb 1996. 117.

Quentin Skinner's work on the intellectual history of the late-Middle Ages also forms a landmark study of the political development of Florence within the larger context of Western political history. He demonstrates the importance of the heritage of Roman law through an examination of the controversies surrounding the *de jure* imperium of the Holy Roman Empire and the *de facto* freedom of the Northern Italian city-states.⁷ Skinner's focus on the legal tradition that comes out of Roman law, especially Justinian's *Digest*, demonstrates a historical continuity in late-medieval understandings of the state that existed before and beyond a humanistic framework.⁸ The adaptability of Roman law as an ideological tool is central to Skinner's argument about the ability of late-medieval jurists to transfer legislative and executive authority from the prince to the city-state, providing a political framework for Italian state development. As a central theme to Skinner's comprehensive volumes of political thought in western Europe, the lineage of Rome extended beyond Florentine civil politics to the Hobbes, Bodin, and other political theorists of the early modern period.

More recently, Daniel Lee expanded on Skinner's legalistic focus by applying the private legal standing of absolute dominion (*dominium*) to the historical studies of *imperium*. Lee demonstrates the concern over the application of property ownership as a political right in his argument for the use of Roman private law to understand the relationship between sovereignty and the people during the twelfth- and thirteenth- century controversy between the Holy Roman Emperor and the Italian city-states.⁹ Property shaped the main relationship between the state and

⁷ Quentin Skinner, "The Rediscovery of Republican Values." *Chapter. In Visions of Politics, 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10–38.

⁸ Quentin Skinner. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5.

⁹ Daniel Lee, "The Medieval Law of Peoples." In *Popular Sovereignty in Early Modern Constitutional Thought*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

the individual, as adopted from the vocabulary of antiquity.¹⁰ Since property relationships were also relationships to power and liberty (as possessions that could be alienated), enslaved people, who were property, could not hold these things as property.¹¹ In reality, just like the fact that the Italian city-states were under the *de jure* dominion of the Holy Roman Emperor but were *de facto* in possession of the ability to self-govern, there existed a liminal space where enslaved people could not hold possessions *de jure* but emerged as actors who owned items *de facto* out of the simple necessities and customs of a property-based society like Florence.

Situated in the last decades of the fifteenth century, J.G.A. Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* highlighted the creation of a historical consciousness as the Republic of Florence struggled for its own survival.¹² Pocock's Machiavellian moment is a popular one, where the demise of the republic was an anxiety shared by the major theorists in the city-republics of Italian in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He connects these ideas to a Greek lineage that continues through Western political thought to the Anglophone world as both a great power and a stark warning for the fate of city-republics and territorial republics.¹³ Pocock and Skinner's overarching views of ancient continuity demonstrate the importance of understanding the humanist intervention and its historical and contemporary inspirations. Their works also reveals the importance of analyzing developing ideas of liberty and state throughout the late-Medieval and early modern period in conjunction with the realities of the social world. Current scholarship

¹⁰ Lee, Daniel. "Private Law Models for Public Law Concepts: The Roman Law Theory of Dominion in the Monarchomach Doctrine of Popular Sovereignty." *The Review of Politics* 70, no. 3 (2008), 374.

¹¹ For a discussion on liberty as the property of the republic, see Mikael Hornqvist, "The Two Myths of Civic Humanism" in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 111.

¹² J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975).

¹³ Mark Jurdjevic, "Hedgehogs and Foxes: The Present and Future of Italian Renaissance Intellectual History", *Past & Present*, Volume 195, Issue 1, (May 2007), 255.

on humanism is now dealing with the social world of the humanists that encompassed more than a few elite literary figures. Looking at the political realities of participatory government, John Najemy added the nuance of the conflict between ruling families and middling citizens, demonstrating the cooption of civic humanism as an apparatus for oligarchical control. He asserts that civic humanism was, more than anything, a cultural paradigm that legitimized the new elite consensus politics.¹⁴ New work by Brian Maxson and Sarah Ross broaden Najemy's hierarchical model to create a more inclusive model of humanism.¹⁵ Participation in the culture of statehood and civic duty was not just confined to the literati but rather permeated the social world of Florence, and thus this chapter seeks to demonstrate that social, cultural and legalistic changes were mutually influential and entrenched in the understanding of Florence as a slave-holding society.

Institutions

Overview of Political development

An overview of the political developments of Florence as a city-state through the continuity of the classical Roman and Greek theories of statehood and its reinterpretation by medieval jurists is necessary to understand the full legal and theoretical picture behind enslavement. These developments built the political structure that became the basis for the communal government of Florence. Classical Greece and Rome created the ideal of the republic whose success demonstrated the validity of republican government in the late Middle Ages. They

¹⁴ James Najemy, "Civic Humanism and Florentine Politics" in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 80.

¹⁵ Elizabeth McCahill. "Humanism between the Middle Ages and Renaissance." *New Horizons for Early Modern European Scholarship*, edited by Ann Blair, and Nicholas Popper, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021), 27.

provided the framework for the legal systems used by Florence as well as the law books which became the backbone of medieval juristic ideas in the Middle Ages.

Through the organizing structure of Roman law codes, private property, the corporation, and the household unit provided the basic organizing structure for the government. While in Florence, the changes in society diminished the absolute power of the *paterfamilias*, the idea of the *familia* still encompassed the entirety of kinship and household.¹⁶ This household ideal included household servants and, with the growing popularity of domestic slaves, was easily applied to slavery in the Florentine household. The parallels set between the legal terms of the Roman *paterfamilias* and the Florentine social structure created a paternalistic view of slavery like that in the legal traditions found in Rome.

Since Roman philosophical and legal documents formed the basis of Western European law, it is necessary to first understand the functions of Roman slavery to understand its influence in medieval jurisprudence. One of the key points in the understanding of Roman slaves and their position in law comes from the ambiguity of their personal status. It is interesting to note that in Roman law, enslaved peoples shared a common legal status with children.¹⁷ For example, children and slaves could be killed by their father or owner if it was deemed necessary under the legal notion of the *patria potestas*.¹⁸ The *patria potestas* explains the legal power of the father, not just over his children but over his entire household, with the exclusion of his wife who is under her father's *patria potestas*. Both were committed under the rite of the *patria potestas* for life, as there was no age of majority for children and slaves could only hope for freedom through

¹⁶ Julius Kirshner, "Family and Marriage" in *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance: 1300-1550*. Ed. John Najemy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 88.

¹⁷ Jonathan Edmondson, "Slavery and the Roman Family." In *The Cambridge World History of Slavery The Ancient Mediterranean World* Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 341.

¹⁸ Richard Saller. "The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society: A Study of Domestic Slavery," in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 120.

manumission.¹⁹ It is difficult to establish the legal difference between freeborn children and slaves under the patrimony of their fathers and slaves.²⁰ While in practise, the treatment of slaves would have been vastly different from the children of the household, the legal position of slaves and children gave absolute power to the head of the household and provided the concept of ownership in abstract terms.²¹

Rome's enslavement laws also allowed for enslaved peoples to change their legal status and obtain Roman citizenship through manumission.²² This created a system of societal customs that allowed for the integration of foreigners into society, most notably in the changing of their legal status. However, such displays of integration required a connection to the communal government and performing civic duty. For example, in his *Ab Urbe Condita*, Livy sets out a story where the slave Vindicius helped stop a conspiracy against the republic by betraying his owner's role in the conspiracy.²³ Since the story is set in the first years of the Republic, Livy cites a precedent for citizenship and the treatment of enslaved and freemen in the republic, thus distinguishing the virtues of citizenship regardless of legal status. Livy's example gives the limits of the loyalty and ownership of the master in that it does not extend past welfare of the state. The slave, in serving the republic, was granted citizenship and his freedom, creating the criteria for legitimate integration of the slave into freeborn society.²⁴ Vindicius became the first slave in the republic to attain citizenship through service to the state. Indeed, although Livy casts his own doubts, he notes that many believe that Vindicius lent his name to the Vindicta Laws, used to

¹⁹ Richard Saller. "The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society: A Study of Domestic Slavery" 118.

²⁰ Richard Saller. "The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society: A Study of Domestic Slavery", 113.

²¹ Richard Saller. "The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society: A Study of Domestic Slavery", 124.

²² Marc Kleijwegt, "Creating New Citizens: Freed Slaves, the State and Citizenship in Early Rome and under Augustus." *European Review of History: Revue Européenne D'histoire* (16, no. 3. 2009), 319.

²³ Livy, *History of Rome by Titus Livius, the first eight Books*. Trans. D. Spillan. (London. Henry G. Bohn. John Child and son, printers. 1857), 2.4.

²⁴ Livy, *History of Rome*, 2.5.

free slaves and contributing to the legal system of the Roman Republic. The potential of enslaved peoples to become Roman citizens was one of the ways that Rome subsumed foreignness and manumission into its civic structure.

Slave-owning households recorded in Roman histories were considered one *familia* despite their size. For example, when Tacitus writes of the story of the murder of Pedanius Secundus by a slave, he records the Roman senator, who lived in the time of Nero, as having about 400 household slaves in his family. The magnitude of the family is noteworthy, since the entire concept of the *familia* included the 400 slaves. The sheer number of slaves demonstrates the necessity of an organizing hierarchy between people within the household. The punishment of the slaves is also important to note as they were all executed after the murder of Secundus.²⁵ This mass execution demonstrated how the household was a whole, with all the slaves under one legal grouping despite household hierarchy.

In Florence, some of these ideas are paralleled in legislation that exempts the *familia* from legal consequences in the same way as blood relations were exempted from being inflicted bodily harm by the communal government for being indebted to or threatening harm to their relatives.²⁶ Slavery played into this domestic structure as well as within the state apparatus when they were inserted into this exception to family members after the regulation of the slave trade in Florence. As domestic labourers and wetnurses, they were under the law governing the *familia* that functioned as an entire unit. Despite being designated as “infidels” by virtue of their birth, their participation into the family copied that of the Roman Republic as they slotted neatly into the laws of property that had once governed Rome and Florence.

²⁵ Richard Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family." *Slavery & Abolition*. Vol. 8, No. 1 (1987), 65.

²⁶ Lynn Marie Laufenberg, "Women, Crime, and Criminal Law in Fourteenth-Century Florence" (dissertation, 2000), 212.

The Latin Christian belief system of the Italian peninsula left Latin Christians uncertain about the validity of the enslavement of souls and required a change in the conceptualization of Roman slavery to fit a Catholic framework. Mass slavery in Roman antiquity was a result of military victory.²⁷ Enslavement was the method used to assimilate the conquered peoples into the culture and economy of Rome.²⁸ Since it was unlikely for Florence to acquire slaves in the same way, Florentines framed the victory in spiritual terms. As a remnant of the vocabulary of the crusades, the ability to convert the enslaved “infidels” into a Christian world assuaged the conscience of Florentines. The terminology of enslavement, where “infidels” was the chosen word, demonstrates the adoption of crusade vocabulary of Christians vs non-Christians. Entrance into the Catholic religion also precipitated the entrance into Catholic society. The integration of enslaved peoples from a non-Christian origin into a Latin Christian one required the induction of the slave into both society and religion. Thus, the task of spiritual guidance fell onto the enslavers - giving a moral rationale behind enslaving “infidels”. Victory was created under the idea of assimilation to both culture and religion.

Changes in the concepts of both secular and canon law in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by the Bolognese jurists and the papacy was a result of the complex social structure that emerged in the Levant after the crusades. Due to the problems arising from the multiethnic nature of the Crusader kingdoms, there required a new understanding of how Christianity related to non-Christians and particularly, non-Catholics, especially with regards to the differences in societal ranks between Catholics, other Christians, and non-Christians.²⁹ The lawyer popes, Gregory IX and Innocent IV were instrumental in creating the written documents that addressed

²⁷ Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 102.

²⁸ Thomas Wiedemann, “The Regularity of Manumission at Rome” in *the Classical Quarterly* 35. (no. 1), 164.

²⁹ James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels: The Church and the Non-Christian World, 1250-1550*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 7.

interfaith relations. Gregory made a landmark decision that conversion was not automatic manumission that began the process to quell the Christian conscience of keeping people in slavery. He also solidified the lines between Christian and “infidel” when he initiated the study of “infidels” through his inclusion of Muslims and Jews as specific categories of religious others in his book of Canon Law.³⁰ Innocent IV furthered Gregory’s attempts by indicating the legal jurisdiction of the Papacy over “infidels”. Slavery thus became a Christian affair where the enslavement of non-Christian peoples was within the jurisdiction of the Papacy.

Innocent IV was perhaps one of the most important popes in asserting the legal understanding of non-Christians both in and out of Europe. By asserting that the papacy had spiritual jurisdiction over infidels as well as secular leaders, religion became mixed with societal legalities. The jurists of the Latin Kingdoms were concerned with the legitimacy of just war. The argument of war against the “infidels”, and the subsequent culture of enslavement, rose from the idea of Christian ownership of Jerusalem through the Roman Empire.³¹ The papacy and Latin Christians regarded themselves as the legitimate heirs of Jerusalem.³² According to Innocent IV’s codification of papal power, infidels could not be the rulers of Christians. By extension, Christians held spiritual jurisdiction over infidels and could not legally be enslaved by “infidels”.³³ While his was a more moderate approach in that he acknowledges the right of non-Christians to own land, he also indicated that converting these lands to Christianity through means of arms was a necessary endeavour for Christian crusaders.³⁴ In this way, he justified the crusades outside of the Holy Lands by associating them with Christian charity.

³⁰ James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels*, 4.

³¹ James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels*, 9.

³² James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels*, 10.

³³ James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels*, 13.

³⁴ Norman Housley. "The Crusades and Islam." *Medieval Encounters*, 13, no. 2 (2007), 199.

Innocent's student Hostiensis denied any property right to infidels. All power was lawfully taken from infidels and given to Christ and his followers.³⁵ By justifying the conquering of infidels, both in and out of the Holy Lands, it was possible to derive the laws of slavery and the responsible ownership of slaves by Christian lords. If Muslims could not possess any political or societal power, their natural position was as the slaves to the Christians. Yet forced conversion was also illegal as the acceptance of Christ was a voluntary act.³⁶ Those without free will – i.e., slaves – could not actually accept Christianity.³⁷ The conversion of slaves during servitude was therefore ineffective for the saving of souls. Innocent IV and his jurists expanded Gregory IX's assertion of conversion not leading to manumission through the idea of universal Christian jurisdiction.

The question of the relationship between Christians and non-Christians was particularly important in the urban centres of Italy and the Latin Kingdom where slavery was domestic rather than agricultural. The close intermingling of the domestic household involving slaves, patricians and servants produced intimate relationships. The urban nature of these areas also challenged the preconceived notions of the variety of intercultural exchange in Medieval Europe. In particular, the port cities of Genoa, Venice and Marseille became the centres of cultural intermingling. The traffic of slaves through these ports is evident in the taxation laws and the bills of sale available from these cities.³⁸ Captives of the crusades, broadly speaking, provided a ready source for politically sanctioned slavery in the Latin Kingdoms while laws singled out religion as the

³⁵ James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels*, 16.

³⁶ Michael Gervers, and James M. Powell. *Tolerance and Intolerance: Social Conflict in the Age of the Crusades*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 118.

³⁷ Origo, "Domestic Enemy", 335.

³⁸ Sally McKee. "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy." In *Slavery and Abolition*. (Vol. 29, No. 3. Routledge: 2008), 306.

primary reason behind the practise of slavery. Enslavement was marked not only by legal status but by the enslaved person's culture and system of beliefs.

The subjugation of the enslaved peoples was justified for the good of the slave as integration into a Christian society would provide the means for the enslaved person to access Christianity.³⁹ In Florence, slavery was set under the ideals of Christianity and Christian charity. Adherence to the Papacy and the Latin Church was therefore the only way to prevent slavery by capture in the Latin West. After the purchase of the person, baptism was a legal requirement, although a slave was not manumitted after baptism.⁴⁰ It was for alleviating the conscience of the enslavers to introduce the enslaved person's soul into the Christian faith, and therefore save them from eternal damnation even while they were physically enslaved. The paternalistic protection of the master over the slave was both a result of Christian dedication and Roman law. Framing Christian victory through baptism and adopting the Roman idea of the *familia* allowed the peoples of the Italian peninsula to practise enslavement through a legal and theological framework. Slavery in Florence based its societal structure on inherited ancient Roman principles, aided along by the political and cultural necessities that created the circumstances for the revival of antiquity.

The idea of civic notions of belonging was both encapsulated in the ability to be participant in peaceful government and as a geographic proximity or lineage to the place of belonging. On one hand, the Florentine commune used the terminology of "infidel" was as both a geographic designation and an inheritable trait to designate the foreignness of enslaved peoples in Florence. Un-belonging was a category that was regulated by the language of Christianity with the term "infidel". On the other hand, the notion of civic duty informed a gendered notion of

³⁹ Origo. "Domestic Enemy", 334.

⁴⁰ Origo. "Domestic Enemy", 335.

participation precluded most of the enslaved people in Florence, of whom 92% were female, from belonging.

Civic duty also contributed to the alienation of civic ties and geographic belonging of enslaved women. While Florentines supported the travel and settlement of its citizens across Europe, Asia, and North Africa, and many even had offspring there, familial relationships tied merchants back to Florence. These Florentines also tapped into the wider Latin-Christian network that preceded them overseas, or at least with other Italian city-states that they were not in direct conflict with at the time. Enslaved non-Christians who were kept in the region where they originated were much more likely to be ransomed due to the community of co-religionists in the region.⁴¹ By the time these women came to Florence, they were stripped of their community and without hope of ransom. Without any familial connection in the city, and lacking property (including the possession of freedom) that would allow them to enter the Florentine community through trade, the commune was able to brand them permanently as the “other” based on their inheritance from their race of “infidels” – neither having the geographic advantage or the participatory ability to change their designation – and thus not able to purchase into freedom as an individual property right.

With the revival of Roman republican rhetoric in the early fifteenth century, authors such as Salutati and Bruni looked to the past to create a vocabulary for Florence that could fit into the polity of the Roman Republic, most notably putting the founding of Florence in the republican era under Sulla rather by the imperial tradition in the time of Caesar.⁴² Since Florentines attempted to emulate the Roman Republic, slavery fell under the justifiable notion of their shared

⁴¹ Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: the Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 13.

⁴² Hans Baron, *Crisis*, 63.

cultural ideas of the *patria potestas*. The language of Rome was coopted in the legal understanding of slavery as an unalienable property relationship that was held up by the state's use of power and authority as a relationship of ownership.

Florence justified the enslavement of domestic labour in terms of the legal and social codes of the *paterfamilias*, one of the most important concepts in both political and social makeups of the city.⁴³ It controlled the freedom of the children and dependents of the household and the family. A child under the *patria potestas* could not enter any legal binding contracts without the consent of the *paterfamilias*.⁴⁴ The use of Roman law under the Justinian Code, increasingly popular in medieval Italy, created similar social and legal constructs of household structure as in Ancient Rome.⁴⁵ Therefore, it was easy to find the vocabulary and the legal proscriptions for slavery under the inheritance of legal codes from the Roman Empire. As Justinian's *Digest* was revisited by jurists in the universities of Italian city-states, it became increasingly possible to justify both the freedom of these city-states to self-rule and the institution of slavery under legal and Christian terms. This legal change, paired with the demographic catastrophe of the Plague, created a system where the trade in slaves was integrated into the social structures of Florentine civic identity.

Since it was said that the Holy Roman Emperor was the king of the world and had jurisdiction over all the world, the emperor borrowed the paternalistic language from the *Digest*.⁴⁶ Yet the *Digest* follows mostly family law, using the language of property ownership

⁴³ Julius Kirshner. "Family and Marriage" in *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance: 1300-1550*. Ed. John Najemy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 86.

⁴⁴ Julius Kirshner. "Family and Marriage," 87.

⁴⁵ Julius Kirshner. "Family and Marriage," 85.

⁴⁶ Joseph Canning. *The Political Thought of Baldus De Ubaldis*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 18.

(*dominium*) as contingent on the position within the private household.⁴⁷ The reimagining of law as the ability to legislate and choose the office of executive power was the wider application of the language of the patriarchal household as microcosm for the structure of the country.⁴⁸ The *paterfamilia* was “by nature” accepted as the supreme authority of the household by all members of the household. Slavery became a natural part of the hierarchal structure of the household in a similar model to antiquity. The changes in the perceptions of law and the emphasis on the independence of the state created circumstances by which it was possible to revive the argument of Roman social structures to allow for the emergence of slavery under the free republic of Florence and mitigated the ostensible discrepancy between the ideals of freedom and the ownership of slaves.

During a time when Italian city-states were looking to establish their own independence from the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy in the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, the ideals of freedom became especially important in the language of self-governing freedom.⁴⁹ The language of liberty adopted from Ancient Rome was that of freedom of legislation and a civil duty, rather than personal freedoms. In the late-medieval period, Florence used the emerging rhetoric for the independence of the city-states in Northern Italy to assert its governmental legitimacy. Medieval political theorists such as William of Ockham argued for the establishment of the common good, which was above the power of both the papacy and the emperor.⁵⁰ The people had the ability to change a government that was not working towards the common good.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Richard Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family," 123.

⁴⁸ Cecil Nathan Sidney Woolf. *Bartolus Of Sassoferrato, His Position In The History Of Medieval Political Thought*. (Cambridge: University Press, 1913), 125.

⁴⁹ Joseph Canning. *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450*. (London: Routledge, 1996), 135.

⁵⁰ James M. Blythe, "'Civic Humanism' and Medieval Political Thought" in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 69.

⁵¹ James M. Blythe, "'Civic Humanism' and Medieval Political Thought", 70.

As an integral part of Italian urban life in the Middle Ages, the Guelph-Ghibelline conflict (1125-1392) shaped the identity of the Florentines, beyond the establishment of the powerful Guelph party in Florence. This conflict between pope and empire enabled Florentines to create the languages for the enemy as political and religious groups. While there were battles with other Tuscan cities, most of the conflict was internal to Florence itself and among its citizenries. To vilify the enemy – or rather whoever was the losing faction – Florentines employed the methods of othering the faction internally. One of the ways the commune did this was through the confiscation of property.⁵² The possession of property, and indeed the ability to possess property, in the commune was one of the ways that identified a Florentine from someone unable to fully assimilate. The confiscation of the property by the state was a visible demonstration of the loss of that identity. The planning of the communal Florentine prison, *the Stinche*, using the disassembled materials from property of an exiled Ghibelline family, acted as a physical reminder of the need to conform to the commune’s Guelph views and its political orthodoxy.⁵³ The continuous infamy associated with the ground on which the prison was built symbolized the loss of the inmate’s access to the commune and the privileges such access afforded the individual.

Another way of demonstrating the “otherness” of the enemy faction was through the adoption of the language of political rivals as enemies of the commune. The Florentines created their own exterior enemies in their conceptualization of rival factions. The strength of the Guelph party meant that the enemy was naturally termed Ghibelline and therefore against the interest of

⁵² Christine Shaw, *The Politics of Exile in Renaissance Italy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112.

⁵³ Marvin Wolfgang, “A Florentine Prison: Le Carceri delle Stinche,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol. 7 (1960), 155.

the commune.⁵⁴ Despite the ideological differences of the Guelph and the Ghibellines, in Florence the frequent violence of these two factions and the wholesale banishment of the losing factions from Florence entrenched these groups as identity markers.⁵⁵ These terminologies were not as important as the parameters this conflict established for the enemy, and the ability of the commune – specifically the powerful Guelph party – to define the parameters of otherness as their enemies.

One of the more persuasive ways Florence defined this inimical otherness was through the context of religion. Such a definition conflated religious and civic loyalties. The Guelph-Ghibelline conflict, fought ostensibly on the lines between pope and emperor, made it easier for the Guelphs – on the side of the pope – to charge their enemies with religious heterodoxy. When the commune charged the Ghibellines with heresy, Florentine civic law adopted these charges and enacted civic punishments for the crime.⁵⁶ This adoption meant that Florentine civic law could determine religious orthodoxy in conjunction with the ecclesiastical courts. By gaining the ability to define religious belonging, Florentines opened the door to determining the in-group and out-group. States decided religious conformity through their ability to enforce the parameters of heresy and branding the Ghibellines as a religious outgroup and therefore, un-Florentine. The connection between religious and civic life in terms of belonging to the state demonstrates that religious affiliation was a political tool. Thus, disloyalty to the state also affected the Christian soul and destroyed a notional membership in both the political community of the city and the Christian community at large.

⁵⁴ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion in Early Renaissance Florence*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 33.

⁵⁵ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 33.

⁵⁶ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 35; the first time the state dealt with heresy charges was in 1382, see Marvin Becker, “Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Florence,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18, no. 3 (1976), 295.

With the introduction of the Ordinances of Justice in 1293, Florence identified its state institutions as entrenched not in dynastic nobility but in mercantile wealth. With the communal developments of Northern Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the ideology of the city state was to be ruled by its own citizens in semi-equal footing as according to the offices established by the governments.⁵⁷ The establishment of the guilds where each guild elected its officials into the city government meant that membership wasn't restricted to the very top of the elite but rather guilds encompassed a variety of social classes from middling artisans to great bankers.⁵⁸ Factionalism in Florence was based not only on class but also on neighbourhood allegiances and familial ties. By the mid-fourteenth century, government offices were held by a few of the merchant elite, but these elites centralized their power within established institutions of governance, rather than trying to change the republican nature of the commune.

Citizenship was also connected to participation by using the institutions of the communal government to settle disputes. By rights afforded to be a Florentine, it was preferable – at least in theory – to have factionalism confronted through communal institutions rather than on the streets. One of the reasons for the condemnation of the *grandi* – or aristocratic families – from office in 1293 was to punish them for street violence. However, this legislation would not have worked if the commune did not provide a more favourable outlet that the new merchant elites had agreed on, and that included giving access to Florentines to use these institutions. The building of the state on the principle of peaceful resolution reinforces the punishment of violence being branded as un-Florentine and exile from the Florentine commune as the ultimate punishment. Exiles who wanted to return to Florence did so by attempting to appeal their

⁵⁷ Mark Jurdjevic, "Introduction" in *Florentine Political Writings from Petrarch to Machiavelli* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania UP, 2019), 10.

⁵⁸ Mark Jurdjevic, "Introduction", 10.

banishment through the communal system as violence against the state went against the political culture of non-violent participation.

A key component in the ideology of citizenship in Florence comes from the cultural value of liberty from domination.⁵⁹ After the movement away from Guelphism at the waning of the Guelph-Ghibelline conflicts in the fourteenth century and the lifting of the Ghibelline threat of domination for the Guelph city, liberty became the replacement for Guelph solidarity.⁶⁰ The commune began to resent and fear the power of the Guelph Party and needed to formulate an identity of Florence outside of their adherence to Guelphism, especially culminating in the end of the Avignon Papacy in 1377 when the pope threatened the Florentine commune with his influence on affairs of the Italian peninsula.⁶¹ When territories of the Florentine commune came under threat, Florence insisted on its liberty as an innate trait of its citizens.⁶² Despite liberty generally taken to mean freedom from outside influence, liberty also manifested itself in government by communal councils of male citizens, and not by lordship. While the highest offices of government in Florence were restricted to a few wealthy guild members, the idea of liberty in Florence as being a system where rich and poor can participate dominated the rhetoric of Florentine freedom. As Alison Brown points out, in the fifteenth century, Florence's liberty also meant a republican system that "guaranteed freedom of speech or equality under the law".⁶³ Having cast off the signorial Duke of Athens, Florence used the terminology of liberty to ensure

⁵⁹ I am using the direct translation of *libertas* as liberty, but it has a host of meanings including equality, freedom, and the possession of liberty as property. See Mikael Hornqvist, "The Two Myths of Civic Humanism", 105 n2.

⁶⁰ Nicolai Rubinstein, "Fiorentina Libertas" *Storia e Letteratura* 216 (2004), 10.

⁶¹ Laura Ikins Stern, *The criminal law system of medieval and Renaissance Florence*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 8.

⁶² Mikael Hornqvist, "The Two Myths of Civic Humanism", 115.

⁶³ Alison Brown, "Demasking Renaissance Republicanism", 12.

civic peace.⁶⁴ The Ordinances of Justice promised a semblance of equality by stripping the magnates of their privileges and barring them from public office. Unlike Venice, which closed the Great Council in 1297, Florence broadened the basis of power for non-elites while narrowing it to the guilds. Terminology of merchant republics being used to describe both states does not encompass their different ideologies on who could hold state power and requires a further look into how Florence identified the terms of inclusion and exclusion, including its language in the codification of enslavement.

By the fifteenth century, Florence had reframed internal freedom to civic freedom from outside influence as the ultimate political goal. This created the justification for Florentine oligarchs to institutionalize systems that centralized real power in their hands while keeping the eligibility of offices open.⁶⁵ During the War of the Eight Saints (1375-1378) and later the war with Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan, Florence used the language of civil government from antiquity to establish their independent authority.⁶⁶ Leonardo Bruni's "*Laudatio*" presents Florence as an ideal city, but also a city with a strict hierarchy that does not seem to conflict with Florence as a state that based their freedom on individual abilities to hold office. Bruni also praises the participatory government of Florence where eligibility to hold office was one of the most prized possessions of Florentine guild members. This put the lower classes and the upper classes shoulder to shoulder with each other in offices and in their professional lives, at least in theory.⁶⁷ Some of Florence's many struggles with political factionalism were over the ability to hold office. Bruni transformed this problem of internal struggle into an external one that required

⁶⁴ Nicola Rubinstein, "Fiorentina Libertas", 6.

⁶⁵ Mark Jurdjevic, "Introduction" 10.

⁶⁶ Hans Baron. *The crisis*, 40.

⁶⁷ Leonardo Bruni, *Laudatio Florentine Urbis*, ed. Stefano U. Baldassarri. (Firenze: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000), 88.5-16 p. 33.

the enemies of Florence to come from the outside. However, these distinctions were not easily defined since Florence tended to exile the losers of their factional struggles into neighbouring states. The enemies that came from the outside were often created within, and Florence was able to neutralize these enemies not only through force of arms but also ideologically.

Slavery and State Institutions

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when humanist political ideas were entrenched into written law also coincide with the development and institutionalization of the Florentine slave trade.⁶⁸ Enslavement in the Mediterranean persisted throughout the Middle Ages, but records became more commonplace by the fourteenth century, while the Genoese had records of enslaved peoples in their ports since the twelfth century. While slavery had not explicitly been forbidden, Florence came late to the regulation of the slave trade, allowing it in 1364 only after the demographic collapse of the Black Death. Florence is unique in that only it both had a document outlining who precisely were to be enslaved and kept a record of all slaves coming into the city in a famous register called the *Registro degli Schiavi*.⁶⁹ These detailed documents point to the centralizing power of the state to legislate and enforce its legislation through a complex bureaucracy.

Entries in the *Registro* were recorded by a notary of the treasury of the Florentine commune for the purposes of imposing a tax for every slave coming into Florence.⁷⁰ Slaves coming in through the port of Pisa via the Florentine state galleys were also processed by paying

⁶⁸ The Florentine slave trade was legalized in 1364 and persisted through the fifteenth century, fading off after the establishment of the Duchy of Tuscany in 1537 where enslavement became a state prerogative rather than a private one. See Robert C. Davis. *Holy war and human bondage: tales of Christian-Muslim slavery in the early-modern Mediterranean* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, 2009).

⁶⁹ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 48.

⁷⁰ ASF, Capitoli Appendice 26 fol. 4r-49v.

a tax for the import duties like any non-human merchandise.⁷¹ These documents demonstrate the uniqueness of Florence for their extensive documentation and the specificity of their legislation. Laws were increasingly being written and specified in legal or notarial language. The official public nature of the *Registro* indicates that Florentine government was concerned with regulating the lives of its citizens both financially and legally.

Florentines engaged with the ethnographic vocabulary that they were familiar with in their descriptions of enslaved people. It is important to recognize that ethnographic vocabulary is subject to change not only temporally but based on the geographic, cultural, and social location from which such knowledge – and the humans that brought them – came from. The vocabulary of the *Registro* gives key clues to how imported peoples were perceived by the dominant powerholders in Florence and thus for all Florentines. Since most of the enslaved population were recorded as one of five ethnographic groups (Tatar, Greek, Circassian, Russian, Bosnian), based on Florentine knowledge of the Black Sea and Balkan region but these terms are also the formulation of simplified categories that allowed legal trade. The universal remarks on the scars or markings on the enslaved woman was a way for Florentines to describe individuals – whether they were brands, tattoos, or scars that served to identify enslavement. When Franco Sacchetti, the fourteenth-century Florentine poet and writer, remarked in a letter that an enslaved girl who ran away “did not have a very Tatar face”, he demonstrated that Florentines understood that the look of a Tatar had a specific set of conditions, reaffirmed by the *Registro*.⁷² In addition, the ubiquity of enslaved people registered as Tatars from the late-fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries

⁷¹ Michael E Mallet. *The Florentine Galleys in the Fifteenth Century*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 114.

⁷² “Non ha il viso molto Tataresco, ma innanzi adatto al mondo di qua” 12 d’Agosto 1388, Franco Sacchetti *Le Lettere le sposizioni di vangeli*. ed. Alberto Chiari (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1938), VI 88.

also points to the idea that looking for runaways necessarily includes finding Tatar faces, connecting the race to servitude.

Part of the development of personal conceptions of identity came out of the state's attempt to catalogue its citizens. In this, Florentine attempts were significant for their widespread practice of recordkeeping and the formulaic processes of these categorizations. By tracing the catalogue of traits, geographies, and property that Florentines considered to be significant to identifying a person and securing their identity, the terminologies of identities contribute to how persons viewed themselves and to how others viewed and remembered them. Part of this identity building can be found in the ethnographic vocabulary of the *Registro* that catalogued the enslaved people who entered Florence for the purposes of taxation. Clearly a tax record would not need the details of the enslaved people, only their existence and sale price, so the detail of the descriptions of these people – of whom 92% were women – indicates another motive. In fact, family accounts and contracts of sale did not have levels of detail to the extent that the *Registro* offered, giving, at most, the name, ethnographic origin, the age, and the sex of the enslaved person.

Unlike the state record, account books offered the colour of the enslaved person and indicated the sex in the language of *schiavo/a*. In these private books, the price, and the seller, notary, commodity, and buyer were the most important information - the name of the enslaved person was often not mentioned, especially in the second half of the fifteenth century.⁷³ In the *Registro*, every enslaved person was named, sometimes also carrying the name that they had before their baptism. Tracking details that did not affect the monetary value of the enslaved, such as markings, eye colour, hair colour and nose shape, demonstrates that the state had intentions

⁷³ See AOIF 12685, 12698 for account books involving enslaved women in the second half of the fifteenth century.

for identifying the enslaved people outside of a monetary consideration. The state wanted to track the enslaved people who lived within the territory of Florence – presumably in the case of runaways as a protection of private property – and thus established critical identity markers recording physical traits in addition to social traits that demonstrated the legality of the enslavement. The *Registro* reveals how the commune sought to catalogue and track people, especially given the anxieties surrounding foreign-born, domestic workers. By identifying the boundaries between people in their physical form, the state regulated the social world by categorizing citizens and non-citizens.

More than just a legal and financial document, the *Registro degli Schiavi* points to the workings of identity and surveillance in Florence.⁷⁴ The records of the identifying features of enslaved people, including skin marks, skin and eye colour and any piercings are evidence of the desire by the state to keep an account of the unfree persons living in Florence. Unlike Genoa, Florence had specific legislation legalizing the sale of “non-Catholic” slaves, stating in clear words that the onus was on the buyers and sellers to make sure that the slaves were not of the same faith, creating a record of the origins of these slaves.⁷⁵ The ethnographic vocabulary that the commune took for granted to be un-Catholic and thereby un-Florentine is evidence of the conflation of religion with geography or social groupings.⁷⁶ In addition, the writing of the clear legislation demonstrated the state’s ability to define the outer boundaries of enslavement and therefore the alienation of people as property. Without any connection to the city, and lacking property (including the possession of freedom) that would allow them to enter the Florentine

⁷⁴ See Valentin Groebner, *Who are you? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe*. Trans. Mark Kyburz and John Peck. (New York: Zone Press, 2007), 141.

⁷⁵ “Qui non sint catholice fidei Christiane et ipsos in ipsa civitate comitatu et districtu habere et tenere et vendere et donare et cuovis titulo alienare et concedere cuilibet volenti” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol 1r.

⁷⁶ In the sixteenth century, the Peace of Augsburg solidifies this distinction.

community through trade, the commune was able to brand them as the “other” based on their inheritance from their race of infidels and their past as living under the lands of the “infidels” – neither having the geographic advantage or the participatory ability to change their designation – and thus not able to purchase into freedom as an individual property right.

The state’s reach into property was also exemplified in the *Catasto* of 1427 where Florentines were required to submit an inventory of their income and their households to the state.⁷⁷ Divided between moveable and immoveable goods, the state received a catalogue of the wealth of citizens with property. Despite the inaccuracy inherent in the self-reported nature of the *Registro* and the *Catasto*, its existence points to the social and cultural duty recognized by Florentines to pay the state, if only to avoid prosecution by the state.⁷⁸ While the *Registro* ended abruptly in 1397, the *Catasto* continued every few years throughout the fifteenth century. Meanwhile, statutes passed in the fifteenth century better regulated the parameters of enslavement; codifying the status of their children, their ability to participate in society, and their punishments. Through an attempt to better regulate the slave trade, Florence created a system by which increased reporting, especially of the particular characteristics of each slave, that allowed for the state to document people in a way that the Genoese and the Venetians did not.

Ideas of civic freedom and duty were conceived against the backdrop of domestic slaves. While it may seem that Florentines were undermining their property rights in their reporting of merchandise and goods for the sake of taxation, the ideology of freedom expanded from a personal relationship to power to include a familial and structural one as the humanist revival of

⁷⁷ See Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy *Tuscans and their Families*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 10-20.

⁷⁸ For more discussion on this, see Monica Boni and Robert Delort, ‘Des Esclaves Toscans, du milieu du XIVe au milieu du XVe siècle.’, *Mélanges de l’école française de Rome* 112, no. 2 (2000), 1060; and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy, *Tuscans and their Families*, 116 on self-reporting and fraud.

Roman and Greek political theories rooted state structure in the family. In particular, the Medici family's successful cooption of the rhetoric of liberty to benefit their own enterprises reveals that liberty was a cultural concept and a theoretical idea rather than a concrete set of rules. On the back of enslavement legislation and the records of enslaved peoples, Florentines created the criteria for their own civic identity. Ideologies of personal freedom were one of the key rhetorical pieces of Florentine political theory during the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. These ideologies were developed through the political realities that Florentines faced in the Middle Ages and the propaganda that humanists wrote to ensure the safety of Florence. Since these propagandistic tools created a cultural identity for the Florentine population, they also had to be adaptable to the lives of the elites. The activities of the merchant-elite required a different understanding of relationships of belonging that came to terms with geographical location, religious adherence, and individual conceptions of the self. In addition, the growth of the commune's power to legislate, control, and manipulate the boundaries of the criteria for belonging was built upon the institutions and the records of the state and manipulated by the ruling elites. Due to the necessity of touting their specific brand of republicanism and personal freedom, these ideas were diffused among the population to be taken as an essential characteristic of their identity – their Florentine-ness

Role of Institutions

Florence's new political culture was inextricably linked to the societal institutions that emerged during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While many of these new institutions and projects were directed by guilds, they served to put wealth towards the betterment of the city rather than personal salvation. One such institution was the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, the Florentine foundling hospital opened in 1445. In the case of the Florentine foundling hospital,

the betterment of the city came at the expense of the familial relationships of the enslaved and served as a convenience to the wealthy. The Florentine Foundling Hospital became a cornerstone of Florentine identity – designed by Brunelleschi and the first of its kind in Western Europe – but it was also a state apparatus to socialize children into acceptable Florentine citizens.⁷⁹ Between 1450-1453, hospital's operation recorded 50% of its intake as the children of slaves.⁸⁰ With so many of these children being the offspring of foreign slaves, it is possible to see how the *Innocenti* functioned as both charity and educator. To mitigate the fact that the children of enslaved women and Florentine men were born free and thus a burden on enslavers, the *Innocenti* was a financial and educational outlet for the tensions created by these children in Florentine society. It was able to erase the child's heritage to her Florentine father and raised the abandoned children as Florentine orphans. The *Innocenti* assimilated the diverse array of unwanted children into a single parentage to become workers who carried out the ideology of the Florentine oligarchs. This system was one of the ways Florentines institutionalized the creation of Florentine citizens and ensured uniformity of the values of the city through a uniform upbringing.

The communal government being able to define the parameters for personal freedoms meant that the city was also able to legislate on unfreedoms in the 1364 legislation of enslavement. The legislation parallels the state's use of the *Stinche*, the communal jail, to punish criminals, wayward slaves, and children, using the lack of freedom of movement as a

⁷⁹ For the socialization of children through charity, see Nicholas Terpstra, *Lost Girls: Sex and Death in Renaissance Florence*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), and Phillip Gavitt. *Charity and Children: Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale Degli Innocenti, 1410-1536*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

⁸⁰ AOIF, 486.

corrective.⁸¹ Only by possessing freedom as a property protected by the state (and thus liable to be taken away by the state) was the commune able to determine who was and wasn't eligible to be enslaved. Enslaved people's unfreedom was one of the ways that they were alienated from the commune and its norms. Criminal behaviour was one of the ways the state took away freedom, and if the state was able to criminalize and prosecute heresy as a secular court, then the lack of religious adherence could become one of the criteria for unfreedom.

Humanism

One of the key ideas that came out of the historiography of this period is the idea of humanism as a cultural and intellectual movement across upper-class Florentine society. Humanism denotes the revival of classic antiquity as a subject worthy of study to apply to the world of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century city states in Italy. While the uniqueness of Florentine humanism has been challenged, there is still consensus that there was an intellectual movement in Florence between the late fourteenth and the fifteenth century that fundamentally affected how elite male Florentines related to their state and to other Florentines.⁸² Writers such as Leonardo Bruni and Matteo Palmieri in the fifteenth century and Niccolò Machiavelli in the sixteenth all wrestle with the ideas of civic responsibility and the governmental structures within the framework of antiquity and their own civic history.⁸³ Even those who were not intellectuals by trade, such as Goro Dati and Giovanni Morelli, wrote diaries affirming the ideas of Bruni and

⁸¹ See Marvin E. Wolfgang, "Crime and Punishment in Renaissance Florence," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 81, no. 3 (Fall 1990) 567-584.

⁸² See Quentin Skinner. *Visions of Politics*. Vol. 2., Cambridge UP, 2002 as well as *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals*. Ed: James Hankins.

⁸³ Works such as Bruni's *Laudatio*, Alberti's *Della Famiglia* and Machiavelli's *Discorsi* all point to duties of a free citizen in a "free" civil state.

Palmieri in their journals of everyday life.⁸⁴ There was a shift in the way that people wrote about civic participation and their relationship with their city government during this period. Central to Hans Baron's famous thesis on civic humanism, Leonardo Bruni's "Panegyric to the City of Florence" remains the great example of both the propagandistic notion of the Florentine state and the hierarchical harmony of its republican institutions, emphasizing the virtue of the wealthy in beautifying the city.⁸⁵ Idealization of the contemplative life gave way to an idea that using one's skill to serve their government was the best way to behave.

To understand the vocabulary behind the rhetoric of slavery, there needs to be a necessary overview of political ideas that developed in the late-fourteenth to the fifteenth century. Major points of the Florentine commune can be found in the humanist literature of the time regarding freedom and legitimate government. The "civic humanist" works of Coluccio Salutati, and Leonardo Bruni were powerful propagandistic tools that served to naturalize two concepts: the republican government of Florence and the innate hierarchy of Florentine society. Humanists and those who bought into humanistic thought applied it to all facets of life to perfect their lived experiences by their own standards. No subject was outside the jurisdiction of the humanists – including, most importantly, an exposition on family life, including the treatment of servants, by Leon Battista Alberti.⁸⁶ In a city-state where the power of the family reflected its political power and honour, family also became a concern for the state. If the harmony of the family was the building block of the state, the question of hierarchy, belonging, and domestic

⁸⁴ See Goro Dati. *Diary of a Florentine* and Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, "Ricordi" in *Mercanti scrittori: ricordi nella Firenze tra medioevo e Rinascimento*. Ed. Vittore Branca and Murtha Baca, (Milan, 1986).

⁸⁵ Leonardo Bruni, "Panegyric to the City of Florence" In *The Earthly republic: Italian humanists on government and society*. Trans. Benjamin G. Kohl. Ed. Ronald G. Witt, Elizabeth B. Welles (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 174.

⁸⁶ Leon Battista Alberti. *The Albertis of Florence: Leon Battista Alberti's Della Famiglia*. Trans. Guido A. Guarino. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971).

production became central to the concept of civic life. The control of enslaved domestic labourers therefore was a way to ensure civic harmony, especially as they were agents without other relationships and honour that controlled their behaviour. Whether the idea of harmony was a result of a genuine belief in republican virtues or an attempt by the oligarchy to solidify their power is irrelevant to the fact that Florentines legitimized this new idea of household harmony and reproduced it in their humanist texts.

In these political circumstances, the regulation of slavery was not just a domestic issue intended to replenish a diminished supply of labour, but rather a part of the rhetoric of statecraft and citizenship that accompanied political philosophies. Around the same time as the publication of the *Laudatio*, Florence engaged in a program of civic reform aimed at maintaining the peace and morality of the city, coinciding with Bruni's utopic speech.⁸⁷ These moral reforms attempted to shape Florentine society according to the humanistic principles highlighted by Bruni. The humanist texts thus had wide ranging consequences for the state's self-image.

As we would be remiss to talk about Roman republicanism without considering the slave labour that supported it, it would be remiss to talk about Florentine humanism without touching on the existence of slaves in Florence. That humanism had real effects on social legislation of the state demonstrates its importance for experiences of slavery. Maria Mazzi argued that regulations involving prostitution and sodomy in Florence may have led to greater sexual exploitation of the enslaved population.⁸⁸ By pairing humanism with the actual practices of slavery in Florence, ideas of servitude became a witnessed reality rather than a rhetorical exercise from which Florentine humanists created a foil to in their attempt to assert their own freedom. A closer

⁸⁷ Maria Serena Mazzi. *Prostitute e lenoni nella Firenze del Quattrocento*. (Saggiatori, 1991), 141.

⁸⁸ Maria Serena Mazzi. *Prostitute e lenoni nella Firenze del Quattrocento*. (Saggiatori, 1991), 141.

analysis of the ideas of freedom provided by Florentine intellectuals reveals the link between slavery and Florentine civic identity.

The idea, not the reality, of the possession of individual freedom had social capital in Florence. The city was entrenched in the language of liberty from outside influence and the freedom of the citizens became part of the mythology of Florentine identity. The use of Roman language in the creation of Florence applied also to the vocabulary of slavery. Petrarch for example, during his tenure in Venice, wrote about the people imported from the East, calling them “Scythians” as is common in ancient Rome, despite their origins not being the same as his Roman sources and not where the Romans designated the origins of the Scythians.⁸⁹ Petrarch, viewing from his position as a native Italian, draws parallels to Rome. In Petrarch’s use of ancient Roman terminology, he also evoked the Roman image of slavery, and a slave society, especially with his exaggeration of the number of slaves imported to the ports of Venice. His description of the slaves is pitiful, where he highlighted their wretched state with obvious distaste. These words were indicative of the medieval republican desire for liberty in the dismissal of the slaves’ legal state as chattel. Florence - and thereby Florentines - was above the pitiful state of slavery as it is a free state. By using the vocabulary of Rome in his description of slaves, he placed Italy at the centre of slave importation – like Rome in the Republic – and created the myth of Italy as the heirs of the Roman system of governance.

One of the key ideas of independence for Florence is the freedom from servitude to a prince or to another foreign power where Florence ensured this through guaranteeing a nominal idea of equality through guild structures.⁹⁰ A conquering prince would disrupt the civil society of Florence and impose his own laws. Thus, to keep Florence secure, Florentines must defend the

⁸⁹ Sally Mckee, “Domestic Slavery,” 305.

⁹⁰ Leonardo Bruni, “Panegyric to the City of Florence”, 153.

city against outside invaders. The preservation of peace within one's own city justified war with the outside.⁹¹ Branding groups and people under the ideology of freedom meant that those who were not in concert with Florence's specific brand of republican egalitarian liberty were not Florentine.⁹² The Ciompi Rebellion in 1378 further expounded the idea of equality as an internal function by bringing to the foreground the discrepancies between rich and poor. While an ultimately failed rebellion, its ideology of the equality of guild power through a government made of the people further demonstrates the ideology of equality that persisted in Florentine peoples. Bruni's "Oration on the Funeral of Nanni Strozzi" expounds the republic as one based in equality of the citizens through its "popular" constitution.⁹³ In both elite and non-elite circles, the idea of equality in Florence was lauded by its population. The non-elite's belief in equality, in part, precipitated the Ciompi Rebellion, while the elite's use of the rhetoric of equality built the idea of Florentine state. The Medici were able to play into this idea by coopting the terms of liberty.⁹⁴ The reality of the centralizing of Florentine power was thus subsumed under the cultural notion of Florentine liberty.

Bruni praised Florentine society for its equality in different classes of men, a city where the poor are taken care of by the state and the rich are taken care of by their wealth. He also gave Florence a distinctive private character, praising the property of its citizens as one of the greatest virtues of his city.⁹⁵ Florentine freedom was tied to private ownership and freedom was

⁹¹ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 23.

⁹² Savonarola, despite coming into power and promoting a religious vision of republican liberty, was in the end executed by Florentines in the Piazza della Signoria – an indication of the commune's denial of his vision.

⁹³ Leonardo Bruni, "Oration on the Funeral of Nanni Strozzi," in *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: selected texts*. Ed. Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson. (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1987), 118.

⁹⁴ Alison Brown, "Demasking Renaissance Republicanism," in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 189.

⁹⁵ Leonardo Bruni, "Panegyric to the City of Florence", 140.

something that could be owned as property. If freedom was a property relationship with the people of Florence, then it follows that the guaranteeing of private property was the guarantee of freedom. Confiscation of property was therefore an act of state that alienated the individual from Florentine civil society. The guarantee of property also is a state relationship since, in theory, the freedom from arbitrary power was protected by the people who made up the electable offices.

The right to ownership of people also guarantees a right to the ownership of freedom which is entrenched in a system of hierarchy that places Florentines above others due to their ownership of freedom. The idea of *libertas* as the freedom of citizens and of the state was known as a property relationship. Those in possession of *libertas* were defined as free from arbitrary domination by others.⁹⁶ By emphasizing the protection of patrimony as the key to the successful growth of a free state Machiavelli demonstrates the fear of tyrannical rule as one that did not guarantee property relationships. Property rights are one of the most important protected rights to a free society. In Book II, Chapter 2 of the *Discorsi*, He speaks of a free state as one where citizens could advance by merit rather than birth through the protection and enjoyment of property.⁹⁷ By extension, servitude, or the loss of freedom, is conflated with the alienation of property. Enslaved persons were alienated from freedom and not in possession of *libertas* as a property relationship and thus could not advance by merit, at least in the legal sense. In inventories commissioned by the state, such as the *Magistro delli Pupilli*, the enslaved were relegated to places in the household as moveable goods next to other inanimate furniture. Their lack of freedom made them less than people in a city where personhood involved the ability to form property relationships, no matter how small.

⁹⁶ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 7.

⁹⁷ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, II.2. Trans. Ninian Hill Thomson. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1883).

City-states such as Florence had to contend with the matter of survival. Ideas of freedom and slavery were therefore linked to the status of the state. Nominally independent but *de jure* under the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Emperor, Florence needed justification for their freedom from the Empire that could make their city seem naturally free rather than a fact of weak centralized minor government in the Holy Roman Empire.⁹⁸ In the new philosophies of these city-states and their assertion of independence, Florentines looked to antiquity to lay claim to legitimacy through republican virtue.⁹⁹ Reinterpreting the many texts of antiquity within the framework of Florence's political needs demonstrates the adaptability of these texts to support the state's agenda. The ideals of antiquity were especially reflected in the writings that consider the political realities of the city. The need for a legal framework to establish the legislative independence of Florence necessitated the application of the terminology of antiquity to reinforce the existing socio-political structures. At the same time, the economic reality that led to the regulation of slavery was also coded in political understandings of "otherness" that allowed persons to be enslaved. Thus, civic identity could exist outside of the restrictive guild system, in which only men of a certain profession could be members, that enabled participation in government. The construction of an identity outside of the ruling powers enabled Florence to capitalize on their rhetorical gestures and to label those who broke the rules as enemies of the state.¹⁰⁰ These concepts allowed Florence to create a civic identity that crosses class divisions and seemingly democratizes state power, but also maintain a firm hierarchical relationship with different members of the guilds.

⁹⁸ Quentin Skinner *Visions of Politics*, 12.

⁹⁹ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 18.

¹⁰⁰ The Albizzi and Medici family used the state apparatus to get rid of their enemies several times. See Christine Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, 39-40.

Despite lauding the Florentine ideals of civic duty, Bruni's ultimate argument in the *Laudatio* was one of hierarchy. He does not acknowledge the guilds of Florence as the rightful legislators of the city but rather places his faith in the elected officials of the priory and the magistrates.¹⁰¹ These magistracies were chosen based on eligibility to hold office, a system which determined male citizenship within the city. Bruni articulates class hierarchy, despite his assertion of the strength of Florentine citizenship. His example of the brilliance of Florentine architecture focuses on the homes of private citizens. He points to these as evidence of Florence's magnificence between the public buildings that symbolize Florence's republican nature, such as the *Palazzo della Signoria* and the public squares in which citizens can congregate. He argues that these were the pride of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, but Bruni celebrated the citizens' houses as like the palaces of the Roman Empire.¹⁰² Such a comparison weakens his celebration of Roman republicanism but reinforces the private palaces as a part of the Florentine political system. Even outside the walls of Florence where Bruni talks about the landscape, he points out that the villas of Florence's leading citizens surpass the landscape.

Bruni also paints the people of the East in broad strokes as barbarians, such as Scythians and Persians. This is the same way that the people of Rome described their slaves and follows Petrarch's similar association of slavery with Scythians. It follows the law enacted by Florence that banned the enslavement of co-religionists but justified and encouraged the enslavement of Muslims and pagans for the sake of conversion. The *Laudatio* is at once an exercise in the language of antiquity and a commentary on the slaves imported from the Black Sea and the Balkans in Bruni's time, two things that appeared together effortlessly for Bruni.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Leonardo Bruni, *Laudatio Florentine Urbis*, 88.1-5 p. 33.

¹⁰² Leonardo Bruni, "Panegyric to the City of Florence", 141.

¹⁰³ Leonardo Bruni, "Panegyric to the City of Florence", 146.

Empire

Continuing the trend for the subjugation of those who were other, the revival of antiquity also solidified the Florentine ambition for empire. While this desire of expansion was by no means only a humanist intervention, Florence in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries succeeded in a spate of conquests that allowed them to become the central commune with multiple subject cities and a territorial state despite its communal nature. The institutionalization of the slave trade in Florence played into a geographic idea of empire. Florence's independent authority did not preclude Florence from asserting their own dominance over other city-states. While decrying the tyranny of Giangaleazzo Visconti, Bruni celebrates Florence's attempt at empire through its conquest of various city states, in particular, Volterra.¹⁰⁴ One of the points he makes is that Florence is the perfect city to rule the world due to the city's many virtues. Between 1350 to 1411, Florence had conquered most of Tuscany north of Siena, including many long-time republics such as Pisa.¹⁰⁵ Far from being a helpless republic defending itself from the tyranny of Giangaleazzo Visconti, Florence became the tyrant of Tuscany. Florence's attempt at empire creation – despite localized in Tuscany – speaks to its self-constructed image as the heir to the Roman Republic, one that felt no contradiction between the protection of its own civic freedom and equality and taking it away from other states.

Coinciding with the regulation of slavery, identity creation and subjugation went hand in hand. In fact, one of the acts of empire was the creation of the Florentine galley system in 1421 through the port of Pisa.¹⁰⁶ Manifests of the ships in this galley project indicate that these ships

¹⁰⁴ Leonardo Bruni, "Panegyric to the City of Florence", 163-164.

¹⁰⁵ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion in Early Renaissance Florence* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 201. For more on Florence as a centre of imperialistic power see Goro Dati, "The Feast Day of St. John the Baptist in Florence", in *Medieval Towns: A Reader* ed. Maryanne Kowaleski. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2006), 306-309.

¹⁰⁶ Michael E Mallet. *The Florentine Galleys*, 21.

came into Pisa laden with goods, including slaves.¹⁰⁷ The sponsors and investors behind each of the ships that came in also came from the Florentine elite, who also had enslaved people in their households.¹⁰⁸ It is no coincidence that Bruni praised Rome for their dominance of the Mediterranean Sea in his *Laudatio*.¹⁰⁹ Having a state regulated and owned galley was both a statement to the city of Pisa of Florence's dominance and hold over the city's commercial interests and to the wider Mediterranean world of Florence's entry into the trade once only available to port cities and their colonies. The subjugation of others was a primary concern for Florentine politics. This defeats the idea that Florence was a small city state fighting for its survival against Giangaleazzo Visconti but rather than one that creates its own empire through both conquest and its attempt at entering the Mediterranean maritime world.

The establishment of the Florentine galley was an attempt at state creation. Its goal was to subjugate the maritime prowess of the newly acquired Pisa into Florentine industry and trade. This endeavour created a wealth of documents that merged the oligarchy with a maritime purpose. Florence was already independently wealthy without the need for a seaport, a reflection of its position as an industrial rather than a commercial city.¹¹⁰ The establishment of the Florentine state-run galleys was both a way of undercutting Pisa's importance as a maritime republic and a centralizing attempt to regulate overseas trade. The list of the captains and officers of these ships are a list of the well-known oligarchs of Florence, including the Pazzi, the Tornabuoni, the Sassetti and the Vespucci.¹¹¹ The lists of investors and creditors for these

¹⁰⁷ Michael E Mallet. *The Florentine Galleys*, 120, also see ASF Consoli de Mare 7.

¹⁰⁸ Monica Boni, "La domesticité en Toscane aux XIVe et XVe siècles" (dissertation, 2006), Appendix 525-613.

¹⁰⁹ Leonardo Bruni, "Panegyric to the City of Florence", 143.

¹¹⁰ Michael E Mallet. *The Florentine Galleys*, 9.

¹¹¹ Michael E Mallet. *The Florentine Galleys*, Appendix A 153-176.

galleys also are a list of the most formidable families in Florence.¹¹² By giving power over the galleys to the oligarchy, they centralized the idea of empire creation within the patrician mercantile elite.

The formal documents of the *Consoli de Mare* indicate the state sanctioned importation of slaves into Florence.¹¹³ Slaves were counted methodically between 1422-1478 using either the word *testa* (head) or *schiaua* (slave), indicating their female gender, among lists of other goods that were brought into Florence.¹¹⁴ These slaves were called either black or white, matching more the late fifteenth-century descriptions of Iberian slaves rather than the earlier, more colourful monikers of white, black, brown, yellow and red in the fourteenth-century *Registro*.¹¹⁵ These slaves were obviously seen differently from the ones imported from Byzantium and the Genoese and Venetian colonies in the East, who were marked by their ethnographic origins such as Tatar, Greek, or Circassian. The inclusion of Lisbon and enslaved peoples from there in the Florentine state galleys indicates that Florence's involvement with the Portuguese-Atlantic slave trade was state sanctioned and began at the very inception of the importation of Sub-Saharan West Africans into Europe and, later, the Caribbean.

Before the establishment of the galley system, Florentines often imported their slaves through agents in Venice, Ragusa, or Genoa. Most of the slaves sent into Florence were already spoken for and ordered specifically by wealthy Florentines.¹¹⁶ The galley system allowed Florentines to buy slaves directly from the markets in Valencia, cutting out the agents. They were also seemingly imported in Florence without a ready buyer, which meant that they would

¹¹² ASF Consoli da Mare 7.

¹¹³ ASF Consoli da Mare 7.

¹¹⁴ ASF Consoli da Mare 7 fols. 64r, 72r, 72v.

¹¹⁵ See Chapter 3, "Race".

¹¹⁶ Origo, "Domestic Enemy", 329-330.

be sold by the investors in Florence, enlarging the Florentine slave trade and localizing it within Florence. The ability to relocate the source of their slaves from the Black Sea, which was threatened by the Ottoman Empire in the 1460s, to Valencia, where Portuguese exploration of the coast West Africa brought cheap slaves into the Iberian markets mean that the Florentine use of slaves did not stop with the closing of the markets in the East.

In the 1470s, after the failure of the state-run galleys, Florentine merchants such as the Cambini family and Bartolomeo Marchionni ran personal shipments from the port of Lisbon to Pisa.¹¹⁷ The ships run by the city government of Florence and operated out of Pisa indicate the centralization of the institutions of the economy for the burgeoning Florentine empire. In addition, slavery becomes implicated in nation creation and new governmental institutions to centralize their power. These experiments with new institutions, such as the galley and the *Innocenti*, were all areas that monitored the existence and status of slaves in Florence, indicating both the profitability of the trade and the anxieties of Florentines in allowing these foreigners into their households. It is important to note that slavery therefore cannot be extricated from these systems. Slavery fit neatly into the idea of a Republican empire based on strict criteria of office holding and personal access to offices in that their ineligibility and foreignness made them the merchandise of empire, long before Spain established their empire in the “New” World.¹¹⁸

The combination of the elite merchants running the Florentine galleys and the galley’s role in the normalization of direct imports of slaves from Iberia demonstrate the role slavery played in the developments of the Florentine state in the fifteenth century. Especially as a more closed off, regimented elite consolidated power around the Medici family, state initiatives also

¹¹⁷ See Chapter 3, “Race”.

¹¹⁸ See Chapter 3 “Race”.

became the initiative of elites and their interests in obtaining merchandise, such as slaves that were priced far above the affordability of the average guild member. Control over long distance trading routes and supply not only indicated that Florence was trying to enter as a competitor in an already competitive Mediterranean market, but also that human cargo was normalized in Florence enough that they would change markets to tap into the West African slave trade.

Culture

Civic Identity

Despite the empowered wealthy merchants becoming an oligarchy, Florence in the late Middle Ages was one founded on the concepts, if not the reality, of the diffusion of state power.¹¹⁹ The new elites had to use the vocabulary of republicanism to enact policies that were beneficial to them and needed to work, at least in theory, through the guild system. Nevertheless, the codification of these republican ideals formalized institutions of state power. Throughout fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Florence engaged in the mechanism of state creation through its institutions, both by placing power in the institution of the *signoria* and the creation of new offices that regulated more aspects of Florentine lives.

The developing Florentine commune tried to enforce social hierarchy and personal status in an era where identity was fluid and enslavement could happen to anyone in the Mediterranean.¹²⁰ Through their attempt at defining the unique characteristics of a person, Florentine registers highlighted the ambiguous nature of the self. One of the most explicit examples of tracking and identity come out of the bodies of the enslaved women registered to the Florentine *Registro*.¹²¹ Such detailed descriptions demanded by the communal government is

¹¹⁹ John Najemy “Civic Humanism and Florentine Politics”, 87.

¹²⁰ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 13.

¹²¹ Valentin Groebner, *Who are You?*, 108-111.

evidence of an inability to properly track people in the commune but the necessity of doing so. One example that illustrates the variability of identity as part of the reification of personhood comes from *The Fat Woodworker*, a famous story by Antonio Manetti who was a polymath in Florentine elite circles.¹²² In Manetti's comedic story, Manetto, a woodworker associated with elite Florentines, loses his identity through a prank by Filippo Brunelleschi and his circle of learned friends. Due to being the lowest ranking person at a banquet, Manetto's tardiness was deemed socially unacceptable and punishable by Brunelleschi who concocted this scheme as punishment.¹²³ The next day, Manetto turns into Matteo. At first, the woodworker insists that he is Manetto, but Brunelleschi and his friends have bought the courts, the neighbours, and took over his home, each insisting that Manetto was in fact another person. Brunelleschi even conjures up a family for the new identity of Manetto, who asks him to return home with them.¹²⁴ The woodworker begins to doubt his own identity and leaves Florence. This story, set in the year 1409 but written in the 1470s, demonstrates the fragility of identity as part of a social process in which members of a Florentine's social circle continuously affirm a person's status. The hierarchy of the social order is again emphasized in this story, where the reason for Manetto to lose his identity was his upending of the social hierarchy where those of higher rank were forced to wait on him. Despite being a prank, the story had lasting consequences for Manetto and served as a stark warning for those who challenged, even unwittingly, the social hierarchy. In the end, the woodworker had to leave Florence for Hungary, because his identity as part of the social

¹²² Antonio Manetti, *Novella del Grasso legnaiuolo*, (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1856).

¹²³ Antonio Manetti, *Novella del Grasso legnaiuolo*, 3-5.

¹²⁴ Antonio Manetti, *Novella del Grasso legnaiuolo*, 10-11.

world of Florence has been stripped and he is left with nothing that connected him to his commune, including his personhood and the freedom that afforded him.¹²⁵

While playing off the distress of the woodworker as a joke, Antonio Manetti revealed the anxieties of personhood that affected the perceived individualism of the city-state. In the absence of identification cards, such as passports or fingerprints, Manetto's identity was as fixed as the people who agreed to recognize him. If identity was conceived through one's connections to society and thereby the state, the state's recording of the characteristics that constitutes a fixed identity established a monopoly on the determination of identity as relational to the commune. Fixing the identity of enslavement may also be part of the commune's attempt at reinforcing the boundaries of social hierarchy - Manetto himself only loses his identity when he upsets the social order by making his social superiors wait for him. The recording of the physical details of enslaved people fixed their identity as property, cementing the social status of enslavement. Establishing the institutions of recordkeeping affirmed the power of Florence in its ability to legislate on property and people and served to use these records to compound its influence on identity and society. The creation of these ideas was reflected in the legislation surrounding enslavement. The enslavement of foreign women as domestic labourers through the negation of legal personhood and the affirmation of their status as property using the legal system reaffirmed society and the state's power of determination. However, this relationship was not typically straightforward, as those that were enslaved operated in the liminal spaces between personhood, property, and legality.

This anxiety around the liminality of identity was reflected in legislation about enslaved runaways and their aides. In the record of regulation of slavery and restated in subsequent laws,

¹²⁵ Antonio Manetti, *Novella del Grasso legnaiuolo*, 67.

the state identified its spaces through its rules concerning the mobility of the enslaved and their ability to move between personhood and property. The codification of these boundaries, identified as the fines that those who helped an enslaved runaway would have to pay to the commune, demonstrates the relationship between legal status and state proximity. The farther the enslaved person and their helper got from Florence, the higher the fine that had to be paid to the commune.¹²⁶ Leaving Florence would result in a more difficult capture of the enslaved person, but also solidified the boundaries of the state and its limited reach. While this legislation denies the agency of the enslaved runaway to engineer her own escape, it serves to legalize the three-layered boundaries between Florence, its territory, and the outside. The low fine that comes from being within three miles of the city and still within the confines of Florentine territory to the 20-fold increase to being outside of the city indicates the level of control that Florence had to find people within its territory.¹²⁷ In an era where Florence focused on empire creation and self-preservation, these legal notions of boundaries reveal the commune's attempt at codifying – and thus rendering permanent – Florence's relationship to the land around it as part of the state's understanding of its own identity.

Religious Identity

This ideology of freedom where the poor and wealthy both had a sense of justice and communal spirit meant that un-freedom was an un-Florentine state of being. Freedom was not

¹²⁶ “Item quilibet persona que deinceps post diem tam qua prius Provisio fuit approbata in consilio comunis dabit operam cum effectu vel causa ex aliquam sclava ut serva pertinens ad aliquem civem florentinum vel ad aliquem Alium habitantem intra civitatem Florentie au fugerit extraterritorum comunis florentio. Et talis fuga sequatur condemnatur et condemnari possit et debeat pro furto in libris mille prefato communi florentinae et ad restitutionem dicte sclave vel serve vel euis valute domino illuis. Item quod quilibet divians Seu transfugans tris[?] aliquam de sclavis et servis predictis ultra tria miliaria et civitate florentie sed in territorio tamen comunis florentie condemnetur in libris quingentis profato communi. Si vero talem sclavam et servam diviaverit seu transfugaverit vel latiare fecerit in dicta civitate vel infra tra miliaria extra causam condemnetur in libris tregentis” ASF Statuti di Firenze 29, fol. 388r.

¹²⁷ 50 to 1000 lire.

the monopoly of elites or even guild members. Rather, the workers though owning nothing or very little, still owned – nominally – their freedom. The reality of their condition did not negate their belief in their rights. The language of the regulation of the slave trade in 1364 as recorded in the *Registro degli Schiavi* followed the language of economic freedom that came with the ability of ownership.¹²⁸ While the official document uses the language of Catholicism, its terminology carries meaning beyond adherence to a religious group. The commune drew power from its identification with the Church – especially as a stronghold of Guelph power. Not only did Latin Christianity put them into wider conversation with the rest of Western Europe and especially Rome, but also allowed Florence to co-opt matters that were the concern of ecclesiastical courts, such as the persecution of heresy. Using religious motivations as a cover for persecuting the enemies of the state, Florence, like the other enslaving societies of the Italian peninsula, adopted religious language to justify enslavement of the other.

The other requirement that justified enslavement involves the absence of a Christian faith. The specification that those who were able to be enslaved and alienated as non-Christian meant that slaves be “infidels” if they had ancestors or were of the race (*de genere*) of infidels.¹²⁹ The entire state apparatus was synonymous with the city’s religious identity, especially after the cooption of the Guelph party into the political system. By reiterating the inheritance of infidel status on “infidel” lands, Florentine legislation also pegged them as non-Florentine, and thus not amenable to the ideals of personal freedom promised to Christian souls.

¹²⁸ Quod deinceps cuilibet undecumque sit et cuiuscumque conditionis existat liceat libere et impune ducere in civitatem, civitatem et districtum Florentie schiavum et schivos cuiuscumque sexus existent” ASF, Capitoli Appendice 26 fol. 1r, see also Ridolfo Livi. *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 142-146.

¹²⁹ “prout in ipsa reformatione continetur, intelligatur de schiavis et servis infidelibus ab origine sue nativitatis, etiamsi tempore quo ad civitatem comitatum vel districtum Florentie ducuntur vel veniunt essent christiane fidei...Presumatur semper ab origine fuisse infidelis si sit de partibus et genere infidelium” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26 fol. 3r, Ridolfo Livi. *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 146.

Since the status of being born in a foreign land led the enslaved to hold a lifetime status of foreignness, they also did not have the ability to take part in the culture of liberty. The denial of the ability to own property negated liberty as a possession that was not just the purview of the wealthy but also set enslaved people apart from the poor, even as they both worked as domestic servants and wetnurses.

One of the ideologies of slavery came out of the about Islam that treated Muslims as Renegade Christians, seen as those who had turned away from the true faith. Thus, the trade in slavery was not just a trade in bodies and the purchase of labour, but also a trade in the souls of the Muslims to return them to the true faith.¹³⁰ The designation of the enslaveability of “infidels” demonstrates Florence’s purchase into this idea of the souls of their slaves. A more important part of this comes out of the gendered aspect of enslavement in the Italian peninsula, where the trade in the souls of enslaved women also was a trade in the souls of the womb. These came out of both a negative relationship by taking away the means of procreation from an “infidel” and adding one to the Christian side, giving a glimpse into the ideology behind having the Catholic children of enslaved women be born free. Framing such a conversion as victory through the return to the fold of “infidels” into the true faith, the real offense of slavery was the enslavement of Christians to Muslim or other non-Christian owners, rather than slavery itself.¹³¹

The regular presence of foreigners who came from beyond Italy within Florentine households and baptized into Florentine’s faith demonstrates that foreignness was not something that could be wiped out through belonging within Florence’s institutions. Birth within Florence and baptism into Christianity at San Giovanni was an important part of belonging and safeguarded Latin Christians from enslavement by their co-religionists. The lack of freedom

¹³⁰ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 190.

¹³¹ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 189.

alienated enslaved and foreign-born servants from the institutions of Florence, and thus freedom. They came from outside of the outer limits of the Florentine empire and thus could not be trusted to be loyal to Florence. The children of enslaved women – who mostly had Florentine fathers – were able to be inducted into Florence’s institutions and become part of Florentine society either through adoption by the family or the *Innocenti* and other hospitals, indicating the importance of a childhood and familial association with the city of Florence. Despite having one foreign parent who was regarded as property, the children’s birth within Florence and their familial contacts made them a Florentine regardless of where they resided.

Neighbourhood Identity

At first glance, there seems to be a discrepancy between the desire for liberty from Florentines and the re-emergence of the slave trade in the legislations of 1364.¹³² However, the regulation and perpetuation of slavery coincided with a time where the Florentine oligarchy was centralizing its power while changing the ideology of Florentine participatory government.¹³³ By reframing their relationship to the *popolo* of Florence – that is the middle-class merchants and guild members – after the Ciompi Rebellion of 1378 as one of benevolent paternalism, Florentine elites normalized hierarchy that was outside of the guild system through the informality of a familial structure.¹³⁴

Hierarchy was established in a familial patronage system that became the key to power, especially after the Medici came to power in 1434. The institutionalization of slavery may have enforced this hierarchy and assuaged the feelings of disenfranchisement of the middle-classed guild members. Their allegiance to the houses within their neighbourhoods – a personal system

¹³² Origo. “Domestic Enemy”, 324.

¹³³ Najemy, “Civic Humanism and Florentine Politics”, 94.

¹³⁴ Popolo were not the same as the Ciompi who were poor wool workers.

of power utilized famously by Cosimo de' Medici – meant that instead of seeing oneself as part of a class or a guild, one was part of the family of the neighbourhood. With the investment in family chapels in parish churches came the symbols of neighbourhood unity. Such a manoeuvre by wealthy elites, while seemingly benign, centralized power into the hands of families who were neighbourhood elites, rather than with the more diffused guilds. Middle class artisans and guild Florentines found themselves firmly entrenched in the hierarchy of that neighbourhood where the great oligarchic families like the Strozzi and the Medici acted as patrons for their parish.

To demonstrate the idea of neighbourhood circles, it is necessary to go back again to the topic of identity. One of more interesting aspects of the story of *The Fat Woodworker*, mentioned above, was that his victimization of this prank was a result of his absence at a party of Florentine elites.¹³⁵ As a middling woodworker (albeit probably a member of the Lesser Guilds, possibly *Arte dei Legnaioli*), Manetto was still an essential part of the neighbourhood politics and participated in parties with more privileged members of the guilds such as Brunelleschi and Donatello. Despite this story being a historical fiction written at least 60 years after the events in the story took place, Manetti's inclusion of the Fat Woodworker in these crowds demonstrates the ubiquity of cross-class interactions. However, hierarchy was still maintained – Brunelleschi and his friends only decided to play this prank when they realized that they were forced to wait on Manetto, who was of lower social standing. Upending that social order resulted in swift punishment in the loss of Manetto's identity, and his departure from Florence.

Manetto's position - and thus his own self-identification - as the fat woodworker places him as part of the neighbourhood associations of his patronage network. No other detailed

¹³⁵ Antonio Manetti, *Novella del Grasso legnaiuolo*, 3.

descriptions are needed because his position within his society was taken for granted (albeit perhaps too much so). Going back to the *Registro* as a record for the demarcation for foreignness, which is an alienation from the neighbourhood allegiances of Florentine social identification, the very detail of its record of skin blemishes as a marker of identity indicates the lack of position in the social world of Florence. Two other areas where these levels of description for marking identity are available and both were used to discuss large numbers of moving people devoid of a social relationship within their immediate surroundings. The first comes from the book of deposits at the Santa Maria della Scala hospital in Siena in the fifteenth century where travelling pilgrims deposited their belongings before the last leg of their journey into Rome. These pilgrims were recorded with the same level of detail as the enslaved women in the *Registro degli Schiavi*.¹³⁶ The second is a 1464 register of mercenaries on the Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome where markings such as moles and scars were discussed all over the bodies of the soldiers, including on their toes.¹³⁷ The practise of branding slaves, as recorded in some earlier scholarship about medieval Mediterranean slavery is perhaps the ultimate example of this lack of neighbourhood identity and therefore the need to use physical means to supplement the lack of a social relationship.¹³⁸ Deeper social bonds within an entrenched hierarchy of paternalism was a marker of identity that precluded the need for physical categorizations that, in its necessity, highlighted foreignness.

In the 1470s, when the story of the *Fat Woodworker* was written, Florentine hierarchies of personal relationships had already been entrenched by the de-facto ruling Medici family and the previous oligarchies. In addition, the opening of the Atlantic slave trade out of West African

¹³⁶ Valentin Groebner, *Who are you?*, 111.

¹³⁷ Valentin Groebner, *Who are you?*, 112.

¹³⁸ Valentin Groebner, *Who are you?*, 110.

had begun importing enslaved Africans into Florence.¹³⁹ The acceptance of social hierarchy – and the acceptance of punishment for its violation – was made in the face of the mirror of unfreedom and foreignness. In an era where slavery was a constant fear for travellers in the Mediterranean, Florentines could accept their entrenched role in the social hierarchy if they were made to recognize their Florentine identity as one of protection from enslavement. The institutions of slavery reinforced and strengthened this hierarchy through its codification. Personal power – like that used by the Medici family – which corroded the republican systems was accepted when the edifice of individual liberty was maintained.

Florentine Identity

One of the ways to establish identity as part of a commune was based on the strength of the commune and the strength of its community outside. Florence had unique characteristics in this due to their practises of exile, and their rhetoric of fear of outside rule. Factionalism in Florence resulted in the banishment of many great families and therefore the establishment of a community of exiles, identifying as Florentine but banished indefinitely from Florence and its territories. These exiles caused a fear of invasion from the outside, especially in alliance with the various city-states that Florentine exiles settled. As Paula Clarke points out, the world of exiles that formed a group remained in essence, Florentine, where principle familial relationships remained within the close-knit group of compatriots.¹⁴⁰ This required a realignment of Florentine identity from hereditary and therefore aristocratic to a geographic notion of Florence, especially in the era of territorial conquest. This was easily adapted from Cicero and Sallust, two widely

¹³⁹ See Chapter 2 “Social World”.

¹⁴⁰ Paula Clarke, “Identity of the Expatriate: Florentines in Venice in the Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries” in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*. ed. William Connell (LA: University of California Press, 2002), 390.

read classical authors, that deemed servitude under a hereditary *signor* as unfreedom.¹⁴¹ Thus hereditary claims to Florentine oligarchical power excluded the exiles and proximity to Florence became a more important indicator of governmental power.¹⁴² The hardening of borders, between the city of Florence and its subject cities, such as Volterra, Pisa, and Pistoia, allowed for the creation of the empire and the periphery.

The commune, and in particular, the *Palazzo della Signoria* was the centre of the Florentine territorial state. This nexus is realized in legislation surrounding cases where enslaved people absconded from their owners. Fines for helping an enslaved woman were priced based on distance from the central government of Florence. The farther the slave got from Florence the higher the fines, with districts of Florence referred to as part of a Tuscan Republican empire in the legal language of this legislation.¹⁴³ Later legislation regarding the enforcement of Florentine law across the geographical territory and the clear demarcation between Florence's *contado* and its territories reinforced the building of the Florentine empire.¹⁴⁴ The formalization of Florentine borders between city, *contado*, and *distretto* in the legal documents demonstrates the geographical, rather than a more hereditary, understanding of the core and the periphery.

Florence also required a version of civic duty that fits with the paradox of the cosmopolitan travelling merchants and municipal belonging.¹⁴⁵ By pointing out specifically that enslaved servants were foreigners and not part of the Latin religious community, Florentine

¹⁴¹ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 29.

¹⁴² This was not always the case in practice since many exiles were granted pardons and came back to Florence at the intercession of the women who remained, however there were also many exiles who took their wives and daughters with them and settled outside of the city. It was only those within Florence that had the power to intercede for the return of exiles. See Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to her sons* (Toronto: Iter Academic Press, 2016); Marco Parenti, *Lettere* (Firenze: Olschki, 1996) and Christine Shaw, *The Politics of Exile*, 206-207.

¹⁴³ ASF, Statuti di Firenze 29, fol. 388r.

¹⁴⁴ ASF, Statuti di Firenze 29 fol. 137r.

¹⁴⁵ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 4.

oligarchs were able to use Latin Christendom to conflate the foreign and the non-Catholic. European travelling merchants and immigrants into the city were Christians by birth, able to enter Florence's community and perform civic duties. In the period between 1339 and 1341, there was an increase in foreigners such as those from the Tuscan countryside who were granted citizenship.¹⁴⁶ This paradox is seen in the body of the slaves that these merchants brought into Florence. Instead of the use of the word Ghibelline, out of fashion by now despite the continued power of the Guelph party, Florence could frame enmity from without and within in terms of servitude and place of origin.

Enemy factions were branded as un-Florentine to avoid them returning to the city with outside forces to subjugate the city and reinstate the exiles. Since Florence exiled, rather than executed most of the elite political enemies that threatened the city, the commune created a precarious regional identity in the territorial areas of Florence, forming a political community guided by their loyalty to the dominant faction.¹⁴⁷ Factional dissent became something not connected to individual interests but became institutionalized – instead of fighting on the streets, factions took to the *Palazzo della Signoria* to sort out their differences and exile their enemies.¹⁴⁸ The power of language and rhetoric, at least in theory, became the tools of elite factions and wars.¹⁴⁹ While this served as the base point for humanism and individual relationships to the state, it also served to undermine the status of people who did not possess a civic identity, such as the enslaved – as they were not able to tap into the identity of the territorial state of Florence or the institutions that required such an identity for legitimacy.

¹⁴⁶ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 254

¹⁴⁸ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 256

¹⁴⁹ One only has to look at the famous words said by Giangaleazzo Visconti on Coluccio Salutati's letters. See Mikael Hornqvist, "The Two Myths of Civic Humanism", 114-115.

Latin-Christian Florentines had the advantage of entering the community through baptism in the city centre at San Giovanni as a member of the Florentine republic. Being born within the territory of Florence brought on meaning, not in the least in legal rights but also in its relationship to the communal government. The lineage of Florentine exiles could also be othered in this way as their children were not baptized in the commune. However, the naturalization process meant that the most elite of the exiles might expect to bring their children back into Florentine society while Florentine exiles who were born in the commune might return when political tensions eased, tying them to Florence. Access to the community moved away from membership in the guild system and rather was placed in a broader Florentine identity as free, both as travelling merchants and state oligarchs.

Perhaps Florentine identity can be best realized in the language with which enslaved peoples were manumitted and naturalized. In the records of the notary Messer Francesco Castro Fiorentino, the manumission records indicated that the newly freed became “Roman citizens” and were restored to their *antiquis natalibus*, or natal rights from birth.¹⁵⁰ These two terms indicate the extent to which Florence identified with their Roman heritage, especially in the day-to-day interactions with legal conventions.¹⁵¹ The enslaved were not Florentine citizens but Roman ones, also perhaps broadly indicating their freedom in all the territories of the Roman Empire and Florence’s position as the intellectual heirs of that large empire. Florentines also acknowledged that enslaved peoples in their households were born as free, understanding enslavement as a process that could be temporary. Freedom was something to be restored to a person, rather than given, by the Florentine state and their Roman heritage.

¹⁵⁰ ASF Notarile Antecosimiano (Henceforth NA) 9039 197r-198r, 333r-334v, NA 9041 f. 27r, NA 9042 f. 143r

¹⁵¹ For more on the diffusion of humanism in society, see Brian Maxson, *The Humanist World of Renaissance Florence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Conclusion

The study of the state and of enslavement are intertwined. The development of the Florentine commune was tied to the practices of enslavement both ideologically and physically and reinforced Florence's political identity developed between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. Legislation, ideology, and social norms reflect and are reflected by the notions of enslavement in Florence. By the later half of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Florence's acceptance of enslavement as a part of the "other" allowed for the expansion of the Florentine state. The progression of the Florentine republican government into a monarchy in the sixteenth century coincided with the changing nature of Mediterranean slavery. By the mid-sixteenth century, enslavement and freedom were directly under the purview of the state, with the establishment of the Knights of St. Stephen. The Medici Duchy began to use enslaved men to row their galleys – turning the state into the primary enslavers rather than private individuals.¹⁵² The control over the legislation and the practises of enslavement was one of the ways that the Medici Duchy asserted their monarchical rule. It also provided a framework to subsume the rhetoric against enslavement into the realities of religious warfare that dominated the sixteenth-century Mediterranean and the anxieties of Florentines about Ottoman expansion.¹⁵³ The survival of the institutions of enslavement that had always been justified by the cultural identity of Latin Christendom and its Greco-Roman heritage now was a part of the survival of the same Latin-Christian culture. The politicization of enslavement in the Mediterranean was thus an instrument of absolutist rule of the Florentine Duchy.

¹⁵² See Robert C. Davis, *Holy war and human bondage and Christian slaves, Muslim masters: white slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

¹⁵³ See Brian Brege, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire* (Florence: I Tatti Harvard University Press, 2021).

By understanding how enslavement and the Florentine state were inextricably linked throughout mutual development, it is possible to look deeper into the commune of Florence as a slave-holding society. The combination of inherited and created ideologies that reinforced and were reinforced by the presence of enslaved people in both the legal and the cultural space of Florentines. These combinations, full of contradictions, created the complex nature of the practises surrounding enslavement. The next chapters will explore the major areas where enslavement operated and were negotiated on an individual basis and detail the interactions between the enslaved, the enslavers, and the burgeoning legal systems that governed Florence.

Chapter 2: The Social World

Introduction

This is the story of two Lucia's, both Tartar enslaved persons brought into Florentine territory in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One Lucia lived to old age, married with a dowry granted by her master. She had his child while managing to maintain a cordial relationship with her mistress. The other Lucia was tortured with hot forceps on a cart through Florence before being hanged on the mound where the present *Archivio di Stato* of Florence sits. Her crime was illicit sex with her master and killing her mistress through poison and strangulation. On the surface, these two women were the same. Both from the Black Sea, both sold to the citizens living within the territory of Florence, and both sexual servants to the master while household servant to the mistress.¹ Nevertheless, their very different ends signify the differences in how Florentines and enslaved people negotiated their relationships and the vast array of networks that enslaved persons could develop in their new-found home of Florence.

Scholarly research on the early modern Mediterranean slave trade consists of either a reaction to the Transatlantic slave trade or an analysis of religious or economic interaction, with a lack of the social or cultural aspect of slavery in the places where enslaved persons ended up. The recent collections and monographs on slavery explore the phenomenon over a large period and across the Mediterranean. In seeking to bridge many of the gaps of knowledge between the Eastern Mediterranean and the coastal cities of Southern Europe, an overarching economic,

¹ See Margarita Datini. *Letters to Francesco Datini*. Trans. Carolyn James and Antonio Pagliaro. (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2012) and Archivio di Stato di Firenze (henceforth ASF), Capitano del Popolo Nanni Gondi 592, 113r.

geographical and temporal analysis was the norm in scholarship on Mediterranean slavery.² For example, Robert C. Davis has written about slavery as a form of Holy War in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³ His work is seminal in the understanding of Mediterranean faith-based slavery as a phenomenon that continued throughout the Atlantic slave trade period. Both his and Hannah Barker's monograph on the slave trade between the Black Sea and Alexandria in comparison with the Black Sea and Italy argues successfully that slavery was a shared cultural practice in the Mediterranean – operating in the same way across Italian city-states, the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa.⁴ The importance of these works lies in their larger framework and breadth of time which creates a Braudelian overview of a common Mediterranean experience.

There has been a lack of scholarship examining the real-life experiences of enslaved persons in early modern Italy, especially regarding the theories of the social effects of slavery on the native population. While Natalie Zemon Davis has written an important study on the life of one enslaved man – Leo Africanus – in the sixteenth century, her work is on an exceptional case of a well-educated man whose experiences differed from the majority of enslaved persons who

² See *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1000-1500 CE)*. ed. Reuvin Amitai and Christoph Cluse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017). For works on slavery in the Middle Ages see Salvatore Bonghi, "Le schiave orientali in Italia" in *Nuova antologia*, (vol 1, 1866), 215-246, Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans L'Europe Médiévale* vol 1 and 2 (Bruges: de Tempel, 1955), Jacques Heers. *Esclaves et Domestiques au Moyen Age dans le Monde Méditerranéen* (Paris: Fayard, 1981), Sally McKee, "Inherited Status and Slavery in Late Medieval Italy and Venetian Crete", *Past and Present* (vol. 182, Feb 2004), 31-53, id. "The Familiarity of Enslaved persons in Medieval and Early Modern Households" in *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500-1800)* ed. Stefan Hans and Julianne Schiel (Chronos Verlag: Zürich, 2014), 501-514, id "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy" *Slavery and Abolition* (vol. 29, no. 3, Jan 2008), 305-326 and Sarah Stuard Mosher, "Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery" *Past and Present*, (no. 149, Nov 1995), 3-38.

³ See Robert C. Davis. *Holy war and human bondage: tales of Christian-Muslim slavery in the early-modern Mediterranean* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, 2009) and. *Christian enslaved persons, Muslim masters: white slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

⁴ See Hannah Barker. *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Enslaved persons, 1260-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

were impoverished women.⁵ Leo Africanus wrote his own biography while enslaved women in Florentine households had no such luxury. Steven Epstein's monograph on slavery explores the linguistic phenomenon of slavery as it entered into the Italian lexicon.⁶ His work is based on Genoa and explores the racial-linguistic attitudes of Italians as developed from slavery and covers a wide swathe of time extending into the modern era. Other studies include the group led by Carlo Taviani looking at Genoese examples of the slave trade and Lucia Dacome's work on the medical knowledge of enslaved persons in the large-scale trade in Livorno during the seventeenth century.⁷ Kate Lowe's work on Florence and Portugal opens a chapter of work in Sub-Saharan interactions with the Mediterranean before the era of the Atlantic slave trade.⁸ There is currently a lack of work that bridges the gap between the Eastern Mediterranean slave trade and the West African one. The focus of scholarly studies comes mostly from other cities on the foreground of the Mediterranean or Atlantic slave culture as a result of their coastal location. There has been no systematic social analysis of the phenomenon of late medieval and early modern slavery in Florence and the areas less connected with this large-scale cultural exchange.

Florence existed on the very edges of the "contact zone" along the coast of the Mediterranean before its establishment of the port at Livorno in the sixteenth century. While Florentines travelled extensively around the Mediterranean region, with few exceptions their city

⁵ See Natalie Zemon-Davis. *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

⁶ See Steven A. Epstein. *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity and Human Bondage in Italy*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁷ See Lucia Dacome. *Malleable Anatomies: Models, Makers and Material Culture in Eighteenth-Century Italy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Carlo Taviani "The Genoese Casa di San Giorgio as a Micro-Economic and Territorial Nodal System" in *The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade around Europe 1300–1600*. ed Wim Blockmans, Mikhail Krom and Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁸ Kate Lowe, "Black Africans' Religious and Cultural Assimilation to, or Appropriation of, Catholicism in Italy, 1470-1520," *Renaissance and Reformation* 31, no. 2 (January 2008): pp. 67-86. Kate Lowe, "Africa in the News in Renaissance Italy: News Extracts from Portugal about Western Africa Circulating in Northern and Central Italy in the 1480s and 1490s," *Italian Studies* 65, no. 3 (2010): pp. 310-328 and Thomas F. Earle and Kate Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

was not as privy to as many foreign visitors and settlers as the trading hubs of Genoa and Venice. Florence's unique experience of enslaved persons entering their city resulted from their operations on the edge of Mediterranean contact. Enslaved persons who came into Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries usually stayed or at least were expected to stay with their masters. An analysis of Florentine enslaved persons offers both an in-depth view of how foreigners integrated into an early modern society and how a city on the periphery of the network of Mediterranean trade negotiated its domestic interactions through exchanges with trade culture.

This chapter uses Florence as a tool to investigate the social processes of slavery. The main argument is that instead of experiencing the total loss of interpersonal relationships enslaved persons in Florence experienced a social "rebirth" where their integration into the community was based on the relationships developed during their captivity.⁹ The slave's "rebirth" happened twice, once upon entrance into Florence, where they were baptized, and once upon manumission, where they become Florentine citizens. The relatively low number of enslaved persons in Florence as a percentage of the population indicates that Florence did not have proscriptive norms on enslavement practises within households. Through the social processes of enslavement and their time in Florence, they were able to integrate into society upon manumission and become Florentine citizens.

This chapter attempts to reconstruct a slave's position in the society of late-Medieval and Early Modern Florence. It attempts to reveal that a slave's position was marginal and changeable. Enslaved persons tried to exercise some semblance of control over their fate by entering the networks around Florence and attaining social capital. This does not imply that

⁹ For more information on the social debate of slavery see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985) and the response *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death*. ed. John Bodel and Walter Scheidel (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2017).

enslaved persons did not often face terrible conditions and treatment as commodities in Florence. However, enslaved persons and masters could negotiate their relationships with some degree of flexibility that depended on personality and personal needs rather than legal definitions. Even in the cases of crime and run-aways, records of these crimes implicated freeborn Florentines who committed these acts in conjunction with their enslaved persons. By reconstructing the lives of enslaved peoples, it becomes apparent that Florentines had difficulties conceptualizing enslaved persons as solely property – or subhuman in practise, despite philosophical and theological debates. Instead, Florentines formed complex highly individualistic relationships with their enslaved persons that depended on the personalities involved within said relationships.

By positioning Florence as the centre of a study on slavery, this chapter hopes to articulate that slavery has complex layers outside of the slave-culture narrative promoted by scholars of the Mediterranean trade networks. By using private letters and notarial records, this chapter seeks to reconstruct the social networks of a slave and offer an analysis of their interactions with Florentines. The fact that many enslaved persons worked outside of the households of their owners indicates a wide array of interpersonal relationships that enslaved persons had access to. Institutions such as the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* have detailed records regarding the children of enslaved persons and the employment of enslaved persons. Criminal trials like the *Otto della Balia* and the *Capitano del Popolo* bring another perspective to the case of a slave in Florence. The punishment of enslaved persons within the confines of Florentine law indicates their participation and acceptance in the established legal systems of Florence even while these enslaved persons transgressed the boundaries of that society. Through a reconstruction of the experiences of slavery at the level of the individual, interactions of Florentines with the foreign and the strange come to the forefront. A deep exploration of slave's

experiences within the society of early modern Florence re-inserts some humanity into these individuals dehumanized by the legal system.

Literature Review

Scholarly research on the early modern Mediterranean slave trade falls into two categories. One is a reaction to scholarship on the Transatlantic slave trade and the other is an analysis of religious or economic interaction, lacking the social or cultural analysis of slavery in the places where enslaved persons ended up. The recent collections and monographs on slavery explore the phenomenon over a large period and across the Mediterranean. In seeking to bridge many of the gaps of knowledge between the Eastern Mediterranean and the coastal cities of Southern Europe, scholars used an overarching economic, geographical and temporal analysis in scholarship on Mediterranean slavery.¹⁰ For example, in his two books published 2003 and 2009, Robert C. Davis wrote about slavery as a form of Holy War in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹ His work is seminal in the understanding of Mediterranean slavery as a faith-based phenomenon that continued throughout the Atlantic slave trade period. Hannah Barker's 2019 monograph on the slave trade between Alexandria and Italy argues that slavery was a shared cultural practice in the Mediterranean but spans a period of 1260-1500.¹² The importance of

¹⁰ See *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1000-1500 CE)*. ed. Reuvin Amitai and Christoph Cluse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017). For works on slavery in the Middle Ages see Salvatore Bonghi, "Le schiave orientali in Italia" in *Nuova antologia*, (vol 1, 1866), 215-246, Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans L'Europe Médiévale* vol 1 and 2 (Bruges: de Tempel, 1955), Jacques Heers. *Esclaves et Domestiques au Moyen Age dans le Monde Méditerranéen* (Paris: Fayard, 1981), Sally McKee, "Inherited Status and Slavery in Late Medieval Italy and Venetian Crete", *Past and Present* (vol. 182, Feb 2004), 31-53. "The Familiarity of Enslaved persons in Medieval and Early Modern Households" in *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500-1800)* ed. Stefan Hans and Julianne Schiel (Chronos Verlag: Zürich, 2014), 501-514, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy" *Slavery and Abolition* (vol. 29, no. 3, Jan 2008), 305-326 and Sarah Stuard Mosher, "Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery" *Past and Present*, (no. 149, Nov 1995), 3-38.

¹¹ See Robert C. Davis. *Holy war and human bondage: tales of Christian-Muslim slavery in the early-modern Mediterranean* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, 2009) and *Christian enslaved persons, Muslim masters: white slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

¹² See Hannah Barker. *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Enslaved persons, 1260-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

these works lies in their larger framework and breadth of time which created a *longue-durée* of a common Mediterranean experience.

This broad scholarship fails to illustrate the real-life experiences of enslaved persons in the early modern Mediterranean, especially regarding the theories of the social effects of slavery on the native population. There are some works specifically on late-Medieval and early modern Italy. Steven Epstein's monograph on slavery in Italy explores the linguistic phenomenon of slavery as it entered the Italian lexicon.¹³ His work is based on Genoa and explores the racial-linguistic attitudes of Italians as developed from slavery and covers a wide swathe of time extending into the modern era.¹⁴ In terms of racial studies, Kate Lowe's work on Florence and Portugal opens a chapter of work in Sub-Saharan interactions with the Mediterranean before the era of the Atlantic slave trade.¹⁵ Sally McKee's work on the gender and sexuality of the late Medieval Mediterranean slave trade covers mostly the naval empires and their colonies around the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁶ The focus of scholarly studies comes mostly from other cities on the foreground of the Mediterranean or Atlantic slave culture as a result of their coastal location.¹⁷ There has been no systematic social analysis of the phenomenon of late medieval and

¹³ See Steven A. Epstein. *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity and Human Bondage in Italy*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ For more on Genoa, see Michel Balard. "Esclavage en Crimée et sources fiscales Génoises au XVe siècles." *Byzantinische Forschungen* (vol. 22, 1996), 9–17, 177-191 and Matthias Schnettger and Carlo Taviani. *Libertà e dominio: il sistema politico genovese: le relazioni esterne e il controllo del territorio* (Rome: Viella, 2011).

¹⁵ Kate Lowe, "Africa in the News in Renaissance Italy: News Extracts from Portugal about Western Africa Circulating in Northern and Central Italy in the 1480s and 1490s," *Italian Studies* 65, no. 3 (2010): pp. 310-328 and Thomas F. Earle and Kate Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁶ See Sally McKee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): 305–26, "Inherited Status and Slavery in Late Medieval Italy and Venetian Crete" *Past & Present* 182, no. 1 (2004), "The Familiarity of Enslaved persons in Medieval and Early Modern Households," in *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500 - 1800)*, edited by Juliane Schiel. (Zürich: Chronos, 2014), 501–14 and "The Implications of Slave Women's Sexual Service in Late Medieval Italy," in *Unfreie Arbeit: ökonomische Und Kulturgeschichtliche Perspektiven*, ed. Tobias Reichardt and M. Erdem Kabadayi (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), pp. 101-114.

¹⁷ For studies on slavery in Florence, see Agostino Zanelli, *Le schiave orientali a Firenze nei secoli XIV e XV*, (Florence: E. Loeschner, 1885), Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Enslaved persons in Tuscany in the

early modern slavery in non-coastal city-states, nor an overview of their lives as represented by their enslavers. The only exceptions are Iris Origo, writing in 1955,¹⁸ an unpublished dissertation by Monica Boni in 2006,¹⁹ and Natalie Zemon-Davis's history of Leo Africanus.²⁰

Florence existed on the very edges of the “contact zone” along the coast of the Mediterranean before its establishment of the port at Livorno in the sixteenth century. Enslaved persons who came into Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries usually stayed or at least were expected to stay with their masters.²¹ Some were rented out to institutions and other citizens for their labour, but generally remained in Florence or its immediate vicinity.²² Despite Florentines travelling extensively around the Mediterranean region, they did not import enslaved peoples directly to their city due to their lack of a domestic port.²³ An analysis of Florentine enslaved persons offers both an in-depth view of how foreigners integrated into an early modern society and how a city on the periphery of Mediterranean trade networks negotiated its domestic interactions with foreigners from beyond the Italian peninsula

Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries.” *Speculum* (vol. 30. 1955), 321–61 and Paola Pinelli, “From Dubrovnik (Ragusa) To Florence: Observations on The Recruiting of Domestic Servants in the Fifteenth Century” *Dobrovnik Annals* (vol. 12, 2003), 51-71.

¹⁸ See Origo, “Domestic Enemy”. While her work is a comprehensive overview of enslavement in Tuscany, it is outdated in its terminology and has issues with some of the translations.

¹⁹ While Boni's thesis provides a comprehensive overview of the enslaved persons in the 1457-58 catasto and around Tuscany, it has less on the actual experiences of enslaved persons in the city of Florence. Monica Boni, *La domesticité en Toscane aux XIVe et XVe siècles*. Thèse de doctorat: (Univ. Genève, 2006).

²⁰ See Natalie Zemon-Davis. *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

²¹ Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans L'Europe Medievale* 370.

²² L'Archivio dell'Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze (henceforth AOIF), Balie e Bambini (henceforth B+B) 486, fol. 6r-6v, 66r, 69r, 77v, 99r, 139r, 197v.

²³ There was a short-lived experiment with creating a Florentine fleet after their subjugation of Pisa in 1405. See Michael Mallet. *The Florentine Galleys in the Fifteenth Century*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

Background

Florence legalized the importation of non-Latin Christian enslaved persons in 1364.²⁴

The regulation of slavery in Florence was in part a reaction to the population devastation of the plague in 1348 and the subsequent increase in wages for labourers in the city – especially domestic female workers.²⁵ Slavery was already a major industry in port cities like Genoa and Venice where enslaved persons made up a significant percentage of the population both in these cities and in the colonies.²⁶ In Florence, enslaved persons were imported from Genoa, Venice, Ragusa and later in the fifteenth century, Lisbon.²⁷ Between the years 1366 and 1397, 357 enslaved persons were registered in the *Registro degli Schiavi* in Florence.²⁸ The *Registro degli Schiavi* was an attempt by the city of Florence to record the total number of slave sales in Florence and the information of each slave as they came into the city. In a small city between 30 000 and 50 000 individuals, enslaved persons accounted for a very small number of the population of Florence.²⁹ The number always wavered around the three to four-hundred mark.

The relatively high price of enslaved persons and Florence's lack of a native fleet meant that slavery was never a truly profitable or prolific business in Florence. Families that imported

²⁴ “Quod deinceps cuilibet undecumque sit et cuicumque conditiones existat liceat libere et impune ducere in civitatem, comitatum et districtum Florentie schiavum et schiavos cuiuscumque sexus existent... Qui non sint catholice fidei Christiane et ipsos in ipsa civitate comitatum et districtum habere et tenere et vendere et donare et euovis titulo alienare et concedere cuilibet volenti” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26 fol. 1r, see also Ridolfo Livi. *La schiavitù domestica nei tempi di mezzo e nei modern: i Ricerche storiche di un antropologo*, (Padua, 1928), 142-146

²⁵ For wage changes in Florence see Mariestella Botticini, “Social Norms and Demographic Shocks, 1250-1450” (2006).

²⁶ For more information on the Venetian slave trade see Kate Lowe “Visible Lives: Black Gondoliers and Other Black Africans in Renaissance Venice” *Renaissance Quarterly* (vol. 66 no. 2, Summer 2013), 412-452 and Sally McKee, “Inherited Status” *Past and Present*, vol. 182.

²⁷ See Paola Pinelli, “From Dubrovnik (Ragusa) To Florence”, Iris Origo “Domestic Enemy” and Sergio Tognetti *Il Banco Cambini: Affari e Mercati Di Una Compagnia Mercantile-Bancaria Nella Firenze Del 15. Secolo*. (Firenze: Olschki, 1999).

²⁸ The *Registro degli Schiavi* is in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze under the record *Capitoli Appendice*, 26. Ridolfo Livi transcribed and published this work in 1928: *La schiavitù domestica nei tempi di mezzo e nei modern: i Ricerche storiche di un antropologo*, (Padua, 1928).

²⁹ Christiane Klapish-Zuber and David Herlihy. *Tuscans and their Families*, 73 and W. R. Day Jr, “The Population of Florence before the Black Death: Survey and Synthesis.” *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002), 96.

enslaved persons into Florence often did it either for private and individual reasons, or as a small part of their larger trade in textiles and other luxury goods.³⁰ Nor did the slave population replenish itself as the children of enslaved persons took on the free status of their Florentine fathers. This meant that all enslaved persons in Florence had to be imported as non-Latins for their slave status to be legitimate under Florentine law. The number of enslaved persons in Florence was never large as Florentines did not employ chattel slavery for agricultural purposes.³¹ Rather slavery was overwhelmingly domestic and female. Out a total number of 357, 329 of the enslaved in Florence were female.³² Most of these girls were young – ranging from girls to teenagers, with a few over their twenties. Once brought into Florence, enslaved women were used for domestic labour and sexual purposes.

Florentines also described their enslaved persons using racialized, rather than geographically or politically segregated, terminology. Enslaved persons would be categorized as Tartars, Greeks, Russians, Bosnians, Albanians, and Serbians among others – although they would come from diverse ports.³³ Later on, enslaved persons coming from the port of Lisbon, and by extension West Africa, were termed as either white or black.³⁴ These women lived and worked domestically in traditionally female jobs such as nursing and housekeeping throughout

³⁰ Boni, Monica, and Robert Delort. “Des Esclaves Toscans, Du Milieu Du XIVe Au Milieu Du XVe Siècle.” *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 112, no. 2 (2000), 1060. Sally McKee “Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy,” 316. Sergio Tognetti “The Trade in Black African Enslaved persons in Florence.” In *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, edited by T. F. Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 214.

³¹ The few number of enslaved persons precluded the large population needed for chattel slavery. In addition, the large proportion of female enslaved persons indicate that enslaved persons were meant for domestic labour

³² Origo, “Domestic Enemy”, 336.

³³ These tabulations have been done by Ridolfo Livi and Iris Origo from the *Registro degli Schiavi* (Capitoli Appendice 26 in the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze*).

³⁴ Sergio Tognetti “The Trade in Black African Enslaved persons in Florence.”, 219.

their lives without hope for ransom.³⁵ When they were manumitted, they disappeared into Florentine society as wives, workers and sometimes mothers.

Conceptually, Florentines adopted the vocabulary of the Romans to explain their practices of slavery, but realistically, Florentines were ambiguous on the exact position of these enslaved persons that entered their households and were privy to the most intimate sections of their daily lives. Florentines grappled with the concept of slavery through the context of a collective Roman heritage that places them at the crossroads of a large cross-cultural empire.³⁶ The dichotomy between the foreign-born enslaved persons and their essentially domestic life created ambiguity in their relationships with their Florentine masters and mistresses. While they belonged outside of the established social classes of Florence and were not citizens, they could be naturalized by manumission and live with the same rights as free Florentines.³⁷

Enslavement Practises

The two dynamics of slavery in Florence make it unique in the early modern experience. One, slavery was predominantly young, foreign and female. The young ages of these women are important in that a slave entering Florence would have been just reaching or already reaching puberty. Their foreignness points to their lack of social network in Florence. Masters even had to cloth enslaved persons before they entered into service, such as Lorenzo Guidetti in 1470 who recorded 18 soldi spent on cloth that would make a shift for his slave ordered from Ragusa.³⁸ Enslaved persons entered into Florence almost naked.³⁹

³⁵ This contrasts with later forms of Mediterranean slavery which was built on a profit-based model of maximizing the amount of ransom that a slave could be exchanged for, see Robert C. Davis, *Holy War and Human Bondage*.

³⁶ See Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics Vol. 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 29.

³⁷ Marc Kleijwegt, "Creating New Citizens: Freed Enslaved persons, the State and Citizenship in Early Rome and under Augustus." *European Review of History: Revue Europeenne D'histoire* (16, no. 3. 2009), 319.

³⁸ "una camicia" Lorenzo de' Guidetti, *Ricordanze*, ed. Böninger Lorenz (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2014), 46.

³⁹ Sergio Tognetti, "The Trade in Black African Enslaved persons in Florence", 217.

Unlike enslaved persons, servant girls had a semblance of protection from having a family that was established in Florence. For example, Bernardo Machiavelli writes a detailed record of a servant girl in his employ who was impregnated by his neighbour. Her redemption comes from the fact that she is a member of a respectable – albeit impoverished – Florentine family that had friends with some degree of social capital that forced the father to pay her dowry and the child.⁴⁰ A slave would not have such a network of friends established from her birth and would lack the social safety net that would help her in a case like this. For this reason, enslaved persons were perceived to be more sexually available than Florentine servant girls. The slave would be forced to create such a network and many of them did, to varying degrees of success.

The second point that makes slavery interesting and individualized in Florence stems from this first one. The predominance of female enslaved persons meant that slavery was essentially sexualized and domesticized. There are no large-scale farming ventures or industries that employed enslaved persons like in Cyprus, but rather most enslaved persons worked closely within households as servants.⁴¹ These women lived and worked domestically in traditionally female jobs such as childrearing and housekeeping throughout their lives without hope for ransom. When they were manumitted, they disappeared into Florentine society as wives, workers, and sometimes mothers, but carried the stigma of an “ex-slave” with them.⁴² Their proximity to their masters was a double-edged sword that gave them a unique position within Florence. While enslaved persons did form long lasting relationships with their Florentine masters and neighbours, they were also vulnerable to sexual exploitation by their owners and

⁴⁰ Catherine Atkinson. *Debts, Dowries, Donkeys: The Diary of Niccolò Machiavelli's Father, Messer Bernardo, in Quattrocento Florence*. (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2002), 108-109.

⁴¹ See Benjamin Arbel "Slave Trade and Slave Labor in Frankish and Venetian Cyprus", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*. n.s. 14 (1993): 150-90.

⁴² AOIF B+B 486, fol. 70r, 85r.

their owners' kin and friends. How they dealt with this minefield of mistreatment represents a wide array of interpersonal relationships that they built around themselves.

When an enslaved woman was brought into Florentine society, she was baptized, if she had not been before. In the Florentine baptismal records dating from 1450, enslaved persons were registered next to children in these lists with the paternalistic position of the father being relegated to the owner of the slave.⁴³ She was given a Christian name and whatever she still believed, she was treated as a Christian by her owners.⁴⁴ Baptism represented the slave's final destination in Florence and the start of her new life as a slave. Florentines only had one baptismal font for the city, located next to the cathedral. All enslaved persons were baptized at the same place and symbolically, as well as physically, entered Florentine society through this rite. While she could be passed around from owner to owner or even sold outside of Florence by travelling merchants, there were no cases of ransom or the return of the slave to her home. In the later variations of Mediterranean slavery explored by Robert C. Davis, conversion was discouraged due to the need to ransom.⁴⁵ Enslaved persons in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were often captured for the sole purpose of ransom. In this earlier period, enslaved persons were captured for use within the confines of the city, rather than as part of an international bargaining tool.

Free and Unfree Labour

Despite being a Christian, a slave was still not free but her unfreedom had as much to do with the social milieu of poor Florentine women as with her slave status. Girls were often put in wealthy households for labour to earn her dowry and her keep. In lieu of a salary, these girls

⁴³ Archivio Storico delle Fedi di Battesimo, Florence (henceforth ASFB), Registri Battesimali 1.

⁴⁴ Margherita Datini, *Letters to Francesco Datini*. Trans. Carolyn James and Antonio Pagliano. (Toronto: CRRS, 2012), 346.

⁴⁵ Robert C. Davis, "Christian enslaved persons", 168.

were often outfitted with a dowry and the articles necessary for her marriage when she came of age. Enslaved women often found the same end after years of service. Florentines adapted the social protocols of freeborn Florentine servant girls to that of the enslaved. The best outcome for an enslaved woman in Florence would be manumission and then marriage to one of her masters' associates, being outfitted with a dowry by her master. Instead of establishing a clear distinction between the native Florentine girl baptized from birth and the servant baptised upon entry into Florence, wealthy Florentines did not have any official proscriptions on treating an enslaved servant differently from a free one.

The blurring of lines between the servant and the slave does not mean to say that enslaved persons lived the same lives as freeborn servant girls. In fact, their lives were strongly informed by their inability to choose their fates. The most relevant example of the dehumanization of enslaved persons comes from the *castasti* of Florence, enslaved persons and their prices were entered under *sostanze* where Florentines typically listed assets.⁴⁶ This process dehumanized the enslaved persons and reduced them to what the Florentines saw as an investment. Enslaved persons were an investment for Florentine citizens almost in the same way as an entry in the state dowry fund or a limited partnership.

In fact, enslaved women were rented out by their masters for a servant girls' salary. They were put in other households for work and whatever the renters determined to do with them. Others were used as wet-nurses, if they were producing milk at the time of their rental.⁴⁷ Wages would be paid to the masters rather than the enslaved persons although the onus of feeding and

⁴⁶ ASF Castasto 792-1960.

⁴⁷ AOIF, B+B 486 fol. 6r-6v, 66r, 69r, 77v, 99r, 139r, 197v.

clothing the slave went to the renter.⁴⁸ This arrangement complicates the construction of a slave's life. While she was not technically a Florentine and did not have a say in her rental, the slave's position as a salaried employee in a different household puts her in the liminal space. Was she an employee or a slave? A rental contract drawn in the late fourteenth century limits the powers the renter had over the slave, saying clearly that she is not to be manumitted or alienated by the renter. She was also not to be damaged. Couched within the language of property was the acknowledgement that this slave belonged to someone else.⁴⁹ Like renting any type of property, the owner took pains to ensure that the slave would not depreciate in value during her time outside of his care. This included protecting the slave from pregnancy, sexual abuse, or injury. These protections were written into the terms of the contract themselves.

However, the rental contract also states that the slave was to join the *familia* of the renter. The idea of the *familia* in early modern Florence stems from the Roman concept. All those who resided in the household was defined by Roman jurists as part of the *familia*.⁵⁰ Italian slavery in the fourteenth and fifteenth century was justified in terms of the legal and social codes of the *paterfamilias*.⁵¹ The *paterfamilias* controlled the freedom of the children and dependents of the household and the family.⁵² Enslaved persons and children were not legally differentiated. Freeborn servant girls that lived within the domestic household were also under the definition of *familia*. Putting the slave that was rented out under the title of *familia*, represents a shift in status of the enslaved. Ownership notwithstanding, enslaved persons were moved from one household

⁴⁸ There is evidence of this as early as 1372 where a notarial document states a contract of an enslaved woman being rented out for a salary of 9 florins a year, see ASF NA 14895, fol. 190r. See also Luca di Matteo, *Panzano, Brighe, Affanni, Volgimenti Di Stato*, 258-259.

⁴⁹ ASF NA 14895, fol. 190r.

⁵⁰ Richard Saller. "The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society", 112.

⁵¹ Julius Kirshner. "Family and Marriage" in *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance: 1300-1550*. Ed. John Najemy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 86.

⁵² Kirshner "Family and Marriage", 87.

to the other as a legal entity. There is some semblance of personhood in this move, as membership implied the implicit agreement of the *paterfamilia* for protecting and providing their basic needs. The slave would then enjoy some semblance of the honour of that household as a member of it.

Sex Trade

The sexual exploitation of female enslaved persons by free Florentine men is one of the most common outcomes in Florence. Although there are no records of enslaved persons being prostituted so far, their gender meant that they were treated as sexual property. Much can be understood in the outcomes of this sexual exploitation. In the *Innocenti* archives, the second book of the *Balie e Bambini* records that out of 207 children given up to the institution, 100 of them were the children of enslaved persons.⁵³ Given that enslaved persons numbered only three to four hundred at any given time in Florence, this number is a staggering confirmation of the sexual purpose of enslaved persons. As Richard Trexler pointed out in his study, most of the sex workers of early fifteenth-century Florence were foreign women, most often from Germany.⁵⁴ Foreign bodies were the norm in sexual exploitation. This case of the woman's foreignness also plays into the common idea that the regulation and state sanctioning of prostitution served to keep good Florentine girls safe from the seduction of hotblooded young men.

Enslaved women were vulnerable to sexual violence due to both their social status and foreignness. The rape of an enslaved woman was not a crime, although impregnation by someone other than her owner or helping her run away was.⁵⁵ The evidence of the sexual abuse

⁵³ AOIF B+B 486, see Appendix A.

⁵⁴ La prostitution florentine au XVe siècle: patronages et clientèles" *Annales; economies, sociétés, civilisations*, 36 (1981), 35-39.

⁵⁵ "Sclavam et servam diviaverit seu transfugaverit vel latiare fecerit In dicta civita vel infra tra miliaria extra causam condemnetur in libris tregentis ut supra hoc tamen salvo reservato quod talis delinquens in aliqua

of enslaved women comes from the prevalence of abandoned offspring in the Innocenti. As Trexler argues, the very existence of the Innocenti was a reason for more children to be abandoned, creating a twofold effect in which the establishment of the Innocenti both justified and encouraged the sexual abuse of enslaved women by lessening the consequences.⁵⁶ The enslaved and honourless position of the mother made her available to sexual abuse by the enslavers. This sexual abuse was absorbed by the Innocenti in mitigating the tensions involved in unwanted illegitimate offspring and the use of enslaved labour.

An institution of childhood like the Innocenti was aware of its role in the sexualization of enslaved women. While the ease of abandonment of the infants was not the cause of this sexual abuse, it certainly was a by-product of the unwanted consequences of sex and the profitability of wet nursing. It also allowed the erasure of the enslaved parentage of abandoned children by giving them the affiliation of the hospital. One of the ways that the Innocenti sought to alleviate this problem was by putting a price on the female enslaved persons. In the miscellaneous collections of the Ospedale degli Innocenti, a fifteenth-century document outlining proposed legislation to the *Signoria* suggested that the owners had to pay the Innocenti one florin within eight days of entry into Florence for every female slave coming into Florence.⁵⁷ While the legislation was never adopted, the gendered nature of the term “schiava” and its plural “schiave” in the legal language indicates that this was to be a tax specifically levied against enslaved

predictorum casuum condemnatorum in presenti capitulo non condemnatur in aliquo virtute presentis provisionis si in quantum prefatam sclavam et servam ad domum sui patroni vel domini vel in qua ipsam mora trahebat riduxerit et consegnaverit et seu ridire fecerit vell quomodo cumque reduceret ipsa sclava vel serva die fuge seu latitationis predictae vel Infra tres alios diem dictam dies immediate sequentes” ASF Statuti di Firenze 29, fol. 388r-389v. Many thanks to Tom Cohen, Barry Torch, Aaron Miedema, Sarah Wilk, Virginia Grimaldi and Vanessa McCarthy for helping with the transcription.

⁵⁶ Trexler, Richard. “The Foundlings of Florence” in *History of Childhood Quarterly* (1973). 1:1 and 2 (1973), 34

⁵⁷ AOIF, Filza di Archivio 6205, fol. 600r-v. For more on children born out of wedlock and abandoned at the Innocenti, see Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: the Ospedale Degli Innocenti, 1410-1536* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1993) and Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

women. This legislation does not specify the ages of the enslaved persons that were brought into Florence, or their fecundity, but rather only speaks of them as “those who did not care about their honour”.⁵⁸ The hospital perhaps did not need to specify the ages of the enslaved persons since the general trend of female enslaved persons at first purchase was generally between 10-22 years old. Evidence in the *Registro degli Schiavi* created 1364-1397 and in notarial records corroborate this fact, as does the demographic work done by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, no matter what age they were, the Innocenti believed that the enslaved women were a large source of infants at the foundling hospital and those that brought these women into Florence needed to pay for the upkeep of the hospital.

With this proposed legislation, the Innocenti argued that enslaved women entering Florence would eventually have a child that would need support from the Innocenti. This presumption reflects the sexualization of female enslaved persons in Florence, especially with the gendered specificity that only owners of female enslaved persons were subject to this penalty. The widespread abandonment of the offspring of enslaved women is not mentioned explicitly in the text but the hospital actively linked its financial resources to the number of enslaved women in Florence. The Innocenti’s proposed legislation indicates that sexual service was inextricably linked to the slave’s roles in Florence. The enslaved persons’ masters would need to contribute to the Innocenti on the idea that their enslaved women would have children and the children of their enslaved persons would naturally end up at the Innocenti.

Since it was extremely likely that the slave would be female (93%), the Innocenti was putting a tax on most of the enslaved persons coming into the city. This proposed tax represented

⁵⁸ “serve le quali non churono [sic] loro honore” AOIF, Filza di Archivio 6205 fol. 600v, AOIF B+B 486, 467, 468. For more on children born out of wedlock and abandoned at the Innocenti, see Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children* and Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence*.

⁵⁹ ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, NA 9039, etc. See Christiane Klapisch-Zuber “Women Servants in Florence”.

an additional cost of buying a slave or bringing a slave into Florence for sale. The assumption was that these enslaved women would bear children within their time in Florence. This law indicates a lack of paternal responsibility in making the masters pay the fee rather than the father when the enslaved woman was impregnated. Innocenti understood that just being born as the child of a slave was rationale enough for abandonment. It is unclear if the masters were generally also the fathers of the child conceived by the slave as Innocenti records seldom record the father of the child of a slave, but rather the slave and her owner.⁶⁰ In the cases that the father is recorded, fees were to be paid by the father.⁶¹ Out of 100 children of enslaved mothers, the father was only named or mentioned 19 times. The lack of paternal involvement puts the blame of pregnancy on the woman. Even the master is absolved of guilt through his payment to the Innocenti. This pre-conception tax demonstrates that judgement was already meted out onto these women as foreign carriers of unwanted children and sexual beings whose children would not be raised by them but by the hospital.

Since the common idea was that enslaved women did not care for their honour, Florentines viewed their chastity as something not necessary to protect. It is impossible to tell how many enslaved persons were impregnated by their masters. The *Balie e Bambini* records that there were also enslaved persons raped by those outside of the immediate familial household. Legally, female enslaved persons were not able to protect themselves from outsiders and only the masters were seen as the victim of an unwanted slave pregnancy. For example, the commune of Genoa only imposed a fine to men who impregnated enslaved persons that they did not own, to be paid to the owner.⁶² In Florence, similar fines were levied if the slave died in

⁶⁰ AOIF B+B 486, 487, 488.

⁶¹ AOIF B+B 486, fol. 22v.

⁶² Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 78.

childbirth.⁶³ The number of abandoned infants of enslaved persons at the Innocenti also attest to the sexualization of enslaved persons and its consequences. Abandoning illegitimate children while profiting from the breastmilk of the women that they impregnated was made easier by the creation of the Innocenti.

The reaction to the impregnation of Florentine women in domestic service was different from those of enslaved persons. Going back to Bernardo de' Machiavelli's diary, the young servant-girl, Nencia's pregnancy in 1475 caused Bernardo to lose honour. He was forced to make arrangements to marry Nencia off. He also needed to make sure the father of the child paid for the damages to Nencia's family since the servant, though poor, came from a good family.⁶⁴ The family also had connections to Machiavelli's in-laws. The father of the unwanted baby, a distant relation of Machiavelli, suffered a loss of honour due to his illicit affair with a servant of another household. The girl was returned to her family and married with a dowry provided by the father of her illegitimate child.

There were detriments to seducing and impregnating of Florentine women no matter the social station since they could be connected to the web of neighbourly patronage that their families afforded them. While there are cases where such crimes would go unpunished, the impregnation of a Florentine woman who came from a good, though poor, family posed a greater threat to the honour of the man than that of a slave who had no honour. An enslaved woman from outside of Italy, however, did not have any protections other than that of her master. There was no need to marry an enslaved woman off in case of extramarital pregnancy. If even lower-class servant girls possessed some honour, derived from their family's reputation, then it stands to reason that foreign girls who did not have honour due to a lack of family relationships would

⁶³ ASF Statuti di Firenze 29, fol. 388v.

⁶⁴ Catherine Atkinson, *Debts, Dowries and Donkeys*, 108-109.

be more likely to provide dishonourable services to Florentine men. Enslaved women were seen as doubly sexually available on account of their foreignness, their lower social status, and their legal objectification. The Innocenti allowed and acknowledged this sexual availability through their understanding of their role in the acceptance of enslaved women's children and their employment of enslaved wet nurses, playing a key role in the functions of enslavement in Florence as an institution.

In cases of enslaved persons being impregnated, much of the discourse turned on the slave women themselves for being wild, foreign, and sexual. Both Florentine men and women wrote at length about the untrustworthiness of their enslaved persons and their supposed seduction of men away from their wives. Men were acutely aware of the jealousy of their wives when purchasing enslaved persons. The merchant Francesco Datini received a letter asking him to find an ugly girl for enslaved labour as to not arouse jealousy.⁶⁵ Lapo Mazzei, Datini's notary, wrote that he considered a young enslaved woman a danger to the household due to any feelings that may arise in the men of the household.⁶⁶ Half a century later, Filippo Strozzi warned his friend against buying a beautiful woman because he needed to consider the jealousy of his wife.⁶⁷ Alessandra Strozzi writes that an enslaved woman overly fond of her wine presents a danger to the unmarried girls of the household.⁶⁸ The language of sexuality places the onus on the slave women as seductresses, rather than the victims. Concern was more for the Florentine

⁶⁵ Federigo Melis, *Aspetti della vita economica medievale (Studi nell'Archivio Datini di Prato)*, (L.S. Olschki, 1964), 48. See also Iris Origo, *The Merchant of Prato: Francesco Di Marco Datini*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), 160-167.

⁶⁶ Cesare Guasti, *Ser Lapo Mazzei: Lettere Di Un Notaro a Un Mercante Del Secolo XIV Con Altre Lettere e Documenti*, vol. 1 (Firenze: Successori Le Monnier, 1880), 86.

⁶⁷ Origo "Domestic Enemy", 343.

⁶⁸ "Cotesta era tenuta dassai e saccante messo: ma e' la venderono perche el vino gli cominciava a far noia, e facevala istare molto allegra: e poi non era onesta: e avendo le moglie loro fanciulle, no la vollona en casa" Alessandra Strozzi, *Selected letters of Alessandra Strozzi*. Bilingual ed. Ed. Helen Gregory. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 169 -171.

women who may lose their husbands to the enslaved persons rather than the lack of agency possessed by the enslaved persons themselves. Men too were in danger of losing themselves to the wiles of their enslaved persons rather than sexual predators of slave women. Although enslaved persons were not bought for overtly sexual reasons, they were seen as sexual beings and their purchase assumed to have a sexual function by Florentine men and women.

The foreignness of enslaved persons was something that Florentines had many ideas about, despite some of them never stepping outside the bounds of Tuscany. Foreign bodies were inherently viewed with mistrust. Alessandra Strozzi most obviously demonstrates her awareness of enslaved persons as foreign bodies with defined characteristics when she writes in a letter to her son that “Tatar woman ...[are] strong, rustic people. Russians are more genteel by nature, and better looking, but in [her] opinion the Tatars are probably better workers. Circassian women are [strong blooded], although they’re all like that”.⁶⁹ Alessandra Strozzi, having never left Tuscany, was aware of the differences in regional origins of the enslaved persons of Florence and had enough to make stereotypical remarks about them to her son. While there were not many Florentines in the famous slave market cities of Tana and Caffa, owned instead by the Genoese and the Venetians, Florentines had enough contact with these traders to use their terminology in referring to these enslaved persons. This essentializing information adopted by the Florentines who were not on the frontlines of the slave trade or Mediterranean seafaring culture indicate the prevalence of racialized stereotypes and terminologies that come out of ethnic identities.

⁶⁹ “qualche tartera di nazione, che sono per durare fatica vantaggiate e rustiche. Le rósse, cioè quelle di Rossia, sono più gentili di compressione e più belle; ma, a mio parere, sarebbero meglio tartere. Le circasse, è forte sangue; benché tutte l'abbino questo” Alessandra Strozzi, *Lettere Di Una Gentildonna Fiorentina Del Secolo XV Ai Figliuoli Esuli*, ed. Cesare Guastini (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1877), 475. Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to Her Sons, 1447-1470*. Translated by Judith Bryce. (Toronto, ON: Iter Academic Press, 2016), 183.

Wet nursing

One other benefit to the sexual availability of enslaved persons was the products of the female body. There was a lucrative trade in a lactating slave's milk which was used to nurse Florentine children. In the same *Balie e Bambini* volume, eight lactating slave women were rented out on contracts to the Innocenti to feed the infants there and there were a few children who were also given to Florentine households to keep the milk of an enslaved nurse.⁷⁰ This practise was also common among free nurse and provided the hospital with a free way of feeding their infants.

The breastmilk market complicates the relationships between enslaved women and the masters and mistresses. Wet nurses were the highest level of service in a household and command some level of respect. Only the wealthiest households could afford a live-in wet nurse. Most households – even patricians – sent their children out to the countryside to live with a wet nurse and the child would only be returned after they were weaned.⁷¹ Even infants abandoned in the Innocenti were sent out to wet-nurses in the countryside, or as previously mentioned, to household with lactating enslaved persons to keep the milk flowing. Due to a wetnurse's proximity to the children and the belief that wet nurses transferred their characters onto the children they suckled, they were also subject to the most personal scrutiny.⁷² Yet the character of the slave was always questioned since she was a person without honour.⁷³ A wet nurse was supposed to remain celibate throughout her tenure as the wet nurse, yet enslaved persons could not be trusted for their voracious foreign sexuality.

⁷⁰ AOIF B+B 6r, 6v, 66r, 69r, 197v.

⁷¹ Philip Gavitt, *Children and Charity*, 188-189 and Rebecca Lynn Winer, "The Enslaved Wet Nurse as Nanny: the Transition from Free to Slave Labor in Childcare in Barcelona after the Black Death (1348)," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 2 (April 25, 2017), 310.

⁷² See Rebecca Lynn Winer, "Conscripting the Breast: Lactation, Slavery and Salvation in the Realms of Aragon and Kingdom of Majorca, c. 1250–1300," *Journal of Medieval History* 34, no. 2 (2008): pp. 164-184.

⁷³ "serve le quali non churono [sic] loro honore" AOIF, Filza d' Archivio 6205, 600r.

In addition to trying to tax the importation of enslaved women into Florence, the Innocenti was happy to benefit from their reproductive capacity. From 1450-1453, there are records of at least eight enslaved persons who served as wet-nurses for the Innocenti.⁷⁴ Most of the wet nurses for the Innocenti however were free women who lived in the countryside. Only three of the enslaved nurses moved to the Innocenti to work within its wall for a salary of about 20-24 soldi a year.⁷⁵ The masters would get the salary of the enslaved persons' labour, rather than the slave herself, although renter was responsible for feeding and clothing the slave. Sums were deducted from the salary to account for the feeding and clothing of the nurse.

Since the custom in Florence was to send infants out of their households to wet nurses and the Innocenti followed this custom by sending out their infants to the homes of wetnurses, most of the abandoned infants were sent out to wet nurses in the countryside to be raised.⁷⁶ This may be the reason that the Innocenti only hired three enslaved wet nurses to work within its walls for a period of four years.⁷⁷ The nurses employed by the Innocenti had a myriad of duties that did not just involve feeding the infants but also taking care of the infants' other needs.⁷⁸ Perhaps the resident wet nurses fed the children while wet nurses were being arranged, or they took care of the children who were deemed too sick to make the journey to a countryside wet nurse.⁷⁹ Despite it being the product of the enslaved woman and her dubious reputation, enslaved women's breastmilk was a commodity that was traded within Florence. By paying for the slave mother's milk, a natural consequence of birth, the Innocenti mitigated some of illegitimacy's consequences.

⁷⁴ AOIF B+B 486, fol. 6r-6v, 66r, 69r, 77v, 99r, 139r, 197v.

⁷⁵ AOIF B+B 486, fol. 77v, 99r, 139r.

⁷⁶ Philip Gavitt, *Children and Charity*, 188-189.

⁷⁷ AOIF B+B 486, 77v, 99r, 139r.

⁷⁸ "era figliuola della schiava lasandra che volta a venere a posti per balia" AOIF B+B 492, fol. 313v.

⁷⁹ Gavitt speaks more about the nature of taking children out of the hospital to wetnurse in *Charity and Children*

Between 1445-1450, four enslaved wetnurses were rented out by their enslavers to the Innocenti.⁸⁰ A fifth woman, Nastasia, was a freed slave who entered the Innocenti to work as a wetnurse. Her previous owner was still the one who signed her contract as her guarantor.⁸¹ Two women, including the freed Nastasia, had their child abandoned to the Innocenti at the same time they were serving as wetnurses.⁸² Unfortunately, Nastasia also died in childbirth and was burned in the grounds of the Innocenti church with the children.⁸³ The enslaved Maria was pregnant when she entered the hospital and gave birth to her child there. The infant was treated like any other foundling at the Innocenti while the mother was contracted by her enslaver, Antonio Rabatti, to work there for three years after giving birth.⁸⁴ The salaries ranged from four and a half to five lire largo a month, or 15-18 florini a year. In the next register covering the years 1450-1454, three enslaved nurses entered the Innocenti to work within its walls for a salary of about 20-24 florini a year.⁸⁵ One of these women, Caterina, remained a wetnurse for her master, Mariotto, but would give any extra milk to the children of the Innocenti.⁸⁶ As a result, her salary was lower than the other wetnurses, at four lire and two soldi. Masters received the salary for their slaves' labour, rather than the slave herself. Salaries were reduced by the amount it took to feed and clothe the nurse.

The Innocenti as an institution also purchased four enslaved women between 1445 and 1454 to serve as wetnurses in the hospital.⁸⁷ All were lactating, or about to lactate at the time.⁸⁸ One woman, Lucia, was bought to nurse the children shortly after her own child was abandoned

⁸⁰ AOIF B+B 485, fol. 197r, 198v, 208r, 215r.

⁸¹ AOIF B+B 485, fol. 215r.

⁸² AOIF B+B 485 fol. 204r, 208r, 225v, 227r, 239r.

⁸³ AOIF B+B 485 fol. 215r.

⁸⁴ AOIF B+B 485 fol. 203v, 208r.

⁸⁵ AOIF B+B 486, fol. 77v, 99r, 139r.

⁸⁶ AOIF B+B 485 fol. 135r.

⁸⁷ AOIF B+B 485 fol. 215r, 239r, 265r.

⁸⁸ One Lucia was pregnant but not yet lactating. AOIF B+B 485 fol. 239r.

at the Innocenti. The others' records of purchase do not mention the fate of their children. The record of one nurse, Caterina, mentions that another wetnurse was being employed by her previous owner, but does not note whether that wetnurse was nursing Caterina's child.⁸⁹ Another Lucia was rented out to Lorenzo Orlandini to nurse his child, with the salary paid to the Innocenti.⁹⁰ The Innocenti's use of enslaved labour demonstrates the ease with which enslaved women were exploited from the hospital's very beginning. Its founder, the Pratese merchant Francesco Datini, had himself owned at least two slaves in his lifetime, one of whom had borne him a daughter Lucia who was adopted by his wife, Margherita.⁹¹ The enslaved mother, Lucia, continued to live with the couple but could not claim maternity of her own child.

Regardless of an enslaved woman's inferior status and reputation, her breastmilk was a commodity that was highly valued and traded within Florence. Using enslaved women as wet-nurses creates a distinctly feminine intersection of labour and sexuality, one that conflates the reproductive capacity of female enslaved persons with her sexual availability. Sexual and domestic labour are conflated in a slave when illicit sex is also the source of the wet nursing. The use of the reproductive capacities of the enslaved woman turned the woman's body into an object that produced a valuable commodity. The monetary gain of using enslaved women as wet-nurses overcame the influences of the various treatises on wet-nursing and the selection of a good wet nurse.⁹² Understanding the bodies of these women became crucial to the selection of a wet nurse since the parents chose their wetnurses based on their characters and health.

Institutionalizing abandonment created a class of inconvenient children, and the Innocenti facilitated their disposal. In her study of wet-nurse contracts in Valencia, Rebecca Winer points

⁸⁹ AOIF B+B 485 fol. 215r.

⁹⁰ AOIF B+B 485 fol. 265r.

⁹¹ See Joseph P. Byrne and Eleanor A. Congdon "Mothering in the Casa Datini".

⁹² Rebecca Lynn Winer, "Conscripting the Breast", 164-184.

out that the children of enslaved wet nurses were problems for their employers. They may have to feed and clothe the child or worry that the milk of the wet nurse would be insufficient for their child as well as hers.⁹³ The ability to give up the slave's child mitigates this problem. In Florence, the sheer number of enslaved persons' children abandoned in the Innocenti gives an idea to how Florentines solved this problem. The importation of single, honourless women caused consternation to the institutions of Florence who were unwilling to bear the financial burden of unwanted children yet profited from their breastmilk production. \

Specific Examples

Alessandra Strozzi

Specific cases allow for an analysis into the wide array of relationships that enslaved persons could experience within Florence and their varying relationships with the neighbourhood around them. There was not a single way or prescription for treating enslaved persons in Florence, unlike the case with wives or servants.⁹⁴ The lack of idealized prescriptive idealized behaviour meant that enslaved persons and masters were given room to navigate their relationships themselves. These relationships were also determined by the household itself and how it functioned. In her letters to her son, Alessandra Strozzi revealed that she did not have a good relationship with her enslaved servants. Whether she was constructing a narrative for her son or exaggerating her troubles, Alessandra's complaints reveal attitudes that women had about enslaved foreigners in their households. She attributes her difficulties to her being a widow leading a household full of women. Alessandra could not find anyone to discipline Cateruccia,

⁹³ Rebecca Lynn Winer, "The Enslaved Wet Nurse as Nanny", 310.

⁹⁴ See Francesco Barbaro "On Wifely Duties" In *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, edited by Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt. (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 189-230 and Leon Battista Alberti, "Della Famiglia." In *Opere Volgari*, edited by Cecil Grayson (Bari: G. Laterza, 1960), 3-341.

her enslaved servant, and thus, she complains that Cateruccia was able to behave in an unruly way and avoid work. Her mistrust of Cateruccia stems from the fact that she had unmarried daughters in her household and any whisper of scandal in family already tainted by exile would impede their marriage prospects.⁹⁵ She attributes this concern to other households as well when she mentions to her son that “[The Albizzi] thought [the slave] knew a lot but they sold her because the wine was starting to do her harm and she was always tipsy... the wives had their daughters to think of, so they didn’t want her in the house.”⁹⁶ The reselling of a slave was very common, as many *ricordanze* register the resale of their enslaved persons after a few years of service. One slave, a 20-year-old Greek woman named Anna, was resold three times within six months of arriving in Florence – an evident sign of the dissatisfaction of her various owners.⁹⁷ While rare for a sale to happen this often, Anna’s case indicates that there was a demand for enslaved persons already in Florence. This was perhaps due to the lack of import tax levied on an enslaved woman already paid for in Florence but perhaps also because Florentines wanted a servant who was more familiar with the city.

Alessandra attributes Cateruccia’s misbehaviour to her desire to be sold or manumitted by the Strozzi.⁹⁸ She also mentions that Cateruccia herself wants to leave her household. Cateruccia’s desire indicates her knowledge of the internal market or the eventual possibility of manumission for enslaved persons and some sort of connection with her fellow enslaved persons in Florence. In Alessandra’s account, Cateruccia also caused issues for Alessandra because she did not want Alessandra’s brother to visit them. Her attribution to the motives of Cateruccia’s

⁹⁵ Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to Her Sons*, 59.

⁹⁶ “Cotesta era tenuta dassai e saccente messo: ma e’ la venderono perche el vino gli cominciava a far noia, e facevala istare molto allegra: e poi non era onesta: e avendo le moglie loro fanciulle, no la vollona en casa” Alessandra Strozzi, *Selected letters of Alessandra Strozzi*. 169 -171.

⁹⁷ ASF, Notarile Anticosimiano 14895, 156r, 194r, 207r.

⁹⁸ Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to her Sons*, 59.

actions indicate a deep level of communication between Alessandra and Cateruccia. Later, she writes that she gets into arguments with Cateruccia because there are never enough sacks in the house since she constantly sends things over to her son in Naples.⁹⁹ The only time that Cateruccia seemed to behave better was when Alessandra brought another enslaved woman from Barcelona into the house – perhaps out of her fear that Alessandra would make good on her threat to sell Cateruccia now that there was a replacement.¹⁰⁰ These exchanges give a sense of the humanity of the two actors. While Alessandra was undeniably the mistress of the household, Cateruccia exercised her own agency by denying service or throwing tantrums. Even without direct quotes from Cateruccia, it is possible to see a glimpse of her personality and character from Alessandra’s letters and that she was able to exercise them in the circumstances of the Strozzi household.

Women accounted for something around 16% of the heads of households in Florence.¹⁰¹ The upper classes of these widows – those able to support themselves mostly through their dowries or inheritances – would have either servants or enslaved persons living with them and assisting them on their daily tasks. The fact that the disobedience of these enslaved persons was attributed to the lack of a male head of house indicates that there was an idea – however broadly construed – that enslaved persons required a man to discipline them. There must be a male head of household for it to become successful. It may also indicate that with the large number of the heads of households as women, enslaved women seemed to have been afforded greater freedom than in households owned by men. In the other examples of households ruled by men, enslaved

⁹⁹ Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to her Sons*, 142.

¹⁰⁰ Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to her sons*, 64.

¹⁰¹ Robert Black, “Literacy in Florence” in *Florence and beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John M. Najemy*, ed. Daniel Ethan Bornstein and David S. Peterson (Toronto, ON: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 197.

servants were not recorded as being as disobedient as Cateruccia or were sold off, such as the case of Bartolomea for the Datini household.

However, disobedience was only one of the many things that concerned Florentines about enslaved persons. Alessandra's harsh words about enslaved persons didn't just come from her own slave, but she critiques other families through her hearsay of other enslaved persons:

Lionardo's wife had her [slave] for four, or really five, years and because her appearance was dubious and she had bad blood – so that you wondered whether she'd do harm to herself or someone else – they got her out of the house. She was immoral as well... Lionardo's wife used her for sewing, but she didn't have the brains for it. If she'd been a good servant she would have kept her for herself.¹⁰²

The immediacy of her judgement on this slave based on her appearance is also reflected in Alessandra's judgement of a possible wife for Filippo Strozzi. The slave's immorality was not just based on her actions but also linked to her dubious ways and bad blood. The idea that the face mirrored the interiority of a person had wider ramifications for the foreign faces that appeared in Florence. Alessandra's words also demonstrate that there was an ongoing internal market for the exchange of enslaved persons already in Florence.

Despite her inability to control her slave, Alessandra still thought the ownership of a slave beneficial when she counselled her son Filippo in Naples on the need purchase an enslaved woman in the household to take care of the domestic duties before his marriage. The fact that an enslaved servant could take over the duties of a wife had a double meaning, one that was perhaps covertly sexual, but also meant that enslaved persons could be given leeway and freedoms in the management of the household. Alessandra was pleased when she received note that Filippo's

¹⁰² “che l'ha tenuta la donna di Lionardo quattro o vero cinque anni; e perche' non apparava, ed era di mal sangue, en modo che dubitavano non facessi qualche male a se' o ad altri, cavonronsela di casa... La donna di Lionardo la teneva per cucire, e non ha'vuto el cervella a cio': che s'ella fussi buona serva, 'are' tenuta per se'. Alessandra Strozzi, *Selected Letters*, 161.

household was well-taken care of by his enslaved woman, Marina.¹⁰³ The good behaviour of Marina reflected well on the honour of Filippo. In her letters, Alessandra jokingly calls Marina by the honorific “*donna*” generally reserved for married and honourable women.¹⁰⁴ There is no record of a slave given this honorific until she was manumitted, something that was not the case in Filippo’s household.¹⁰⁵ Alessandra’s word choice was a play on the importance of Filippo’s slave to his household and perhaps even a sly nod to the sexual nature of her ownership. Despite Alessandra’s bad experiences with Cateruccia, her first advice for the service of Filippo’s household was not to hire a free servant but to buy an unfree one.

Marina was also mentioned in her deceased son, Matteo’s will.¹⁰⁶ Alessandra’s youngest son, Matteo, left Marina a sum of five *tarenos* for his “*anima*” after spending nine years with Marina in his brother’s household before his untimely death at twenty-three in Naples.¹⁰⁷ Matteo saw this bequest as an act of charity for Marina. Giving an enslaved woman a sum of money indicated that Matteo acknowledged Marina’s ability to use the money for herself. Leaving money or manumission in wills was usually a reward for good service, as is evident in several manumission notices in the wills of Florentines in the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁸ The inclusion of Marina into Matteo’s will indicate a level of closeness between the two that only existed if Marina was seen as both an enslaved woman and an individual. Especially in incomplete households such as Alessandra’s who did not have a male head of house or Filippo’s, who was

¹⁰³ “...che venne el dì della pasqua, e me n'ha detto molte cose delle virtù ch'egli ha: e così della Marina,” Guasti, *Lettere*, 330.

¹⁰⁴ Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to her sons*, 197.

¹⁰⁵ AOIF, B+B 486. fol 70r.

¹⁰⁶ “Item, legavit Marine, serve sue domus, pro eius anima, tarenos quinque” Guasti, *Lettere*, 192, Alessandra Strozzi, *Letters to her Sons*, 111.

¹⁰⁷ “The *tari* or *tarenus* was a gold coin first struck in Arab-ruled Sicily. See Sarah-Grace Heller, “Angevin-Sicilian Sumptuary Statutes of the 1290's: Fashion in the Thirteenth-Century Mediterranean,” in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, ed. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2015), 85 n24.

¹⁰⁸ ASF NA 9039 fol. 197r-198r, 333v-334v.

lacking a female one, enslaved persons could attain very strong positions in the households and could be indispensable to the households that they served.

Contessina Medici

Cateruccia's disobedience was a result of her circumstances can be contrasted to the life of the enslaved persons in the Medici household. The household of Contessina Bardi and Cosimo de' Medici with their slave Maddalena exemplifies how slavery functioned with a full wealthy patrician household. In this case, the freedom afforded to Cateruccia and these complaints are not reflected in Maddalena. Cosimo purchased or was gifted at least three enslaved women during his lifetime. In the Catasto of 1458, he was registered with two different enslaved women. Zita who was 35 and Berbera whose age is not given.¹⁰⁹ Later on, for Cosimo's funeral, there were three recorded enslaved persons present, Chaterina, Christina and another Chaterina.¹¹⁰ The large number of enslaved persons within one household was rare, but not distinct to the Medici household. Of note, however, is the slave Maddalena who was an eighteen-year-old Circassian slave procured from Venice in 1427 and within a year of her entrance into the Medici household she gave birth to Carlo de' Medici, later to become a canon of the Florentine Cathedral.¹¹¹ His famous portrait by Mantegna shows a man with piercing blue eyes and swarthy features.¹¹² Contessina's letters do not document her concern over Maddalena or the other enslaved persons.¹¹³ It seems that the enslaved persons in the family attended to anyone who was in need of them as she mentions that her daughter in law, Lucrezia Tornabuoni took the enslaved

¹⁰⁹ Monica Boni, *La domesticité en Toscane aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, 588.

¹¹⁰ Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans L'Europe Medievale*, 370.

¹¹¹ Agostino Zanelli, *Le Schiave Orientali*, 38.

¹¹² Andrea Mantegna, "Portrait of Carlo De' Medici." Florence: Uffizi Gallery, 1459-1466. Uffizi Gallery. Florence.

¹¹³ Janet Ross, *Lives of the Early Medici: as Told in Their Correspondence*. (Miami, FL: Hard Press Publishing, 2013), 10-117.

servants with her when she travelled.¹¹⁴ This arrangement indicates a less personal relationship between Contessina and her enslaved persons within the larger household of the Medici family.

Whatever relationship Contessina had with her enslaved persons, Maddalena's son by Cosimo, Carlo, was adopted into the family. Contessina never mentions Carlo in her letters, despite having ostensibly raised him alongside her own children. Cosimo shows more concern for his son as he writes with anxiety to secure appointments for his illegitimate son.¹¹⁵ Carlo de' Medici was given many appointments within the church and later on became an archpriest of Prato. In the description of the wedding of Lorenzo de' Medici to Clarice Orsini, mention is made of Carlo's house in the same area as the Medici palace. He seems to have enjoyed the legendary Medici wealth as it is written that 100 barrels of wine were consumed from his household for the occasion and his people ate and drank well at the wedding.¹¹⁶ His participation as an integral part of the wedding suggests his interconnectedness with the other Medici children despite his illegitimate status. He is unable to inherit like Piero de' Medici as he was an illegitimate child, but his slave heritage is rarely mentioned in any family records.

Unfortunately, the adoption of Carlo into the family does not seem to indicate better treatment of his mother. In fact, Carlo is never mentioned in conjunction to his mother – perhaps a wish to deny the liaison between Cosimo and his slave or Carlo's illegitimate birth. The slave Maddalena seems to have continued as usual in the household of Contessina and Cosimo de' Medici. The last time Maddalena appears in the archives is a note in the *Balie e Bambini* register

¹¹⁴ Contessina Bardi, "Contessina Bardi to her daughter-in-law Lucrezia at Bagno a Morba" *Lives of the Early Medici*. Ed. Janet Ross, 117.

¹¹⁵ Cosimo de' Medici, "Cosimo de' Medici to Giovanni his son in Rome" *Lives of the Early Medici*. Ed Janet Ross, 53.

¹¹⁶ Cosimo Bartoli "An Account of the Wedding of Lorenzo di Piero di Cosimo, according to what was told by me, Cosimo Bartoli, one of the principal Directors of the Festival, particularly as regards Sweet meats and Sugar-plum, and also what I saw myself" *Lives of the Early Medici*. Ed Janet Ross, 132.

of the Innocenti, where as a matron now 58, she was rented out by Contessina Bardi as a nurse to the hospital.¹¹⁷ Contessina Bardi was said to be the one who had the ability to collect her salary. Nothing is given to Margherita for her labours. One can not imagine that the Medici household would require the rental of a slave to supplement their own income, so the decision to rent out Margherita would have been a social one. Contessina certainly wanted Margherita out of the household, or that she did not have a use for Margherita during those years, which may be because Cosimo had younger and presumably healthier enslaved persons for domestic duties. It is likely that Contessina never forgave her for Cosimo's inconstancy. Another example of this comes from Maria Mazzi who mentions the child of Luca Panzano and a slave who was abandoned to the Innocenti and was only reclaimed after the death of Luca's wife.¹¹⁸ The rental would also be a good way to avoid taxes as enslaved persons who did not live within the household were not taxed as property. The Innocenti employed her for the duration of two years, after which her whereabouts are unknown. Cosimo left no will and thus no record of Margherita's manumission if it happened, or if she was given any stipend. Nevertheless, her longevity in the Medici family may be indication of her acknowledged connectedness to Carlo de' Medici since it seems that other Medici household enslaved persons had a shorter lifespan within the household or were rented out and thus not counted within the household.

Margherita Datini

Circumstances dictate a third outcome for a slave in the household of the famous Merchant of Prato, Francesco Datini. As a result of his travels, his family affairs are recorded in detail by his wife in her many letters to Francesco dictating her management of the family

¹¹⁷ AOIF B+B 487 fol. 66r; Ridolfo Livi, *La schiavitù domestica*, 232.

¹¹⁸ Maria Serena Mazzi. *Prostitutes and lenoni in the Florence of the Quattrocento*. (Saggiatori, 1991), 52-53.

affairs.¹¹⁹ In these letters, his wife, Margherita Datini, writes about two enslaved persons. The first one Bartolomea, was purchased by her husband in 1384 and only stayed in the household for four years until 1388. She was disliked by the couple as insubordinate and garnered several complaints from their neighbours.¹²⁰ She also mentioned that the neighbours found it much quieter around her when Bartolomea was sent to Florence to serve Francesco in the same way that Alessandra was afraid of Cateruccia's behaviour on Alessandra's position in her neighbourhood.¹²¹ The sale of Bartolomea complicated matters in the Datini household where conflict over her sale erupted between his kinsmen, who grew attached to Bartolomea and did not want her sold.¹²² The integration of the slave into the household demonstrates that close bonds were built around the enslaved persons and the members of their households. Their inferior status does not seem to indicate distance, but rather due to their permanency in the household – unlike that of domestic servants, they were able to form deeper personal relationships with the masters of the household and his kinswomen.

The Datinis' experience did not deter them from buying another slave. Francesco Datini brought Lucia into the household about two years after the sale of Bartolomea. Lucia was a successful purchase in that she served the needs of the household for both Margherita and Francesco. For Margherita, Lucia served as both a servant and an informant in the long separations between Francesco and Margherita. Whatever her feelings on Lucia's relationship with her husband, Margherita used Lucia's position to keep track of her husband's habits and to ensure that his extramarital affairs didn't stray too far from home. In her many letters

¹¹⁹ See Iris Origo, *The Merchant of Prato: Francesco Di Marco Datini* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963).

¹²⁰ Margherita Datini, *Letters*, 35.

¹²¹ Margherita Datini, *Letters*, 35.

¹²² Enrico Vivarelli, "Aspetti della vita economica pratese nel XIV secolo; con trascrizione delle 459 letter di Monte d'Andrea Angiolini di Prato" *Tesi di Laurea*, (University of Florence, 1987), 631-33.

admonishing Francesco for his unscrupulous lifestyle, she mentions that Lucia should take better care of him in her stead.¹²³ When Margherita claims Francesco lives like a bachelor, keeping odd hours, she references Lucia as if she was a surrogate wife that takes away Francesco's travelling merchant bachelor status. For Francesco, Lucia provided a child in the illegitimate Ginevra, who is adopted and raised by Margherita.¹²⁴ There is no talk of Lucia raising the child, rather Margherita seems to become the mother of the child regardless of Lucia's desires. Ginevra's only sin was her illegitimacy and the low social class of her mother, not her slave status. She was unable to be raised by her birth mother, despite sharing a household with her. There was no talk of what Lucia wants or any hint of interactions between Lucia and Ginevra.

Religious assimilation was also one of the rationales for enslavement.¹²⁵ This duty was attributed to Margherita as the head of the domestic household. Margherita took Lucia's Christianity for granted, even though Lucia's enslavement meant that she was not born a Christian. The only time the religion of her slave comes into the letters occurs offhandedly, when she remarked that "Lucia is praying to God".¹²⁶ Whatever Lucia thought about Christianity was unimportant to Margherita since she did not comment on Lucia's faith but merely the physical act of praying. Concerned with only the practical and physical manifestation of religion in her household, Margherita's role in the household was strictly domestic.

Lucia's position was a relatively comfortable one that mediated between Margherita and Francesco. In many cases, Margherita must ask Lucia about the movement of inventory in her

¹²³ Margherita Datini, *Letters*, 352.

¹²⁴ Joseph P. Byrne, Eleanor A. Congdon "Mothering in the Casa Datini" *Journal of Medieval History* (Vol. 25 no. 1, 1999), 52. Steven Epstein. *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 106.

¹²⁵ Franco Sacchetti, *I Sermoni Evangelici, Le Lettere, Ed Altri Scritti Inediti o Rari* (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1857), 95-96.

¹²⁶ Margherita Datini, *Letters*, 346.

household when Francesco makes decisions without consulting her.¹²⁷ Similarly, when Francesco was investigating Margherita on suspicion of her mismanaging the household in 1395, Lucia was one of the witnesses Francesco's agent asked about Margherita's movements.¹²⁸ Interestingly, Margherita wrote to Francesco about endeavouring to take care of Lucia's cat while she is away with Francesco.¹²⁹ The ability of Lucia to own a pet indicates a certain amount of leisure and freedom given to her by the family. The cat was Lucia's cat, not the Datini household cat. Lucia is later manumitted and married with honour to one of Francesco's servants and became the head of her own household. Her daughter Ginevra was also married as Francesco Datini's illegitimate daughter to an agent of Francesco with a dowry of 1000 florins.¹³⁰

Lucia's story is a success story in the larger scheme of enslaved life in Florence. Margherita and Francesco both demonstrate their understanding of Lucia's agency when they discuss her wellbeing, her property – even when still enslaved – and asked her opinion to mediate arguments between the married couple.¹³¹ Lucia was given a respectable retirement as a lower-class wife in Florence.¹³² The difference between the treatment of Bartolomea and Lucia were – according to Margherita – the result of the differences in the temperament of the two women. Margherita's own feelings towards Lucia and her illegitimate daughter seemed only to stem from concern and are a result of her own lack of children. If there was any ill-will, Margherita does not explicitly voice them in her letters and even in her admonishments of

¹²⁷ "I am searching here thoroughly. I cannot find [the quilt]... I asked Lucia, and she says that at the time, when it was in the chest, it was noted down" Margherita Datini, *Letters*, 318.

¹²⁸ In June 1395, Francesco accused Margherita of neglecting his household to visit with other women and have sumptuous meals with her kin, Margherita packs up her bags and moves out of Florence without his knowing in an open act of defiance. She would refuse to return to Florence for years. Margherita Datini, *Letters*, 168-169.

¹²⁹ Margherita Datini, *Letters*, 326.

¹³⁰ Joseph P. Byrne, Eleanor A. Congdon "Mothering in the Casa Datini", 48.

¹³¹ Many of Margherita's letters concern clothing for Lucia. Margherita often in the same cloth for Lucia as her own but in a different style, and Margherita often entreats Francesco to be lax with Lucia as she is a young woman, Margherita Datini, *Letters*, 72, 262, 263, 352, 360.

¹³² Cesare Guasti, *Ser Lapo Mazzei*, xlvii.

Francesco's lifestyle, used Lucia to try to reign him in from wandering lusts, rather than to try to turn him towards her. Lucia ultimately disappeared from the archives after the death of Francesco Datini, and presumably lives out the rest of her life married to her husband as a Florentine citizen.

Manumission

Lucia's end in Florence demonstrates the role of manumission in integrating a slave into Florentine society. Manumission seems to be a natural transition for many of the enslaved persons in service, as most cases of slave ownership included rites of manumission.¹³³ Slavery seems to be a stage in life, rather than the lifetime slavery of later periods and was not carried on generationally. In the many cases of manumission, the wording is often explicit. In the records of the notary Messer Francesco di Piero Castro Fiorentino, the liberation of enslaved persons was often accompanied by the indication that they were to become "Roman" citizens and restored to their *antiquis natalibus*.¹³⁴ These manumission notices convey the fact that the slave was born free and enslaved during her lifetime. The attribution of Roman citizenship – a rhetorical device used in Florence – means that she has become part of the Florentine citizenship. Thus, the slave joins Florentine society in the legal sense and witnesses a transition of her status from slave to freewoman.

It is important to note that legal manumission does not always equal social emancipation. The ex-slave status is still part of her life in unofficial documents. The interconnectedness of Florentine society means that despite manumission enslaved status was likely not to be forgotten. In addition, manumitted women still relied on their former masters for financial and social status, as seen in Nastasia who was rented out by her former master to the Innocenti as a wet-nurse

¹³³ The Notarile Anticosimiano has more cases of manumitted enslaved persons than purchased enslaved persons.

¹³⁴ ASF NA 9039 197r-198r, 333r-334v, NA 9041 f. 27r, NA 9042 f. 143r.

despite her liberated status. However, class often had to do with these associations as well. For example, in the sixteenth century, Alessandro de' Medici's mother, a manumitted woman, was also kept anonymous as a peasant in the countryside. However, the rationale given for this was that Alessandro de' Medici's enemies would often reference his mother's low social status as a peasant, rather than that of an ex-slave.¹³⁵ Poverty seems to be a bigger indication of low social status than slavery in this case. Even in the cases of perceptions of ex-enslaved persons, there seems to be a great amount of variation within the society of Florence.

The visibility of the ex-slave status is especially apparent in the cases of children but not necessarily as a result of her lower social status. When a woman brought a child to the Innocenti or identifies the mother of the child, the ex-slave status is noted in many of the cases, although perhaps some have been left out. It is interesting to note though that these ex-enslaved women took the honorific of "donna", indicating either marriage or a social status equal to that of other Florentine women. Enslaved women are never given the honorific of "donna" in the same books.¹³⁶ The use of the honorific "donna" indicate that the distinction was not a social one but a practical one. In a city where surnames are seldom available or used and distinctions are made in terms of patronymics – or in the case of married women, their husbands' names, it is possible that the indication of ex-slave was an effort to identify the woman in the absence of a husband or father. Familial relations as identifiers permeate the society of Florence – especially for the identification of women who were defined by their husbands or fathers. The absence of a family for the slave presents a very strong social disadvantage and a lack of identity or identifying features. The use of the term ex-slave possibly explained this lack of relationship. A woman's

¹³⁵ John K Brackett, "Race and Rulership: Alessandro de' Medici, first Medici duke of Florence 1529-1537)," *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* ed. T Earle and Kate Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 308

¹³⁶ AOIF B+B 486,487,488,489.

parish or neighbourhood would be able to tell if she was an ex-slave and thus identify her even if chronicles were reluctant to use her name out of respect. The Innocenti tried to identify the people who brought in children, in case of reclamation of a child and dutifully recorded all the information that was volunteered to them.

Enslaved Mothers

When enslaved women became mothers, they, at least initially, passed the taint of enslavement onto their children. While according to Florentine custom and law, the children of enslaved persons were born free, they were still recorded as a child of a slave in the baptismal registers.¹³⁷ The only records in the early years of the baptismal record that did not include the name of the father were the records of the baptisms of enslaved persons, the children of enslaved persons, and the children of the foundling hospitals. Enslavement was a main identifier of people in the same way that one might be described as a wool worker or a dye-maker in lieu of a name. The enslaved status of these people followed them as part of their identity – more so than their Christianized names or Christian fathers.

The *Balie e Bambini* records indicate when the mother was a slave and will often name the owner, but it was rarer to have the name of the enslaved mother. Abandoners of children were less forthcoming about the father of the child, perhaps to guarantee that the infant would not come back to find the father or to avoid paying the Innocenti for the upkeep of the child. In the first decade of the opening of the Innocenti, there were no records of an infant who had an enslaved father. The overrepresentation of enslaved mothers makes sense given that 93% of enslaved people were women. Florentines were forthcoming with identifying the children of enslaved women, so it seems possible to assume that they would be equally forthcoming with

¹³⁷ ASFB, Registri Battesimali 1.

identifying the children of enslaved men. They do not do so perhaps because tracing paternity is often more difficult than tracing maternity.

Out of the 100 enslaved mothers whose children were abandoned at the Innocenti between 1450 and 1453, only twenty-four had their first names recorded. Most had the full names of their masters, or at least the family that they came from recorded, instead of the identity of the mother or father. Twenty-two of the infants had their fathers explicitly named as not the masters of their enslaved mothers. At least some enslaved women were impregnated by those outside of their immediate household. Some were working as a rented servant similar to the way that the Innocenti contracted the masters of enslaved women to work for them.¹³⁸ One abandoned infant's father was a sailor on the ship that brought the infant's enslaved mother to Florence.¹³⁹ This child would have been inconvenient to her seller and buyer, especially regarding the dangers of childbirth. The child did not become a slave, presumably because the father was understood to be free, but was brought to the Innocenti as an abandoned infant. This case represents the rampant sexual abuses forced on these foreign women not just in Florence but in the enslavement process.

While Florentines were open to admitting that the infant's mother was enslaved, they were not as forthcoming with the identity of the mother. In the hospital records, most cases of enslaved mothers included the name of the owner of the slave but only about a quarter of the cases included a name for the mother. However, with the name of the master, it would perhaps be easy to find the mother since most slave-owning households only owned one or two enslaved

¹³⁸ There is evidence of this as early as 1372 where a notarial document states a contract of an enslaved woman being rented out for a salary of 9 florins a year, see ASF NA 14895, fol. 190r.

¹³⁹ "nato d'una schiava in firenze che ingravidò in nave quando veniva d'uno a nome girolamo" AOIF B+B 486, fol. 99r.

persons.¹⁴⁰ In these cases, the lack of identifying the mother with her first name was probably more a case of not finding it important, rather than the protection of her identity. There are no repeated names in the Innocenti records of masters, so if the mother was not sold off, it might be the case that enslaved persons were seldom impregnated twice.

Enslaved women were often used to bring children to the Innocenti, although in these cases it is not recorded whether these women were the mothers of the infants they were abandoning. They were able to move around the city relatively unchaperoned, perhaps leading to the frequency of sexual abuses by those who were not members of their immediate household. Those who brought children to the Innocenti usually did not state their relationship to the children but gave information about the origins of these children.

Manumitted women also abandoned their children, although these cases are rarer than the enslaved persons. The Innocenti recorded a manumitted woman who was addressed as mona Caterina, an honorific used only for free women in Florence.¹⁴¹ However, this was not always the case as another manumitted woman, Aghata, was referred to only with her name and described as *fu schiava* rather than *libera* like mona Caterina.¹⁴² In the case of mona Caterina, the father was said to be out of Florence. In both cases, the fathers of the infants came back for the infants after a period of a year. It is difficult to say whether these two cases mean that the infants of manumitted women had higher status than the children of enslaved women. A hint of the shame of slave status might come from an example in Giovanni Morelli's family chronicle, where he details the life of a beautiful slave who had children by her master Bernardo di Giovanni Morelli, but was married to one of his friends in the Mugello. He does not mention her

¹⁴⁰ Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage Dans L'Europe Médiévale*, 208-220.

¹⁴¹ AOIF B+B 486, fol 70r.

¹⁴² AOIF B+B 486, fol 85r.

name or his, as he says it is not seemly.¹⁴³ He also mentions that they are good people. His reluctance to reveal the identity of the ex-slave and her husband indicates that there was a stigma associated with an ex-slave or being married to one. The descriptions of the ex-enslaved persons demonstrate that the stain of enslavement followed the women to their children at the Innocenti despite manumission. Their previous owners are not named. However, the fathers were mentioned by name and required to pay for the infant's stay at the Innocenti.¹⁴⁴ The fact that the fathers reclaimed these children indicate that the fathers saw value in their children or felt genuine affection towards their children.

The records of enslaved women in the Innocenti reveals the role the hospital played in the sexualization of enslaved women and the dismissal of their maternal role. The burden of the child was put on the master rather than the father, reflecting more on the status of the enslaved mother rather than the father. Abandonment at the Innocenti denied any maternal feeling between the child and the mother. Such abandonment also opened the mother up to further profit by wet-nursing, denying the enslaved women their humanity as mothers while profiting off the products of their motherhood.

Children of the Enslaved

The result of the predominantly female slave population was the reason for the large number of identifiable slave children. Motherhood intimately connected the offspring to the woman in a way that paternity does not and there could be no question of maternity in the way that paternity was often questioned. In the slave society of Ancient Rome – where Florentine law was derived – the child of a slave took on the status of their mother. One of the most key

¹⁴³ Giovanni Morelli, *Merchant Writers*, ed. Murtha Baca and Vittore Branca 124.

¹⁴⁴ AOIF B+B 486, fol. 70r.

differences in Florence with the regulation of slavery in 1362, a rather late date compared to the Italian maritime republics, is the status of the offspring of enslaved persons. The children of enslaved women and Florentine men were born free in legislation written in 1364.¹⁴⁵ Florentine statutes reaffirmed in 1415 that the children of female enslaved persons took the legal status of their fathers, and thus were born free and baptized into the Latin Christian church.¹⁴⁶ This trend had started in Medieval Crete and the Venetian and Genoese colonies – especially in the cases of domestic slavery.¹⁴⁷ Even before Florence codified this law in 1415, it seems that the freedom of the children of enslaved persons was taken as customary. There are no records of manumission of the children of enslaved persons born in Florence, indicating that there was no need.

The freedom of the offspring of enslaved persons was a religious consideration, as these children were baptized from birth and registered alongside Florentine children in the baptismal records.¹⁴⁸ While their illegitimacy was maintained – since enslaved persons could not marry legitimately – they were not legally different from illegitimate Florentine children and could be legitimized by their fathers and inherit.¹⁴⁹ This implies a level of assimilation, if only just with the child of the slave. Since they had the equal legal rights as their fathers, and were not treated differently in the courts, it is possible to anticipate that they would then have children of their own and a life in Florence that was as unremarkable as that of the countless other poorer labourers of Florence.

The attitudes towards the infants abandoned at the Innocenti are the best case studies for the inheritability of enslaved status in unwanted infants. The language associated with the

¹⁴⁵ ASF Capitoli Appendice 26 fol. 2r.

¹⁴⁶ ASF Statuti di Firenze 29, fols 153r-153v.

¹⁴⁷ Sally Mckee, “Inherited Status”.

¹⁴⁸ ASFB, Registri Battesimali 1, 35-154.

¹⁴⁹ This is the case of Ginevra Datini, the only daughter of Francesco Datini who inherited a part of his fortune after he passed.

children of enslaved women reveals attitudes towards enslaved women and their bodies. It is difficult to determine if the staff of the Innocenti treated children of enslaved origins differently than the free ones. The sheer number of children abandoned at the Innocenti that were the offspring of enslaved persons indicates that the children of enslaved women were abandoned more capriciously than the children of free women. While there are cases that indicate the regret over the abandonment of an enslaved child, these are not the norm. Within eight years after the hospital's opening, it was so associated with the offspring of enslaved women that those who brought infants to the Innocenti pointed out that the child was *not* the son of a slave.¹⁵⁰ This assertion demonstrates the understood ubiquity of abandonment of enslaved women's offspring. The children of enslaved persons may have indeed experienced forms of prejudice from Florentines, or at least a lower level of care than children who were perceived to be from good Florentine families. There were also very little qualms about naming the slave that the child came from, while those who brought children of Florentine women were far less forthcoming about the identity of the mother.¹⁵¹ Enslaved persons – perceived of as without honour – transferred a part of their social status to the children, but legally the children were distinct from the mothers.

The vestiges of an infant's enslaved parentage passed on at least one generation, socially if not legally. Without familial relations, the child of a slave had much the same identity as the slave in the wider social world, despite being legally freeborn. Regardless of their formal status under law, the language associated with the children of enslaved women in public records reveals prevailing attitudes towards their mothers. This was underscored in the baptismal

¹⁵⁰ “non era figliolo di schiava ma di persona da bene” and “non e nato di schiava ma e madonna di buono” AOIF B+B 486 fol. 84r, 492 fol. 7r.

¹⁵¹ AOIF B+B 485-487.

records. Generally, baptismal records indicated the name of the child, the name of their father, and the name of the family's parish. The baptismal records of children born to enslaved mothers gave the name of the owner rather than the name of the father, underscoring the paternalistic relationship inherent in slave ownership. Infants left at foundling hospitals, including *San Gallo* and *Santa Maria della Scala*, were registered with the name of the institution rather than the name of the father. Putting a Florentine institution *in loco parentis* conferred a legal identity that erased the taint of slavery.

As mentioned before, neither the enslaved Lucia nor Maddalena, whatever their relationship is in the household, could raise their own children. Florentines saw the adoption of the children of their masters' enslaved persons by the women of the household as an act of kindness. In the slave Maddalena's case, it is uncertain if she had much contact with Carlo considering she followed the women of the household around their trips in Tuscany. Nor did Carlo or Ginevra ever express interest in their birthmothers, at least in any written records. Whatever they thought about their mother's status, it did not affect them as much as their illegitimacy.

One of the problems of this approach of associating the child with the father comes from the offspring of a black couple in Florence in the 1450s. It is likely that both parents of the child were enslaved persons. Thus, the legal right of the father was not certain to be passed onto the child and creates a problem of assimilation. As Kate Lowe suggests, the solution to this problem perhaps can be found in the child's abandonment at the Innocenti, since all children at the Innocenti became interwoven into the fabric of Florentine life and assimilated into Florence as no legally different from those born illegitimately in Florence and baptized.¹⁵² Thus while there

¹⁵² Kate Lowe, "Black Africans' Religious and Cultural Assimilation", 72.

were problems to the idea of the child being born free as according to the status of the father, institutions provided the means of assimilation into Florentine culture so that the child would not remain legally a slave if she was born in Florence.

In rare cases, the parents came back for the child. Sometimes, a father would come back to reclaim his child even if the child was born of a slave. As previously mentioned, Luca Panzano took his illegitimate son by a slave back after the death of his wife, which suggests that it was his wife who wanted to abandon the child in the first place. In another case, the seven-year-old Anselmo, son of the enslaved Giuliana, was adopted by a notary from Viterbo who promised to treat Anselmo like a son. He also adopted a seven-year-old girl named, coincidentally, Giuliana at the same time who was the daughter of a free woman.¹⁵³ These dual adoptions indicate that Anselmo and Giuliana were seen the same way after seven years at the Innocenti, despite the differences in the legal status of their birth mother. The slave Lucia, whose son, Asimo, was put into the Innocenti on February 5, 1455, came back after three days to retrieve her child.¹⁵⁴ Whether she was coerced to leave the child or determined to but changed her mind, Lucia's reclamation of the child demonstrates that she wanted her son and was able to find a way to support him.

The variability of the fates of these children is a reflection on the unpredictability of the fates of their mothers. The best outcome for the children would be to be disassociated from their slave mother and adopted by the father. Institutions such as the Innocenti facilitated the disassociation of these children by taking in unwanted children of enslaved persons. By putting the children of Florentine masters and enslaved persons in the Innocenti, the domestic household intertwines into the institutions of Florence. A slave's status as property and mother allows her to

¹⁵³ AOIF B+B 485 fol. 126r.

¹⁵⁴ AOIF B+B 486, fol. 106v, 161v.

make the bridge between Florentine institutions such as the Innocenti and the domestic private household. She was freer than a Florentine noblewoman to move about the city – and her experiences of the city around her and its institutions are then brought home. Many enslaved persons were also responsible for working in the Innocenti and taking care of Florentine children. The gender of the slave as a nurturing mother was both shunned and exploited by Florentines. Her children had the best chance if they were not associated with her lineage but a Florentine paternal one, even if that was the institution of the Innocenti. The disassociation between the slave and the child was not so easily done as jealous wives, greedy masters and the very gender of the enslaved persons stood in the way of forgetting the maternity of the child. The importance of gender thus was instrumental in shaping the lives of slave children and the perception of enslaved persons by Florentines as well as their treatment in society.

Conclusion

Through the exploration of slavery as it functioned in the social networks of daily life, it becomes clear that slavery did not follow a proscribed set of behaviour but rather it was up to the Florentines and the enslaved persons to negotiate their roles within a household and the broader Florentine society. By moving away from the typical cultural studies to a more individualistic one allows for an exploration of the motivations and desires of all parties of the slave trade. Through a closer reading of documents in Florence regarding enslaved persons, there is a sense that every slave relationship was highly variable in a city where most households only possessed one. The slave was the only non-European foreigner they would have within their household but was sold into Florence to stay. In lieu of a formalized process, questions of assimilation and offspring were understood on a case-by-case basis and adapted from established norms that integrated citizens of Florence. The stigma of slavery could be temporary and transitory.

Enslaved persons could become part of the citizenry, or their children could succeed through circumstances and networks set up for them by their wider social groups.

As to the Lucia who didn't succeed in Florence, she did make a misguided attempt at it. The Capitano del Popolo records her trial on September 2, 1374.¹⁵⁵ The record indicates that she tried unsuccessfully to poison her owner's wife and then stabbed her to death out of the encouragement from her owner and lover. She was an example of how this uneasy alliance between households, slavery and the wider social networks intertwined within a city to create unique circumstances. Florence condemned not just her but the man that sold her the poison and a servant of her household. She was having an illicit affair with her master for two years when she committed her crimes. The procurement of poison and the condemnation of the apothecary indicates the slave's intervention within the neighbourhood of her new home. In her sentence, she was tortured with hot forceps and dragged around Florence in a cart, ultimately to be hanged. Her accomplices – the servant and the apothecary – were also in this cart and then sent to the *Stinche*, the Florentine jail. Their association with the condemned Lucia is made abundantly clear and public. In this case the fear of the slave's sexuality by the wife resulted in the death of the wife. The husband, however, is not mentioned in the punishment, an indication of how Florentines felt about the dangerous sexuality of the slave.¹⁵⁶ A forceful integration that ended in death, Lucia's story is a cautionary tale. Like the cases of the runaways in the Otto di Balìa books, Lucia left the safety of her household network and existed outside the law but was aided and abetted by the people around her newly found neighbourhood. It is this paradox that makes the social study of slavery such a necessary endeavour and could perhaps allude to the later development of the codification and proscriptions on how to obtain and treat enslaved persons.

¹⁵⁵ ASF Capitano del Popolo Nanni Gondi 592, 113r.

¹⁵⁶ ASF Capitano del Popolo Nanni Gondi 592, 113v.

This chapter hopes to demonstrate that enslaved persons were neither “domestic enemies” nor agentless female bodies, but that the truth lies somewhere in between, in the negotiations, the conflicts and the friendships that developed for better or for worse when Florence legalized the slave trade. It is in the holes in the evidence that allows conjecture on the lived experiences and motivations of slave owners and enslaved persons. The born-again slave was a free agent in Florence and most tellingly, disappears from the record. Her descendants are as part of the geography of Florence as any immigrant. Like modern understandings of race, gender and sexuality, a slave’s humanity and sub-humanity were not fixed categories but subject to the ever-present negotiation between Florentines and their property. It is through this negotiation that it is possible to understand the humanity within the institution of slavery and the personhood of the enslaved persons themselves.

Chapter 3: Race and Race Formation

Introduction

“Race, as we historians understand it, is therefore something which is made and unmade.” – Ernst Renan, “What is a Nation?” 1882.

As early as the late nineteenth century, French historian Ernst Renan, though holding racist beliefs common to the nineteenth century, concluded that race was mutable and manmade, not couched in anthropological determinism but rather in the circumstances of ethnographic histories of each “people”.¹ Despite the early date of his writings, historians are just beginning to examine race-making as a historicized phenomenon. Literary scholars and critical race theorists have made great headway into studying the literature and travel logs of the Middle Ages and the colonial period through the lens of race relations.² However, the application of such theories and ideas to the early modern period has been resisted by historians based on the idea that racialization simply did not exist before the creation of social Darwinism. Such an argument fundamentally misunderstands race as a social concept and pathologizes racism as an empirical phenomenon that is made by observable physical difference and scientific processes. By (re)evaluating the origins of racist ideology, scientific racism is revealed not a maker of hierarchy in and of itself but as the codification of established social, cultural and economic perceptions.

Using archival sources, including letters, sermons, *ricordanze*, slave and orphan registers, it is possible to use documents well-known to historians to trace to creation of a

¹ Ernest Renan, “Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?” Lecture, Sorbonne, March 15, 1882 in *Oeuvres Completes* (Paris, 1947-61) Vol. 1 pp. 887-907. http://www.cooper.edu/humanities/core/hss3/e_renan.html.

² Kim F. Hall offers a starting point through literary studies in 1996, with her publication of *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

hierarchy of essentialized social and physiognomic human traits within pre-modern Florence. It is also possible, as many have done before, to look at race-creation as a system predating the established modern racial categories as the integration and coalescence of many categories of alterity into a semi-coherent ideology that is both subjectively understood and objectively held. The inability to precisely define and categorize racial monikers presents problems for the historian trying to study race since race-creation is dynamic and non-linear. By tracing the locus of identity-creation to a single city-state, Florence, and its participation in the socio-economic ideologies of the pre-modern world, it is easier to narrow down the language of race to find traces of race-creation within the contact zones of its citizens. The slave trade was a relatively quantifiable institution that converted the domestic life of Florentines into a source of interactions between the familiar and the unfamiliar, creating a system by which civic ideology is produced off the knowledge of embodied “otherness”.

This chapter argues that race-creation was a crucial by-product of the Florentine slave trade and formed the basis for the creation of ideas of belonging and otherness that later reinforced the Atlantic slave trade.³ In order to understand this transition, there are three points that must be established, which should come as no surprise to scholars of race but are new territories for early modern scholarship. These points are that 1) race is not a fixed category, 2) the formation of race cannot be divorced from its intersections with gender, sex, and labour, and 3) otherness is constructed through the determination of the ingroup, i.e., the coalescence of essentialized human traits as part of those who “belonged” in Florence created the categories of otherness, rather than the other way around. Through the deconstruction of these main points,

³ This chapter owes a much of its theoretical basis to Geraldine Heng’s ground-breaking book on the making of race in the European Middle Ages and borrows much of her theoretical framework in order to historicize race making. See Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

this chapter refers to race within a biopolitical and socially constructed framework that creates a structure of inequality that is predicated on non-belonging.

Conceptualizing Race

The interpretation of race in the Middle Ages requires a definition of race that is not merely based on epidermal descriptors and overt discrimination but encompasses race, not as a historicized phenomenon resulting from events of the eighteenth century but rather as a nuanced conceptual framework that aids in the essentialization of human differences. Therefore, I adapt my definition of race through my work from Geraldine Heng's work in *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*. She defines race as a "repeating tendency, of the gravest import, to demarcate human beings through differences among humans that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differently to human groups."⁴ Rather than categorizing modern essentializing discriminations within a medieval framework, I follow the idea from critical race theory which posits that "the differences selected for essentialism would vary in the *longue durée*."⁵ Race is not solely a biopolitical structure of power but rather functioned socio-culturally in the negotiation and construction of political theory and theology.

Many historians have pointed out that religious difference was the main cause of structures of inequality within premodern European society.⁶ From the crusades to the expulsion of the Jews from various medieval polities, scholars have pointed to religion as the impetus for

⁴ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 3.

⁵ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 3.

⁶ For more on this argument see Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise. the Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Enslaved persons, 1260-1500* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), Sally Mckee, "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): pp. 305-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440390802267774> and Sally Mckee, "Inherited Status and Slavery in Late Medieval Italy and Venetian Crete," *Past & Present* 182, no. 1 (January 2004): pp. 31-53, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/182.1.31>.

the reestablishment of slavery in Italian city-states.⁷ While it is true that religious difference was the vocabulary by which Florentines justified the regulation of the trade, it is also necessary to question the validity of separating religion from race.⁸ Religion was a key maker of knowledge and power in the Middle Ages that also functioned as a political theology that “could biologize, define and essentialize an entire community as fundamentally and absolutely different in an interknotted cluster of ways”.⁹ The biologification of religious difference in the Middle Ages and especially in Florentine slave discourse attests to the invalidity of separating the two. Religious groups were often prescribed physical and socio-cultural attributes that emphasized religious differences in ways that are only able to be understood with the tools, mythologies, and methodologies of race-making. Within the medieval world, religion as the criteria for difference functions socially, culturally, and more importantly, *biopolitically*. This means that the politicization of biological differences and the biologification of political differences are two interconnected processes of essentializing and othering that are informed by premodern religious boundaries. The observance of religious difference must not be analyzed as a process independent of other structural phenomenon, but rather part of the larger discussion on race.

It is not only necessary to look at race as a dynamic category on a subjective-objective spectrum – existing objectively as a societal concept but also predicated on subjective perceptions – but also to consider the intersectional mechanisms of race-making, in particular the role of gender and sexuality. I argue that gender and the perceptions of gender are major factors in racial formation. As critical race theory problematizes race as a fixed category, it must also

⁷ The other justification for slavery often promoted by scholars of the medieval Mediterranean world is victory in battle. This is obviously not the only reason for enslavement as Florentines never took Pisan or Sieneese enslaved persons despite being in near constant warfare with them.

⁸ Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Capitolo Appendice 26, fol. 1v cited as ASF, CA 26. 1v.

⁹ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 3.

account for the ability of race to intersect with gender and sexuality. All three of these categories centre the body as the source of knowledge production – skewed in the search for signs of innate defect or otherness.¹⁰ The dehumanization and alienation processes of female enslavement – so well explored by scholars of the Atlantic slave trade such as Jennifer Morgan – reduces the enslaved woman to the output generated by her body.¹¹ The commodification of the body and its productive (or reproductive) systems forms the basis of slave labour, the justification and identification of which is coded in languages of racialized difference – one that is not just epidermal but a socio-cultural difference.

One of the major changes of the Atlantic slave trade was the inheritability of slave status as a result of lineage. Women, as producers of future profits through reproduction, carried this lineage and were the victims of the defamilializing – or alienation – that justified the slave trade. The denial of motherhood and family structure allowed enslavers to justify their production of new labourers.¹² Femininity as a gender, with all its reproductive capacities and its potential for othering, is thus folded into the structural hierarchies of difference perceived within the slave. To understand how the body produces knowledge, it is important to look at the circumstances upon which knowledge creators perceived the body of the enslaved that inform their construction of a hierarchical narrative that reflects the intersectionality of race-making.

Background

When Florence legalized slavery in 1364, they were purchasing into a larger tradition of Mediterranean slavery that was a cornerstone of Latin and non-Latin interactions. The

¹⁰ Gislene dos Santos (October 23, 2019). Gislene dos Santos, “Race and Gender: Contributions to Legal and Social Science Studies in Brazil.” (Presentation: The Institute for Feminist Legal Studies and the Centre for Feminist Research, York University, Toronto, October 23, 2019).

¹¹ See Jennifer L. Morgan, *Labouring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

¹² Morgan, *Labouring Women*, 16.

Mediterranean world had largely operated on a system of cultural exchange and religious pluralism justified by economic gain.¹³ Within this realm, Florence existed on its periphery. While solidly entrenched within the Northwestern European economies of wool-making, Florence's banking industry also created a network of connections within the Mediterranean.¹⁴ Its other importance lies in the humanist expression of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, coinciding with its introduction of slavery.¹⁵ It would be remiss to look at this development of the language of citizenship and personhood without considering slavery's role in the lives of Florence's humanists and the general structure of Florentine civil society. Through analysis of the entrenchment of slavery within the city, Florence's importance in the creation of a pan-Western European culture cements it as a key player in the production of racial hierarchy.¹⁶

While the narrative of religious uniformity based on geographic boundaries grew out of the cultural pluralism of the conflicts of the Mediterranean and later global colonial ambitions, religious differences are grounded within a biopolitical framework that essentializes these differences as fundamental. Florence in the Trecento and the Quattrocento is a place where the idea of religion is folded into human characteristics that go beyond mere religious intolerance. The processes of Florentine myth-building of its own identity resulted in the creation of an "in-group" that is culturally, socially and in some ways biologically distinct from a perceived "out-

¹³ See J Joseph F. Stanley, "Negotiating Trade: Merchant Manuals and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Medieval Mediterranean," *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 30, no. 1 (2018): pp. 102-112, <https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v30i1.407>, Steven Epstein, *Purity Lost: Transgressing Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1000-1400* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) and Virgil Ciociltan. *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹⁴ For more on Florentine trade patterns, see Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence, A Study of Four Families*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968) and Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

¹⁵ For more on the political and ideological development of Florence in the 14-15th century see Brian Maxson, *The Humanist World of Renaissance Florence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and David Rundle, *Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁶ See Lynn Tarte Ramey, *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2016).

group”.¹⁷ The adulation of the “Renaissance Men”, most exemplified in the continuous study of Florentines like Coluccio Salutati, Leon Battista Alberti and Cosimo de’ Medici demonstrates the configurations of the Florentine ingroup.¹⁸ The burgeoning paternalism of classical Florentine texts such as *On the Family* by Alberti and *On Famous Women* by Boccaccio¹⁹ among others are indicative of the inherent maleness of this group.²⁰ As Kim Hall pointed out in her ground-breaking work on race, when the default is the statuesque white man, those that are female, non-white and poor are the other.²¹ That is not to say that race exists on the spectrum of, for example, intercity rivalries – to say so would be a misunderstanding of race – but rather that recognizable human defaults create differences that result in structural relationships enabling hierarches which in turn manage and articulate these differences.²² The structures that allowed Florentines to distribute powers and positions according to a set of essentializing human characteristics coalesced into a feeling of “Europeanness”, a cohesive biopolitical idea that – not withstanding its changing parameters – that laid out the groundwork for structural justifications, whether religious, cultural or epidermal, that later colonial powers adopted.

¹⁷ Trexler discusses the incorporation of the marginal into Florentine civic life and the changes of Florence in the context of letting “marginal” groups such as women, children and the poor participate in processions. Similarly, he points out the involvement of subject cities to Florentine festivals, such as the festival of the St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of Florence, where they were involved to make Florence and in particular Florentine adult wealthy men the centre. See Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ As Stephen Milner suggests, this adulation is twofold, one as entrenched already in Florentine civil society and the other comes from the modern historian’s inheritance of the Burckhardtian universalism of the Renaissance as the beginning of modernity and the modern white Christian heterosexual male default. See Stephen Milner, “Identity and the Margins” in *At the Margins: Minority Groups in Premodern Italy*, ed. Stephen J. Milner (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 8.

¹⁹ While Boccaccio’s work is on famous women from antiquity to his time, it offers a view of women that is deeply paternalistic, praising women for chastity, obedience and piety rather than any more traditionally “male” categories. See Virginia Brown’s introduction in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁰ Milner, *At the Margins*, 9.

²¹ Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 27.

²² Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 3.

It is not just Florentine participation in trade that is crucial to our understanding of slavery but also their production of intellectual culture. Florentine humanism engaged in the dichotomy of belonging and otherness. Works by humanists such as Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, Leon Battista Alberti and Niccolò Machiavelli all allude to citizenship and otherness.²³ One result of the strong republican tradition was that citizenship was based on civic and established categories of participation rather than the decisions of a prince or ruler. Since citizenship came with privileges entrenched in law, the demarcation of Florentine and other is a necessary protection that becomes a part of the cultural milieu.²⁴ The Florentine rhetoric of mistrusting the other, as can be seen in the letters of Alessandra Strozzi, can be analyzed in terms of slavery, a permanent presence of the other in the households of Florence. This strange closeness made slave owners examine the qualities of Florentine-ness through their domestic unfree interlopers. Florence created the vocabulary and the criteria for exclusion by defining the terms of inclusion. In a city engaged in creating its identity through the rhetoric of liberty and humanism, Florence's cultural influence over the creation of a European identity provides valuable insight into proto-racial terminology. Insofar as Florence is part of the historical canon as the basis of the fables of European uniqueness, Florentine ideas on slavery also play a crucial role in the construction of the European narrative.

In Florence, the overwhelming ratio of female to male enslavement created a gendered notion of their understandings of the categories of human differences eligible to be enslaved.

²³ See Niccolò Machiavelli, *History of Florence and the Affairs of Italy* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1960), Leonardo Bruni, "Panegyric to the City of Florence," in *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, ed. Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 135-78, and Leon Battista. Alberti, "Della Famiglia," in *Opere Volgari*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Bari: G. Laterza, 1960), pp. 3-341 for more on ideas of belonging and correct behaviour within a Florentine context.

²⁴ For how Florentines created concepts of the East-West dichotomy along the lines of civilized and barbarian, see Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

Ninety percent of the people imported into Florence as enslaved persons were women, most of them nubile or pubescent.²⁵ Ostensibly imported for domestic labour, there is an obvious gendered and sexualized component to the desirability of enslavement and labour. Nearly half of the abandoned children in the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, the Florentine Foundling hospital, in 1453 were the children of slave women.²⁶ The fact that enslaved persons accounted for only one percent of the population indicates that there was a highly sexualized component to this trade in people. Production from the enslaved female body is key to the understanding of the processes of racialization. The purpose of the enslaved persons is intertwined with feminine production in both children, breastmilk, and gendered labour. With a ratio so obviously skewed towards women, not studying the role and perceptions of femininity in the creation of otherness and race would be leaving out an aspect of slavery integral to the socially constructed world of race.

Knowledge Production

While the body is the source of knowledge production, it is necessary to understand the positionality of the people who have the power to comment and record their perceptions of the body. The gaze of the oppressor – in this case the enslavers – informs the historical understandings of the body of the enslaved. Religion cannot be separated from physical attributes as these associations cannot be dealt with in bifurcated categories but rather the interactions of the social worlds and the vocabularies of religion and of the body must be understood in race-making.²⁷ Racialized ideologies are created through the construction (and reconstruction, or deconstruction) of the self within an in-group that places the other outside it. There are no texts

²⁵ Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Enslaved persons in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Speculum* 30, no. 3 (1955), 336 and Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica Nei Tempi Di Mezzo e Nei Mode* (Padua: CEDAM, 1928).

²⁶ L'Archivio dell'Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze (AOIF), Balie e Bambini (B+B) 486.

²⁷ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 347.

written by enslaved women currently available or found in the archives. The source of knowledge production comes from the words of those with power and must be analyzed in terms of self-representation of the author and their prejudices, especially when it comes to the processes of race-making. Positionality within the social hierarchy informs perceptions of oppression, so there are multiple dimensions to the creation of race that also require analysis of those who are in the process of social construction.²⁸ The study of marginal populations like enslaved persons is contingent on the voices of the dominant. It is necessary to look at these sources critically, for both their words and their silences since the positionality of the masters reveal the observations of their constructed realities in relation to their enslaved persons.

The chosen vocabulary used by Florentines outlined the parameters of race-making through the ideas of lineage and otherness. Especially since the specific term race (or *razza*) was not applied to humans during this period, it is important to interrogate how Florentines communicated the concepts of race through their vocabulary.²⁹ The terminology used in the categories described was *progenie* or *genere* in Latin. The specific language in the Florentine statutes on the regulation of slavery reveal that those who were to be enslaved were “presumed to have been infidels if they were of the parts or the race of the infidels”.³⁰ As Florentines used the language of familial lineage for infidel status, the past-tense of having been infidels did not seem to negate enslavement as it stemmed from birth, not baptism or conversion. In the language of registration of enslaved people, *progenie* or *genere* were used to refer to ethnographic groups

²⁸ Gislene dos Santos (October 23, 2019).

²⁹ See Mackenzie Cooley, *The Perfection of Nature: Animals, Breeding, and Race in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

³⁰ “Presumatur semper ab origine fuisse infidelis si sit de partibus et genere infidelium” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol 3r.

such as Tatars, Circassians, Russians, and Greeks, rather than “infidels” more broadly.³¹ Since the law specified both “infidels” and non-Catholics were to be enslaved, these terminologies substituted the specific language that followed these criteria. The lineage – and thus *inheritance* – of infidels were thus applied to specific peoples where the terminology was presumed to demonstrate religious affiliation through their belonging to a certain group. The idea of inheritable ethnic status that mapped onto religious affiliation turns the chosen vocabulary into a biopolitical function of difference. Religion and lineage were intertwined in geographic and ethnic hierarchies that argue for the ideas of race in the terms *progenies* and *genere*. Thus, I translate these terms into “race” when analyzing the language in Florentine documents as these words demonstrate both race-thinking and approximate modern conceptions of racialized difference.

Despite being a peripheral city in the context of the Mediterranean, Key configurations of power were involved in the processes of knowledge production through Florence’s proximity to the institutionalisation of slavery. Florentines were inextricably involved in the slave trade of the early modern era, not just in the eastern Mediterranean but also in the opening of the coast of West Africa. Florentines were on the ships that brought enslaved persons from the Coast of Benin to the Caribbean in the 1520s and the famous Florentine Bartolomeo Marchionni was the first large scale slave trader, obtaining a permit from the Crown of Portugal in 1486 to import Sub-Saharan enslaved persons into the Mediterranean coast.³² Florentine closeness to the initiation of the well-known Atlantic slave trade came from their comfort with their internal slave market. For example, Bartolomeo Marchionni was an agent of the Cambini family, whose lists of

³¹ Capitoli Appendice 26.

³² Francesco Guidi Bruscoli, *Bartolomeo Marchionni "Homem De Grossa Fazenda" (Ca. 1450-1530) Un Mercante Fiorentino a Lisbona e L'impero Portoghese* (Firenze, FI: Leo S. Olschki, 2014), 113.

slave imports from Lisbon to Florence still exist in the *Arte della Seta* archives at the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*.³³ However, Marchionni's understanding of enslaved persons does not come from the streets of Lisbon but from his Florentine heritage where slavery was a widespread practise unquestioned by its inhabitants. Legalized in 1364, these wealthy Florentines grew up in a society that already had an established and normalized system of enslavement and slave labour. The transition of the slave trade from the Eastern Mediterranean to West Africa was a geographical, and not an ideological one. These ideologies were already in place by the fifteenth century through the participation of the same merchants shifting to different geographical zones.

Racial Categories

In addition to its role in defining structures of power, it is necessary to look at Florentine slavery through their engagement with ethnographic vocabulary. Yet, even ethnographic vocabulary is subject to change not only temporally but based on the geographic, cultural and social location from which such knowledge is derived. One of the key documents for an ethnographic study of the slave trade— and one that makes Florence unique – is the *Registro degli Schiavi*.³⁴ This document contains the notarized records of the biological and physiological traits of ostensibly every slave imported into Florence between 1366 and 1397. While scholars have pointed out that this list is by no means complete, given Florentines' propensity to dodge taxation³⁵, its vocabulary detailing the imported people gives key clues to how they were perceived by the dominant powerholders in Florence. Its most significant feature is the record of the ethnographic categories of enslaved peoples and sometimes their previous names. The formulaic descriptions in the *registro* also go over age, height, skin colour, lips, eyes and any

³³ AOIF 12691, fol. 31v.

³⁴ ASF Capitoli Appendice 26.

³⁵ Origo, "Domestic Enemy", 366.

birthmarks, deformities, and other identifying features. Florentines often included the buyer and seller of the enslaved persons as well as the notary that formalized this sale. No level of records with such detail happened in any other city, and it is this record, along with the decision to formalize it as a state record, that gives the ethnographic language with which Florentines described their enslaved persons.

An examination of the *registro* indicates discrepancies between the language of the law and the language of knowledge used by Florentines. One of the most glaring examples comes from the legislation that legalized the buying and selling of enslaved persons in Florence with the explicit terms that only “Non-Catholics” were to be enslaved.³⁶ Legally, this means that anyone outside of the Church of Rome was eligible to be enslaved.³⁷ This specificity comes from a long history of the othering of other formations of Christianity such as the Nestorians and the Orthodox.³⁸ The Eastern Nestorians were seen as culturally as well as religiously divergent, portrayed as worse enemies to Latin Christians than the “pagan” Mongols.³⁹ They stood in the way of the vision of universal Christendom that Franciscan and Dominican missionaries imagined in their journeys east. Similarly, the racializing of the Orthodox comes from the enmity of the crusades.⁴⁰ The split between the two Churches, while still reconcilable, became one that seemed of two peoples when the rhetoric of enemy changed from the Saracens to the Byzantines.⁴¹ The previous names are significant in that there were Greek women with clearly Christian names such as “Lucia” whose names were changed upon baptism to “Caterina”, indicating ethnic status was the justification for enslavement rather than the seemingly Christian

³⁶ ASF, CA 26, fol. 1r.

³⁷ “qui non sint catholice fidei christiane e ipsos in ipsa civitate” ASF CA 26 1v.

³⁸ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 316.

³⁹ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 317.

⁴⁰ Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 94.

⁴¹ Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 94.

names.⁴² The high number of enslaved Greek women in the register demonstrates that the stain of the Eastern church was also something that required erasure upon entering the Latin world. The specific language of “Non-Catholic” Christians not only emphasizes the supremacy of Western Christendom but also the linguistic supremacy of Latin over Greek and the use of Latin to justify Western Europe as the true heirs of Rome.

While the provisional legislation legalizing the slave trade stated in no uncertain terms that Latin Christians were exempt from slavery, Florentines registered their enslaved persons in the *Registro degli Schiavi* using the vocabulary of ethnographic origins rather than religious affiliation. This glaring discrepancy is evidence that the law did not operate the same way as how Florentines saw non-Florentines in society. If the religion of the enslaved person was the only justification for their slavery, then it seems that racial and geographic monikers were enough to prove the non-Christianity of the slave. The terminology used for enslaved persons’ origins were Tatars, Circassians, Romanians, Sardinians, Cretans, Turks, Bosnians, Serbians, Russians, Saracens, Greeks and Albanians.⁴³ These ethnographic origins did not correspond to skin colour, which was recorded in a separate category. Epidermal awareness was not yet a major concern in terms of religious origin – but it is beginning to take shape.

While it could be pointed out that these words correspond roughly to geographic origins, there is a stronger argument for these terminologies being ethnographic monikers. Race was (and is) not constructed solely epidermally but also with reference to facial structure, geography, culture and origin. Greek enslaved persons were sometimes given a location with their entry into the *registro*. A typical entry involving Greek enslaved persons demonstrates that Greeks don’t necessarily come from Greece but around the Black Sea:

⁴² “Caterinam vocatum Luciam de genere Grecorum” Livi, *Schiavitù Domestica*, 155

⁴³ ASF CA 26, see also Origo, “Domestic Enemy”, 366.

“1366 Indiction 4 on the 10 of July. Nardo Chelo Pagnino of the parish of San Lorenzo of Florence, master of the underwritten Maria of Constantinople represented before me Tardacorro of Mei of Piglio for the commune of Florence as the notary for the care of the treasury, the aforementioned slave Maria born of the race of Greeks being about twenty-five years of age with a large stature, olive skin with her narrow face and a sharp nose with several moles on her chest, who is said to be sold for the price of 30 gold florins.”⁴⁴

It is uncertain where Maria was bought, although one may venture to guess Constantinople, and what makes her nose sharp or her skin olive, but terms such as “from Constantinople”⁴⁵ or “from Romania”⁴⁶ describing a Greek slave demonstrates the understanding that populations were not concentrated on one area. Linguistic or ethnographic origins did not change when enslaved persons were transported and sold from different locations. The use of the word Greek did not mean the geographic region that is Greece but rather was a descriptive label that transcends geographic boundaries. Furthermore, in 1390, there was one slave registered in the *Registro* called Margherita who is either born of the race (*de genere*) of Albania or Russia.⁴⁷ These two different locations indicate that there were gaps in the geographic knowledge as well as the documentation of enslaved persons coming into Florence. She is described as white

⁴⁴ “Miii lxvi indictionis iiii die x messe julii Nardis chelis pagnanii populi sancti laorentii de florentii dominus ut dixit marie de constantinopoli representavit coram me Tardacorri quamdam Mey De Piglis de Floren. Notai ad custodiam attorum dicte camera dictam Mariam sclavam sua de pregenie grecorum etatum vigniti quinque annorum vel circa magne stature pelle ulivigna cum visu et naso affilato cum aliquibus neis in pectorum quam dixit se emisse pretio floren auri triginta et aurii” ASF CA 26 fol. 4v, see also Angela Zhang “Source: The Florentine Register of Enslaved persons” <https://medievalslavery.org/europe/source-the-florentine-register-of-enslaved-persons/>.

⁴⁵ “de Constaninopoli”, ASF CA 26, fol. 4v, 5v.

⁴⁶ “de Romania, de progenie Grecorum” ASF CA 26, fol. 8r and “de progenie Grecorum de Romania” ASF CA 26, fol. 9r.

⁴⁷ “Margheritam de progenie Albanie sive Rossie sclavam” ASF CA 26, fol. 25r.

skinned and white eyed.⁴⁸ If there were physiognomic identifiers for eastern peoples, they did not distinguish between the Russian or the Balkan regions. The lack of records meant that Florentines needed to guess where she was from, and they did guess based on facial features and personal cultural discrepancies, at least enough to make a record in the *registro*. The *registro* entries vary in terms of detail of the descriptions, with skin colour ranging from black, yellow, white, red, olive, brown, and sometimes lips or noses were described as big or eyes sunken.⁴⁹ There does not seem to be a racialized aspect to these descriptors. They mark the noteworthy traits Florentines saw when looking at their enslaved persons. Florentine knowledge of these features was still blurred at this point, only coalescing into a general sort of “otherness”.

Another reason that it is unconvincing that the terms such as Tatar, Russian, Greek, Bosnian and Circassian were geographic terms is that enslaved persons were mostly coming out of the port cities of Tana, Caffa and Ragusa where they were categorized.⁵⁰ These categorical differences probably meant that they were categorized by the traders – either Venetian, Genoese, or from the Black Sea region – who sold them based on what they perceived were characteristics of each ethnicity. Detailed descriptors of skin colour, hair, markings, and eye colour not only are indicative of the fear of runaways but rather the indefinability of personal features to geographic origins. These recorded features supplemented the broadly ethnographic or racial terminology of the Black Sea trade, rather than supplanted them.

The use of black and white when the enslaved persons are from Africa and the more detailed terminology from the East is telling in that there was a lack of distinction when there

⁴⁸ Pelle alba ... oculis quasi albis,” Livi, 216.

⁴⁹ ASF CA 26 fol. 4r.

⁵⁰ Tana and Caffa were Genoese colonies with large populations of Venetians while Ragusa (modern day Dubrovnik) was an independent maritime republic on the Adriatic Sea that supplied Balkan enslaved persons to Florence. For more, see Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise and Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1000-1500 CE)* ed. Reuvin Amitai and Christopher Cluse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017).

were epidermal differences rather than more nuanced facial and cultural ones. It also demonstrates that the specificity of the races of eastern peoples was a choice – informed by political, cultural, and economic realities – that was made by enslavers - rather than a legal or religious necessity or a lack of direct information. In addition, it was harder to neatly categorize the Eastern enslaved persons due to the differences being not particularly epidermal but rather based on physiognomic indicators. Through these categorizations, Florentine enslavers chose to identify with whiteness, rather than darkness when marking difference. There by identifying with light colours, blackness was marked as “other”. The simplification of the myriad of colouration to a simple black and white dichotomy reveals the tendency to simplify categories as visible differences became more entrenched culturally, and thus more visible.

The terminology of the slave traders is unconvincing if viewed solely from a geographic point of view. Religious affiliation was linked to ethnographic origin, leading to the justification for slavery from religious difference to ethnographic monikers. In particular, the area of the Golden Horde created ambiguities as to who were Circassians, Tatars or Russians. This large Khanate extended from Western Asia to the Black Sea and encompassed many peoples. The ports of Caffa and Tana were within the physical boundaries of the Golden Horde and was a hub for gathering slave traders to sell people to Venetian and Genoese merchants.⁵¹ In these areas, there were more terminologies to specify the ethnographic origins of these enslaved persons. Venetian notaries in Tana that had an in-depth knowledge of the origins of the enslaved persons from Caffa, were categorizing enslaved persons as Tatars, Ruthenians, Zygians, Mingrelians, and

⁵¹ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 129.

even one Chinese woman.⁵² Aside from indicating the wide knowledge and array of people that made their way through these ports, the detail is extraordinary.

Many of these categories are not only geographic but classical, resulting in the ahistorical “other”. The Zichs were first described by Strabo during the Greco-Roman period, although Giorgio Interiano, writing in Venice in 1502, equates them with Circassians.⁵³ In the Middle Ages, the use of this term to describe enslaved persons indicates the persistence of classical ideology to proscribe pre-formed knowledge on eastern peoples. Petrarch describes the enslaved persons coming into the port in Venice as “Scythians”⁵⁴ despite the changes in the demography of the Black Sea region. By labelling contemporaries with Greco-Roman terminologies, categories of different applied to Italian city-states as the “heirs” to Rome could be mapped onto eastern peoples. Using classical terminology to describe the people of the East imports the preconceptions of classical thinkers and denies the changes of populations in that region. Ahistoricization as a tactic of othering is emphasized in the scholarship of the Atlantic slave trade to render Africa a subjective apolitical entity worthy of enslavement.⁵⁵ This trend did not begin with the nationalist histories of the eighteenth and nineteenth century but with the humanists and the development of histories and panegyrics that glorify the self in opposition to the “other”, whether that other were rival city-states or from the far east.⁵⁶ The result of a

⁵² Danuta Quirini-Popławska, “The Venetian Involvement in the Black Sea Slave Trade (Fourteenth to Fifteenth Centuries)” *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 1000–1500 ce)* ed. Reuvin Amitai and Christoph Cluse. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 276.

⁵³ Strabo, *Geographica* 11.2 and Giorgio Interiano, “George Interiano, The and and Customs of the Zygians Called Circassians (October 1502),” in *Humanism and the Latin Classics*, ed. John N. Grant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 204-206.

⁵⁴ Petrarca, *Opere di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. Emilio Bigi. (Milan: Mursia, 1966), 956–8.

⁵⁵ Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Enslaved persons*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 44-46.

⁵⁶ See the histories and chronicles of Florence such as Dino Compagni, *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence*, trans. Diane Bornstein (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), Giovanni Villani, *Villani's Chronicle: Being Selections from the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*, ed. Philip H. Wicksteed, trans. Rose E. Selfe (Westminster: Archibald, Constable and Co., 1906), Gregorio Dati, *L'istoria Di*

nationalist history predicated on the exceptionalism of Florence with a language rooted the Roman legacy of legitimate government (also conflated with Latin from Christendom) facilitated the creation of an apolitical group whose lack of history ousts them from the civilized world. By co-opting Roman language of the “barbaric” and tapping into a Latin Roman legacy, Florentines introduced a system by which religion, politics, history, and biology intertwine through established “knowledge” to reinforce racialized otherness.

It is hard to say what the contemporary categories for ethnographic terms come from or if the enslaved persons were self-identifying or identified based on Venetian observations, but these terms clearly meant something in the Black Sea region. Ruthenians, from the south, were often equated with the more northern Russians and the other Slavic peoples around the Black Sea region.⁵⁷ Enslaved Mongols and Tatars were recorded as distinct groups by notaries who formalized their sales in Tana and onwards in Venice.⁵⁸ By the time these enslaved persons enter Florence, their racial category was conflated into a singular Tatar.⁵⁹ It is unclear how Venetian notaries in Tana distinguished between Mongol and Tatar enslaved persons, but Florentines either did not import people labelled as Mongols at all or deemed the two peoples similar enough to conflate the two. Race relations changed between the frontiers of the Black Sea and the inner Italian peninsula where categories did not need to be as clearly defined. The mutability of racialized understanding and the grey areas in between demonstrate the lack of objective evidence for race creation but rather its intersections with geography, ethnography, culture, and political systems. The conflation of terminologies to various groups of peoples or the

Firenze" Di Gregorio Dati: Dal 1380-1405 ; Ill. e Pubbl. Secondo Il Codice Inedito Stradiniano Collaz. Con Altri Manoscritti e Con La Stampa Del 1795, ed. Luigi Pratesi (Norcia: Tip. Tonti Cesare, 1902), Giovanni Cavalcanti, *Istorie Fiorentine*, ed. Filippo Luigi Polidori, vol. 2 vols. (Firenze: Tipografia all'insegna di Dante, 1838).

⁵⁷ Quirini-Popławska, “The Venetian Involvement” 267.

⁵⁸ Quirini-Popławska, “The Venetian Involvement”, 267.

⁵⁹ ASF CA 26 fol. 4r-49v.

use of various terminologies to describe one group of people indicate the variability of ethnographic terminologies.

Florence does not have as clear categories as the Venetians in their colonies, but similarities in the identification of enslaved persons and the sourcing of enslaved persons from Venice indicate that they borrowed many of these terms. Florentines were not colonizers in the East, so they categorized based on their perceptions and hearsay from Venice or Genoa. The adoption of these terms by Florentines creates questions of racialized origin from within the Italian mainland as opposed to geographic or religious difference of intercultural interactions within the colonies. This level of difference, however, is telling for the Florentines, whose lack of personal contact with the cultures of those enslaved meant that they relied on their own perceptions and a reading knowledge of otherness rather than ideas from Eastern peoples. As the dominant population contending with the interloper of the unknown, rather than a minority ruling class in an Eastern colony, the cultural confidence of Florentines allowed for a starker contrast between “belonging” and “otherness”. Physiognomic descriptors were mixed in Florentine texts, and it is unclear what Florentines meant by things like olive or red skin. Nevertheless, an examination of the differences that Florentines pointed out, such as “pierced ears”⁶⁰ and “snub-nosed”⁶¹, demonstrate what constituted as foreign and noteworthy for those living in Italy rather than the more metropolitan Venetians.

While this chapter argues for a pre-Black vs White conception of race, blackness as a notable category goes beyond cultural delineations of difference and highlights the essentialization of epidermal categories. In a list of 207 children, there were 100 abandoned

⁶⁰ ASF, CA 26, fol. 4r-5v “Auribus Fortatis” Eastern Mediterranean habits of piercing the ears were not common in Italy at this time. See Stephen Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 110.

⁶¹ ASF, CA 26, fol. 4v “Naso... rincagnato”.

infants whose mothers were enslaved persons (Appendix A). Out of these, there are only two babies in the intake list of abandoned infants that had physical descriptors in their records. They were referred to with the word “*ghezzo*”, meaning dark-skinned, and *nero* which is inscribed more than once on this entry and directly under his name, which indicates the importance of this difference from other presumably “light-skinned”, and therefore unmarked, children.⁶² The first “ghezzo” infant, Filippo, died three weeks later in the hospital and was buried among the others. Unfortunately, infant mortality rates were too high to ascertain whether he was treated any differently on account of his dark skin. The second child, Benedetto, was also brought in by a “ghezzo” man and born of a black female slave.⁶³ Nothing else about the child is known. No other child had a comment about colour on their name, signifying whiteness or at least some sort of not-black colour as the norm while darkness was irregular or worthy of comment. While enslaved people in the *Registro* were marked as brown, yellow, and black skinned, the blackness of these two children indicate that there was something extraordinary to the Florentines who were not used to dealing with dark people and used the language of darkness as an overarching term. The awareness of blackness as coloured, and the bifurcated understanding of black and white is demonstrated in these simple entries. While racial categories are based on a conflation of cultural, social, geographical, and physiognomic differences, blackness continues to stand out as the opposite side of the spectrum of acceptability. The highlighting of this blackness indicates that Florentines were acutely aware and occupied with epidermal differences.

Florentines writing on enslaved persons often made stereotypical allusions to the foreignness of enslaved persons. These allusions not only highlight foreignness but make clear

⁶² AOIF, B+B 486, fol. 47v “era figliuolo della schiava d’antonio d’antonio del papa nato o di ghezza o di ghezzo e nero”.

⁶³ AOIF, B+B 486, fol. 50r “era nero e figliuolo d’una gheza di schiava”.

exactly what parts of the body they considered indicative of an outsider. Going back to Petrarch, his description of the Venetian port is that “an unusually large and countless crowd of enslaved persons of both sexes has afflicted this city with deformed Scythian faces, just like when a muddy current destroys the brilliance of a clear one”.⁶⁴ Petrarch established bloneness as the standard for feminine beauty in his *Canzonere* where Laura’s bloneness is one of the more dominant motifs.⁶⁵ This points to the transgressive nature of the muddy faces of Scythians. Petrarch described Scythian faces as muddy and deformed, thus abnormal or ugly by nature. He was pointing out that there was a visible difference between the native Venetians and the imported enslaved persons, especially a hierarchical difference where the enslaved persons were had faces that were akin to mud. The conflation of foreign bodies with mud dirtying the “clear” Venetian populace is a common trope in medieval literature surrounding ideas of darker skin or foreignness.⁶⁶ The idea of lightness as sanctity and blackness as sin was manifested in stories about dark skinned foreigners turning white upon acceptance of Christianity.⁶⁷ However, the brown muddiness of the “Scythian” faces itself wasn’t the only thing that alluded to the foreignness – and therefore wrongness – of these individuals. As mentioned before, Petrarch also taps into the historical legacy of the archaic term “Scythian” which comes from respected thinkers of antiquity such as Aristotle indicating that these enslaved persons were geographically from the Eurasian Steppes around the Black Sea and they were also barbaric, lacking the reason and therefore enslavable.⁶⁸ In one broad sentence, Petrarch, in his contempt for these people,

⁶⁴ McKee, “Domestic Slavery”, 305.

⁶⁵ Patrizia Bettella. *The Ugly Woman: Transgressive Aesthetic Models in Italian Poetry from the Middle Ages to the Baroque*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 134.

⁶⁶ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 186.

⁶⁷ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 215.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*. I.5, 1254b, and I.13, 1260a.

argues for the slave status of these imported people and their barbarity and dirt against the purity of the Venetian people.

There is further information to indicate that physiognomic differences perceived within Tatar population were indications of a lower social class than the native population of the Italian peninsula. Hannah Barker points out exactly what was perceived to be wrong with these enslaved persons. In her monograph, she notes that the term Tatar was often associated with ugliness and flat faces.⁶⁹ These judgements on aesthetics are predicated on the foreignness of these faces. Venetian and Florentine chroniclers described Tatar faces as “broad” and “flat”,⁷⁰ demonstrating that both cities had the same understanding of the differences of Italian faces. By describing Tatar faces using the terminology of “flat” or “broad”, they were indicating what they saw as extraordinary as opposed to the perceived normal thinner and deeper Mediterranean faces. Tatars were judged on their appearances or perceived appearances by the place of their birth and their slave status, something that was easily visible rather than the less provable qualities of religion. Using the language of flat, broad faces, they are also tapping into the traditional descriptions of the Mongols by missionaries such as John of Plano Carpini’s first trip into the *orda* of the Great Khan as a papal legate.⁷¹ The prescribed alien cultures of the Mongols were seen as signs of their barbarity and animalistic tendencies – tendencies which argued for their ownership in the same way that humans had dominion over animals.

The conflation of the cultural difference with ethno-racial categories are found in Florentine writings on the enslaved persons in their social circles. As previously observed, race was not based solely on physiognomic features, but rather on a blend of cultural, social and

⁶⁹ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 58.

⁷⁰ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 58.

⁷¹ See Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 291 for descriptions of the Mongol face by John of Plano Carpini

religious hierarchy that attempts to fundamentalize these differences.⁷² The Florentine poet Franco Sacchetti, writing in 1388, describes the runaway slave of his friend as "... around 20 years old, [with] brown skin and eyes... [she] is small, and doesn't have a very Tatar face, but instead can be of the world, and [she] doesn't speak much of our language".⁷³ Evidently, there was an understanding of what a Tatar face looked like, particularly since Tatars were the most popular ethnographic origin of enslaved persons in Florence.⁷⁴ The traditional flat and broad faces of what the Florentines consider the Tatar race seems not to apply here. Whether she was a Tatar without a Tatar face or from another ethnoracial demographic that was a common source of enslaved persons for Florence is unknown. He does not root his description of her in religious terminology but rather the facial structure of the woman herself. Since his letter is for the purpose of finding this runaway slave and returning her to her legal owner, his descriptiveness is serving the purpose of being able to single her out from a group of Florentine or Italian girls. While it is impossible to decipher just what shade of complexion equals brown skin to Sacchetti, it is important to note that he points out she does not have a very Tatar face but speaks very little of their language. His emphasis on her "not Tatar" face denotes that, in his view, she has a rather Florentine – or Italian face, one that perhaps could blend in with the rest of the population. This would not be very helpful when it comes to finding her but it allows us to realize that there is a

⁷² One can think of the example of the Jewish people of Europe whose differences were not so much based on real epidermal or facial variations but rather perceived as such under the confluence of religious and cultural discrimination. See Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 55-109 and S.J. Pearce, "The Inquisitor and the Moseret: The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages and the New English Colonialism in Jewish Historiography," *Medieval Encounters* 26, no. 2 (2020): pp. 145-190.

⁷³ "D'età di circa a venti anni, la qual'è di pelo e occhi bruni, assai adatta nel busto, cioè ne grassa ne magra, e piccoletta, e non ha il viso molto Tataresco, ma innanzi adatto al mondo di qua che no, e non parla molto scorta nostra lingua" 12 d'Agosto 1388, Franco Sacchetti *Le Lettere le sposizioni di vangeli*. ed. Alberto Chiari (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1938), VI 88.

⁷⁴ Origo, "Domestic Enemy", 366.

face that is unnecessary for description, the “unmarked” one associated with Italian girls.⁷⁵ A slave’s purchase into this face does not come from how close she fits into the ideals of beauty but rather how far she is from the stereotypical face of the other peoples eligible for enslavement, such as Tatar, Turk, Greek among others. Sacchetti goes on to add that she also does not speak much of the language – that is Tuscan –, indicating that there was still some fundamental way to categorize her difference through language.

Florentines were also concerned with the problem of Christianizing the foreign slave. In this too, there was a change in the language corresponding to geographic distance. While Barker points out that enslaved persons dwelling closer to the Black Sea could one day hope for redemption through ransom, enslaved persons that made their unfortunate way as far as Italy lost such a hope.⁷⁶ This means that the entire understanding of these enslaved persons changed from one that would remain a foreigner to one that could become Christian and remain in the Italian cities. While religion was the legal prerequisite for enslavement, the Florentine register of enslaved persons makes no mention of the original religion of the enslaved persons, indicating that religion was already conflated with race. Outside of the contact-zone of the Black Sea coast and the Aegean, the fight between Muslims and Christians for souls becomes more theoretical, rather than practical. The power of conversion is also a gendered one and the importation of women into Florence gave rise to an ideological approach where paternal lineage trumped the mother’s enslaved status. The conversion of women in Florence creates a paternalistic

⁷⁵ See Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction, Second Edition*. Vol. Second edition. Critical America. (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 75-90.

⁷⁶ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 13.

relationship with their enslavers, where the names of the Florentine men were registered next to these women's names in place of the father.⁷⁷

It is unsurprising that for the people who have no hope of returning to their homeland, the discussion of their souls turned into the legitimacy of conversion. Since they were to spend the rest of their lives in Florence, it was hard to determine if their conversion meant that they were the same as any other baptized Florentine. As Heng points out, religion was beginning to instruct biology in the writings of the fourteenth century.⁷⁸ However, conversion was one of the ways to “wash” the body clean of heretical faiths.⁷⁹ Theoretically, Florentines argued against the efficacy of conversion. Franco Sacchetti wrote that baptizing a slave was the same as baptizing a cow and in fact it was immoral for enslaved persons to be set free if it meant that they returned to a non-Latin Christian life, since the master would then be condemning the slave to eternal damnation.⁸⁰ Bishop Antoninus, the Archbishop of Florence between 1446 and 1459, also wrote about the pointlessness of baptizing enslaved persons who did not have the ability to consent to baptism.⁸¹ If conversion was useless to Florentines, then the justification for saving the souls of non-Christians through enslavement would be useless. Thus, what justified the continued enslavement of foreign people to Florentines if not the conversion of the non-Christian masses to protect souls from their Muslim enemies?

⁷⁷ In the baptismal records, the master appears where the father usually does in cases of the conversion of a slave, see Archivio Storico delle Fedi di Battesimo (henceforth ASFB) Registri Battesimali 1. For example, on fol. 33r the slave of Jacopo Pazzi, baptized 19 April 1453 is recorded as “Chaterina Schiava di Iacopo de Pazi” while on the next line, the daughter of Bartolomeo is recorded on the same day as “Piera di Bartolomeo di Calvello muratore”.

⁷⁸ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 216.

⁷⁹ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 216.

⁸⁰ Sacchetti, 94-95 (*Sermoni XXIX*) in Franco Sacchetti, *I Sermoni Evangelici, Le Lettere, Ed Altri Scritti Inediti o Rari* (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1857).

⁸¹ “Si autem christianus emerit iudaeum vel paganum, si velit effici christianus, non propterea efficitur liber... quia servitus introducta est de iure divino et per ius gentium et ius canonicum approbata” in Sancti Antonini Archiepiscopi Florentini. *Summa theologica*, ed. Innocenzo Colosio. (Graz: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959) III, 60, De servitute.

Intersectionality

In addressing the second point of the argument where the racialization process cannot be divorced from the gendered nature of slavery, it is necessary to explore the implications of the overrepresentation of women as domestic enslaved persons within the Italian peninsula and particularly Florence. In cases of gendered slave labour and its sexualization, much of the discourse has turned on the slave women themselves for being wild, foreign, and sexual. 90% of enslaved persons imported into Florence were women,⁸² so the construction of otherness and race around the presence of enslaved persons is by necessity gendered and sexualized.

The masters were responsible for the consequences of the enslaved persons' sexual liaison, whether they were the father of the child or not. In the miscellanea of the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, a document outlining proposed legislation to Florence suggested that for every female slave coming into Florence, their owner had to pay the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* one florin within eight days of entry into Florence.⁸³ This demand by the *Innocenti* for payment indicates a material and a perceived truth. The material truth is that most of the children abandoned at the *Innocenti* in the fifteenth century were the children of enslaved persons and servants born out of wedlock.⁸⁴ While enslaved persons only accounted about 1% of the population of Florence,⁸⁵ between 1451-1453, roughly half of the children abandoned to the *Innocenti* were the children of enslaved persons.⁸⁶ This indicates that just being born as the child of a slave was rationale enough for abandonment. The perceived truth was that these women who were entering into

⁸² Monica Boni and Robert Delort, "Des Esclaves Toscans, Du Milieu Du XIVe Au Milieu Du XVe Siècle," *Mélanges De L'école Française De Rome* 112, no. 2 (2000), 1070.

⁸³ AOIF, Filza di Archivio 6205, fol. 600r-v.

⁸⁴ AOIF B+B 486, 467, 468. For more on children born out of wedlock and abandoned at the *Innocenti*, see Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: the Ospedale Degli Innocenti, 1410-1536* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1993) and Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

⁸⁵ Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. "Women Servants in Florence during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries." *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, edited by Barbara Hanawalt, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). 69.

⁸⁶ AOIF B+B 486 (See Appendix 1).

Florence would eventually have a child that would need to be supported by the *Innocenti*. This presumption adds a sexualized aspect to the labour of enslaved persons in Florence, one that is not named explicitly in the text except through the reproductive capacities of the women. This proposed legislation by an institute for abandoned children indicates clearly that sexual availability was inextricably linked to slavery. It also put the onus on the masters and not the fathers to bear the cost to the *Innocenti* on the idea that children of enslaved women would naturally end up there.

Foreign enslaved women were perceived to be without honour based on their enslaved status and their lack of Christianity. The perceptions of the sexuality of these women factor into the creation of otherness that focuses on the body of these women. Where there is no other social network from which to view these women, the focus of the attention is on the woman herself and her body. The choice of these masters to abandon these children indicates the lack of paternal affinity or responsibility for these children. While the slave belonged to the master – including the breastmilk she produced as a result of the child – the child was associated with the slave in society, if not in law.⁸⁷ The lack of honour is then passed on from mother to child.

While not every child of a slave was abandoned, the ones that weren't, such as Ginevra, the daughter of Francesco Datini and his slave Lucia, or Carlo, the son of Cosimo de' Medici and his slave Maddalena, were adopted by Florentine wives. Since the child was detached from the foreign mother, they were not linked to the foreignness but to illegitimacy as the primary obstacle between them and society. Whatever they looked like, the conditions of their mother were ignored by the adoption⁸⁸ Thus gender, reproduction and slavery were inextricably linked

⁸⁷ Despite the children of enslaved persons being born free in Florence, they were always noted to be the children of enslaved persons. See the Florentine baptismal registry: ASFB, Registri. Bat. 1.

⁸⁸ Maria Serena Mazzi, *Prostitute e lenoni nella Firenze del Quattrocento*. (Milan: Saggiatori, 1991), 52-53.

to the process of race creation. The mother, as a female honourless and foreign entity, needed to be excised in order for the child to have a chance at a Florentine life. Slavery as a mostly female category played into this process and became linked to honourless femininity and illicit birth.

Sometimes the undesirability of certain traits associated with ethnographic labels worked in the favour of Florentines and they were thus emphasized in writing about the enslaved persons. The merchant Francesco Datini bragged to his notary Lapo Mazzei in a letter about how he found an ugly slave that would not incite the anger of his wife.⁸⁹ In the 1420s, Filippo Strozzi was warned against buying a beautiful slave because he needed to consider the jealousy of his wife.⁹⁰ Merged with the rhetoric of the ugliness of a Tatar face, it is possible to see why Florentines highlighted the visible differences in their enslaved persons.⁹¹ The stereotyping of Tatar “ugliness” assuaged wives of their jealousies but also was an indication of their dishonour, highlighting a rationale for enslavement. This dishonour, however, also made them dangerous in the eyes of Florentines since they were prone to steal, lie and cheat.⁹² As Hannah Barker points out, it was more common to point out Tatar ugliness in enslaved persons, rather than free Tatars.⁹³ Slavery itself served as a form of ugliness and debasement that was based on class as much as on race and religion. The totalizing of ugliness here served a purpose: if Florentines were actively looking for enslaved persons that were not too pretty – as to not incite rumours or jealousy – it would explain the propensity of Tatar enslaved persons and their unattractive descriptors by Florentine men. It would also make Tatar women suitable for the kind of labour that they were imported for, which is hard domestic labour serving the households of Florence.

⁸⁹ Origo, “Domestic Enemy”, 344.

⁹⁰ Origo, “Domestic Enemy”, 343.

⁹¹ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 58-59.

⁹² Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, *Letters to Her Sons, 1447-1470*. Translated by Judith Bryce. (Toronto, ON: Iter Academic Press, 2016), 59.

⁹³ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 58.

Women also bought into this narrative through their own interactions and networks in Florence. The widow Alessandra Strozzi writes about her neighbour's slave having bad blood and drinking to excess, causing dangers for the unmarried women in the household.⁹⁴ She also points out in an oft-quoted letter that "Tatar woman ...[are] strong, rustic people. Russians are more genteel by nature, and better looking, but in [her] opinion the Tatars are probably better workers. Circassian women are [strong blooded], although they're all like that."⁹⁵ Her demarcation of the different races of enslaved persons demonstrates that the association of racial categories with essentialized traits, placing them on a hierarchical spectrum in which she can generalise her experience of these women into ethnographic "knowledge". She also uses gendered language to talk about these women in relation to their ability to perform domestic labour for her son.⁹⁶ This extrapolation is one of the ways that the body and female labour produces knowledge. Alessandra Strozzi was a Florentine noblewoman who had never left the immediate vicinity of Florence, but through the various interactions with enslaved persons in her household and among her social network, she was able to assign traits to slave women based on origin.⁹⁷ As Kim Hall points out, there does not need to be a significant population or racial conflict for there to be racialized prejudice.⁹⁸ Despite the low number of enslaved persons in Florence and the lack of epidermal descriptors, Alessandra Strozzi was confident in pinpointing essentialized characteristics of different races. Her words also demonstrate that enslaved persons were stratified by race, rather than other identifying features. By using ethnographic terms, she

⁹⁴ Strozzi, *Letters*, 197.

⁹⁵ "qualche tartera di nazione, che sono per durare fatica vantaggiate e rustiche. Le rósse, cioè quelle di Rossia, sono più gentili di compressione e più belle; ma, a mio parere, sarebbero meglio tartere. Le circasse, è forte sangue; benché tutte l'abbino questo" Alessandra Strozzi, *Lettere Di Una Gentildonna Fiorentina Del Secolo XV Ai Figliuoli Esuli*, ed. Cesare Guastini (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1877), 475; Strozzi, *Letters*, 183.

⁹⁶ Strozze, *Letters*, 183.

⁹⁷ Bryce, "Introduction" in Strozzi, *Letters*, 6-16.

⁹⁸ Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 13.

demonstrates the stratification of the slave market and the division of enslaved persons according to geographic and religious origin, giving clue to the reason that the *registro delle schiave* was so keen on reporting the origin of the enslaved persons.

In the previously mentioned letter written by Sacchetti on the runaway slave, he suggests, as an afterthought, that they look for Margarita in a brothel, as he mentions that escaped women often ended up there.⁹⁹ While there is no evidence thus far that enslaved persons were used in prostitution, Sacchetti's advice indicates at least that those who escaped slavery may find a living as a prostitute, especially if they did not have a particularly Tatar (or ugly) face.¹⁰⁰ Sacchetti is linking the enslaved woman to a lack of morality and looseness that others associate with these foreign women. The conflation with untrustworthiness with the sexual labour of the enslaved persons is part of the general obsession with feminine purity but its conflation with bad blood and innate uncontrollable qualities is one that comes out of the Florentine's experiences of these foreign, forcibly imported women.¹⁰¹

The gendered language of female enslaved persons was thus one that differed from that of Florentine Catholic women. It was their character, not their honour and family, that was besmirched. They did not have honour in the same way that even an impoverished Florentine girl did as they did not have the kinship networks necessary to establish themselves.¹⁰² For example,

⁹⁹ Franco Sacchetti, *Lettere*, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Mazzi, *Prostitutes and Leoni*, 294. See also John K. Brackett, "The Florentine Onesta and the Control of Prostitution, 1403-1680," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24:2 (1993): 273-300. And Richard Trexler, *The Women of Renaissance Florence: Power and Dependence in Renaissance Florence*. Medieval Institute Publications, 1993.

¹⁰¹ See Alessandra Strozzi and Lucrezia Tornabuoni's letters on choosing a daughter in law Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, *Lettere Di Una Gentildonna Fiorentina Del Secolo XV Ai Figliuoli Esuli*, ed. Cesare Guastini (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1877), 464 and Lucrezia Tornabuoni, *Tre Lettere Di Lucrezia Tornabuoni a Piero De' Medici Ed Altre Lettere Di Vari Concernenti Al Matrimonio Di Lorenzo Il Magnifico Con Clarice Orsini: (per Nozze Gherardi - Baldelli)*, ed. Cesare Guasti (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1859), 9.

¹⁰² Similarly, in Genoese law, the testimony of a slave is not enough to prove to the court who impregnated her. The court also needed the testimony of the master or mistress, should they be of good repute. The slave's reputation is not spoken of, indicating that she cannot be reputable or acquire honour as a slave. See "Punishments for

in the case of Bernardo Machiavelli's servant girl's seduction, he was able to send her home to her parents and regain her honour somewhat by arranging for the seducer to pay them off.¹⁰³ In the slave's case, it was up to their Florentine owners to give them the protection of belonging to their owner's household. The owner is protecting his property – the body of the slave – not the slave herself. The fact that enslaved persons had no protection against rape made them easy targets. Their chastity remained a question of personal morality, not familial. Here we begin to see their characters and actions being linked to “otherness” and ethnicity. The sexualization of enslaved persons stems from the already perceived foreignness and the assumption of their barbaric nature, made more prevalent by their domestic labour and availability to men, which is a conflation and important intersection between their gender and their foreignness.

Belonging

Any engagement with the creation of the “other” must also have its opposite or the “familiar”. Interaction with otherness is often the impetus behind the codification and the coalescence of the familiar into writing. For example, in Lynn Ramey's monograph, she points out that it was after the John of Pleno Carpini's travel writings on the Mongol *orda* that the monogamous marriage laws were codified in European canon law.¹⁰⁴ Travel accounts give an description of the other, but the language used in these travel logs reveals the norm in the

Impregnating a Female Slave in Genoa” in *The Intolerant Middle Ages: a reader*, trans. Eugene Smelyansky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 162-63.

¹⁰³ See Catherine Atkinson, *Debts, Dowries, Donkeys: the Diary of Niccolò Machiavelli's Father, Messer Bernardo, in Quattrocento Florence* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2002). Also see Elizabeth Cohen, “No Longer Virgins: Self-Presentation by Young Women of Late Renaissance Rome,” in *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 169-91.

¹⁰⁴ Ramey, *Black Legacies*, 33.

writer's society much more than the realities of their travel experiences.¹⁰⁵ In the same way, how Florentines described their enslaved persons indicate the norm in Florentine society as opposed to the other, and reinforced the cultural processes of native Florentines by observing difference. The importation and proliferation of foreign women as enslaved persons in domestic households reinforced ideas of Florentine-ness and by extension, ideas of belonging. Florentines did not need to travel to access the foreign and the unfamiliar. The home became the centre of concepts of belonging by creating the conditions for foreignness. Florentines created a "contact zone" within their home that turned a domestic space into a place of constant transnational contact where perceptions of otherness became canonized as produced knowledge.

The development of Florentine histories and chronicles that celebrate the rise of Florence as an important Tuscan state coincides with the regulation and importation of slavery into Florence. At the same time as the infusion of enslaved persons, Florence was expanding its holdings across Tuscany. Between 1350 to 1411, Florence had conquered Prato, Pistoia, San Gimignano, Volterra, Arezzo, Montepulciano, Pisa, Sarzana, Cortana and Livorno.¹⁰⁶ The contention with otherness thus intersects slavery and Florence's increasing idea of a republican empire, drawing parallels with Rome.¹⁰⁷ This outward expansion – both in the importation of foreigners from beyond Europe and the conquest of neighbouring city-states – created the need for Florence to reinforce its cultural identity. The area around Tuscany was marginally unfamiliar, possessing a similar culture and the same religion as Florentines. Yet, Florence's

¹⁰⁵ The idea that travel narratives are not descriptors of the others but rather produces the "others" they are trying to describe comes from Linda Lomperis, "Medieval Travel Writing and the Question of Race." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 147-64.

¹⁰⁶ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion in Early Renaissance Florence* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 201. For more on Florence as a centre of imperialistic power see Goro Dati, "The Feast Day of St. John the Baptist in Florence", in *Medieval Towns: A Reader* ed. Maryanne Kowaleski (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2006), 306-309.

¹⁰⁷ See Bruni's "Panegyric" and Leonardo Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, trans. James Hankins (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

larger territory in Tuscany formed the basis of the hierarchy of city-states and citizenship with Florence at the centre. With the conquest of Pisa, Florence experimented with maritime trade.¹⁰⁸ The establishment of the Florentine galleys through the port of the conquered Pisa had shipping manifests including, among other goods, eastern enslaved persons.¹⁰⁹ In this way, Florentine empire cannot be divorced from the slave trade and Florentine interactions with Eastern peoples. The importation of enslaved persons and the requirement that they be born on non-Latin Christian lands created a ready supply of foreign entities within Florentine households.

The difference between citizens, conquered polities and enslaved persons is found in the language of the civil state. The use of Aristotle's view on citizens of virtue as those who are "able to rule and be ruled well"¹¹⁰ adds a political aspect behind the descriptions of enslaved persons by even those who were disenfranchised. Alessandra Strozzi's condemnation of not only her enslaved servants but the enslaved servants of those in her social network as unruly, prone to drink, promiscuous, and uncontrollable are exclusionary terms that make enslaved persons unable to be ruled well.¹¹¹ Similarly, the equation of enslaved persons to animals in the case of baptism also creates the exclusionary idea that enslaved persons cannot attain reason. The lack of ability to accept Latin Christianity and the ungovernable are conflated here as justification for the enforcement of hierarchy.

In Florence, the citizenship of every person was overseen by baptism at the city's only baptistery, *San Giovanni*, located at the heart of religious affairs in front of the cathedral. The records of this baptistry start in the year 1450, coinciding with the opening of the *Innocenti*. The need to baptize enslaved persons and the children of enslaved persons at the same baptistery

¹⁰⁸ See Michael Edward Mallet, *The Florentine Galleys in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

¹⁰⁹ ASF Consoli de Mare 7, fol. 68r-72v.

¹¹⁰ Aristotle, 178-79, (*Politics* 3.4 1276.16-1277.32).

¹¹¹ Strozzi, *Letters*, 198.

caused a problem for Florentines who wanted to distinguish themselves from their unfree labourers. Enslaved persons and the children of enslaved persons were identified in the baptismal records as such, indicating even from birth that they belonged into a separate category than the Florentines born of Florentine fathers, regardless of the legitimacy of that birth or the social standing of the mother.¹¹² There is clear separation between Florentines – even illegitimate ones – and those whose bloodline was associated with non-Latin enslaved persons, where instead of a notice of paternity, these enslaved persons and their children were attached to the names of their owners. The only exception to this were the children who were given to foundling hospitals and baptized as a member of the hospital. They were similarly without family or relation, although the foundling hospital generally became their relation.¹¹³ Without paternity, these children of enslaved persons and enslaved persons themselves are associated with ownership, placing them as a subject from birth - or re-birth as the case with slave baptism – where their position in society is entrenched through the institution of slavery by the mastery of a Florentine over them, rather than the familial relation of paternity that was afforded Florentines.

While it seems obvious that there must have been linguistic struggles between Florentines and their foreign enslaved persons, it is not mentioned in any of the private letters regarding relationships with their enslaved persons. Sacchetti's writing is also the first time there is any mention of linguistic difficulties between the slave and Florentines that has any connection to the vernacular.¹¹⁴ Steven Epstein points out that there were many fifteenth-century rhymes making

¹¹² ASFB, Registri Bat. 1.

¹¹³ See Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale Degli Innocenti, 1410-1536*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990) and Richard Trexler, *Power and Dependence in Renaissance Florence*. Vol 1: Children. (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993).

¹¹⁴ Sacchetti, "Lettere", 89.

fun of enslaved persons for their inability to pronounce the Tuscan dialect.¹¹⁵ Emphasis on the localized Tuscan dialect and signaling the inability to imitate it presents a stark image of an outsider, whose difference is signified not only visually but auditorily. While the lack of the Tuscan dialect is not by itself a symptom of race-making, lack of linguistic knowledge and the inability to communicate puts emphasis on knowledge of Italian or the vernacular.¹¹⁶ Sacchetti himself, born in Ragusa from a Florentine father and an enslaved mother¹¹⁷, emphasizes “our” language to frame himself as an Italian. He placed emphasis on the vernacular as a form of belonging – transcending the class-based and religion-based Latin in favour of the geographical and ethnographical Italian language.

There was a penalty in difference in a republic where its citizens were expected to perform citizenship through public ceremony and the citizen’s access to the city was democratized (albeit to a small urban elite). An exploration of epidermal awareness allows a simplistic way to understand the monetary value associated with difference.¹¹⁸ The paleness of her daughter-in-law is commented on in the letters of Lucrezia Tornabuoni in the selection of a spouse for her son.¹¹⁹ Alessandra Strozzi also uses the same language as the *registro* to describe

¹¹⁵ Steven Epstein, “Enslaved persons in Italy, 1350-1550” in *At the Margins: Minority Groups in Premodern Italy*, ed. Stephen J. Milner (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 222.

¹¹⁶ For literacy in Florence see Robert Black, “Literacy in Florence, 1427,” in *Florence and beyond: Culture, Society and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John M. Najemy*, ed. Daniel Ethan Bornstein and David S. Peterson (Toronto, ON: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008), pp. 195-212 and Judith Bryce, “Les Livres Des Florentines: Reconsidering Women’s Literacy in Quattrocento Florence,” in *At the Margins: Minority Groups in Premodern Italy*, ed. Stephen J. Milner (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), pp. 133-161, for more on the linguistic developments associated with slavery see Steven Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery*.

¹¹⁷ Susan Mosher Stuard, “Ancillary Evidence for The Decline of Medieval Slavery,” *Past and Present* 149, no. 1 (1995), 21.

¹¹⁸ This is different in principalities such as the one of Isabella d’Este where blackness was seen as an exotic personal status and Isabella paid sumptuously for the darkest enslaved persons she could find. See Paul H.D. Kaplan “Isabella d’Este and Black African Women”. *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*. Ed. Kate Lowe and T. P Earle. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 125-154.

¹¹⁹ “a detta fanciulla... e bianca, et a’ si dolce maniera” Tornabuoni, 9.

a potential wife to her son Filippo Strozzi,¹²⁰ Her use of colour differences and her judgement of the girl as olive, which is better than brown but less preferable than white, indicates already that there was epidermal awareness of skin colour. These colours don't necessarily preclude Florentine girls. In the same way as the enslaved persons, Florentine girls could be described as olive, brown or white. However, blackness as a category of skin was too far from the norm for a Florentine girl. Deviance from paleness, as seen in the importation of African enslaved persons in the 1470s, after the supply in the East closed down due to the Ottoman conquest of the Genoese colony of Tana,¹²¹ lowered the status and the cost of the enslaved persons.¹²² According to a study on the Cambini records by Sergio Tognetti, darker enslaved persons fetched a lower price than those described with fairer skin, a clear indication of the association of whiteness with value.¹²³ Even before this slave trade, the conflation of whiteness with the good and blackness with the bad has already been discussed by those engaged in Medieval colourism.¹²⁴ By looking at what Florentines termed as normal skin, the abnormal could be located in the darkness of these African enslaved persons.

The simplification of epidermal descriptors into “black” and “white” with these enslaved persons coming in from Lisbon is telling of the perceived strangeness of these enslaved persons. When visible difference is marked so starkly, there is no reason to distinguish between the colours of brown, olive and white as Alessandra Strozzi and the *registro* do with girls – both

¹²⁰ “Elle non e' di pello molto bianco, ma non e' bruno, e' ulivigna” in Strozzi, *Lettere Di Una Gentildonna Fiorentina*, 464.

¹²¹ Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise*, 149.

¹²² See Sergio Tognetti, *Il Banco Cambini: Affari e Mercati Di Una Compagnia Mercantile-Bancaria Nella Firenze Del 15. Secolo* (Firenze: Olschki, 1999).

¹²³ Tognetti, “Trade in Black African Enslaved persons”, 220.

¹²⁴ See Heng, *The Invention of Race*, and Ramey, *Black Legacies*, see also Cord J. Whitaker, *Black Metaphors. How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019) and Kimberly Poitevin, “Inventing Whiteness: Cosmetics, Race, and Women in Early Modern England,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2011): 59-89.

enslaved and free – within closer skin tones. In the other cases as well, different descriptors are given that do not only have to do with skin colour. Alessandra Strozzi goes on to describe the height and face of the girl that might become her daughter-in-law. The *registro* too speaks of race first, along with other descriptors such as height, facial features, eye colours and identifying marks. When Sub-Saharan black enslaved persons became imported on a larger scale and directly from the ports of Lisbon, these descriptors are waived in favour of a simple black and white divide. A shipping charter of two ships arriving in Florence in 1473 lists 34 enslaved people from Lisbon, out of which 33 out of 34 were female.¹²⁵ Enslaved persons from Lisbon were termed a mixture of white and black¹²⁶ and they were sold into households as typical merchandise in the same way as people imported from the east. The simplification of black and white, without ethnographic origins, demonstrates the importance of blackness as a sign of difference and its purchase as an overarching category that can turn olive, brown and white into a singular whiteness.

Conclusion: (Trans)formations of Slavery

Sustained by the domestic interactions with the other, the Florentine slave trade and its aftermath created the processes by which it was possible for the languages of hierarchy to become entrenched socially and culturally through perceptions of difference. This process manifests itself in the mutability of racial categories, gender and sexual labour and the creation of the language of belonging. Again, Florentines, such as the Cambini and Bartolomeo Marchionni were pervasive in the ports of Lisbon and the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century, engaged with the slave trade not only as a foreign enterprise but as one that was a natural extension of their domestic life in Florence.

¹²⁵ AOIF 12698, fol. 31v-2r.

¹²⁶ AOIF 12685, fol. 14r, 105r; 12698, fol. 99r-v, 218r. See Tognetti, *Il Banco Cambini*.

The language in the fourteenth and fifteenth century that conflated difference with religious and geographic identities had a hand in the allocation of labour into the hands of those that were seen as fitter for such labour. This is not to say that class divides become meaningless in this context, but rather they were exacerbated by the qualifications of ethnography and gender within the labouring classes. A study of the Florentine slave trade provides the connecting point between medieval ideas on the black/white divide, the exacerbation of religious warfare and widespread institutionalisation of epidermal slavery in the Atlantic world.

It must be pointed out that the slave trade witnessed a dual transition after the fifteenth century in conjunction with the socio-political transformations of European interactions with the world. Slavery continued in the Mediterranean in a changed state at the same time as it started in the Atlantic. The first transformation was the establishment of epidermal slavery that occurred synchronically with the establishment of colonized plantations in the Americas.

The major changes witnessed in this establishment are the inheritability of slave status and the singling out of one epidermal type for enslavement, creating a system of hierarchy that permeated government and social institutions. This transformation is the one that this chapter alludes to through the establishment of the racial ideology that became the basis for the justification of enslavement in the Atlantic world.

The second transformation of slavery occurred closer to home with the intensification of the religious conflict and its conflation with state power in the Mediterranean in the sixteenth century, after the establishment of the Duchy of Tuscany. The ducal establishment of the port at Livorno and its subsequent founding of the Knights of St. Stephen as a force for enslaving Mediterranean Muslims and Jews were part of the new version of a state-sanctioned and operated

version of slavery based on the concepts of Holy War.¹²⁷ On the other side, Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis became established slave ports where abducted Christian enslaved persons were brought in to trade.¹²⁸ Both the Muslim and Christian powers, with their centralizing governments, regarded slavery as a crucial part of the war against an enemy religion. Unlike the case of medieval slavery, those who converted to Islam in Algiers as renegades could obtain high positions after their manumission.¹²⁹ Religion became more of a major motivator of Mediterranean slavery in the early modern period than it was in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Mediterranean slavery also functioned differently with the establishment of corsair cities and centralized Mediterranean empires of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. This was the golden age of the barbary pirates so popular in early modern literature. In this context, slavery was more of an economic investment rather than a ready supply of labour. While Atlantic slavery was no doubt an economic investment, its main purpose¹²⁷ was to fulfill roles and functions that their owners could not or would not find paid labour to fulfill. Sixteenth to eighteenth century Mediterranean slavery, in the case of private owners, allowed enslaved persons large freedoms such as opening their own shops or trading their knowledge. Enslaved persons had to pay their owners a fee for their enslavement but otherwise were left free to come up with how they would earn the money.¹³⁰ In the case of private ownership, the enslavement of captured villages and ships was also an extralegal affair, much of it done by pirating, only marginally encouraged by the state in the interest of holy and political war in the Mediterranean. The higher status the

¹²⁷ See Robert C. Davis *Holy War and Human Bondage: Tales of Christian-Muslim slavery in the early-modern Mediterranean* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), 83, 112-13, 176-80.

¹²⁸ Robert C. Davis *Christian Enslaved persons, Muslim Masters: white slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xxviii.

¹²⁹ Davis, *Holy War*, 49.

¹³⁰ Davis, *Holy War*, 161.

captive the more desirable they were as enslaved persons for the ransom they would fetch.¹³¹

This later development was a result of the centralization and bureaucratization of the polities of the Mediterranean, becoming a state-sanctioned variety that, although developed from the medieval economic model, was deeply entrenched in the political struggles of the Mediterranean.

In arguing for the construction of race, there is a strong connection between the ideas established by Florentine cultural influences and the Iberian trade that later became a trans-Atlantic phenomenon. Transitions to African slavery were geographic, where institutions of slavery were already set up in Florence from the Eastern Mediterranean trade. While there were “ghezzo” enslaved persons in Florence by 1453, it is unclear how they got to Florence. The trade of enslaved persons from North Africa sometimes included Sub-Saharan enslaved persons that could have been picked up by Venetian or Genoese merchants.¹³² It is only with the Cambini family ships coming in from Lisbon that there is a clearer indication of enslaved persons being sourced from West Africa – the future locus of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.¹³³ As mentioned before, a Florentine merchant was granted the first royal charter from Portugal to import West African people as enslaved persons for profit. Markets were mostly located in the Iberian Peninsula as well as the various Mediterranean islands that were colonized by larger powers.

When the first slave ships sailed to the Caribbean with a cargo full of enslaved persons intended for plantation and mining work, they were only shifting geographically the structures of slavery already in place in European cities. These enslaved persons also carried the cultural baggage and social hierarchies already established by the existence of a slave population in

¹³¹ Davis, *Christian enslaved persons*, 146-147.

¹³² Benjamin Arbel, “Slave Trade and Slave Labor in Frankish Cyprus,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 14 (1993): 154 and Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage Dans L'Europe Médiévale: Italie - Colonies Italiennes Du Levant - Levant Latin - Empire Byzantin*, vol. II (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit, 1977), 208-220.

¹³³ See Tognetti, *Il Banco Cambini*.

Iberia and Italy. A small number of sub-Saharan enslaved persons trickled into Florence. The injection of enslaved persons from the coast of Africa rather than from the Eastern Mediterranean did not change the structures of slavery, only the source and the origin. Systems of ethnic slavery had already been in place by this time, and it only added an epidermal context rather than a broader physiological one. Still, epidermal slavery only added a layer to the physiognomic and sociological hierarchies entrenched in the ongoing practise of slavery. One does not wake up and assign dark skin and large noses to servitude overnight. Small minute interactions over long periods of time sustained by hierarchy – religious, social, and cultural – combined to create the structures that embedded certain human characteristics as fundamental and inferior. These ideas permeated and developed through the medieval and the early modern into the Atlantic slave trade and its legacy still holds power over society. It is only by an acknowledging the build up of these hierarchical essentialisms that it is possible to dismantle it.

Chapter 4: Law, Crime, and Punishment

Introduction

Criminal activity and its prosecution through the court systems are part of state development, but criminal courts are also one of the places where the gaps in state jurisdiction are especially prominent. The operation of the court and its pursuit of justice was a negotiation between its officials, the witnesses, and the injured parties. In cases where the law failed to address the realities of societal functions, the court becomes the ultimate arbitrator of their interpretations and a reflection of social mores. In terms of slavery, the treatment of people as property under the law cannot fully encompass or address the actions of the enslaved population since people are not objects to be acted upon, but rather independent actors on their own. An in-depth analysis of the lines between property and personhood as it functioned in the records can shed light into how these lines were drawn and erased. This final chapter discusses further how prescriptions and proscriptions of enslavement had no official formula and argues that slavery was a fluid status that Florentines were required to negotiate in the absence of provisions for its existence. This chapter also considers the humanity attributed to the enslaved and the attempt by Florentines to negate this humanity through Florentine interactions with the law, while negotiating its boundaries for their own advantages.

Criminality in Florence was both an extension of state power through institutional responses and a reflection of social mores through individual action. The legal and institutional inclusion of enslaved peoples in crimes against other Florentines places them at odds with their legal definition as property. This chapter will discuss the crimes, disputes, and legal categories of enslaved peoples in Florence in three parts: legislation, criminal courts, and legal life. First, I will look at how legislation on slavery contributed to the dehumanization of enslaved peoples in

Florence through their legal systems. Then, I will take the cases of enslaved peoples charged with violent crimes and their experiences of the Florentine legal system and court systems. The last section will move away from crime but still deal with the social mores of the legal system through systems of inheritance, manumission, and official inventories, which were in the hands of some government agencies but documented through Florence's notaries who were needed to finalize and officiate over binding legal agreements. I argue that the treatment of enslaved people in the criminal justice system as people and as property reveals the liminal nature of their legal status in Florence. It also demonstrates the tensions between legislation and the execution of the law when the ideology of property did not fit the realities of enslaved experiences.

This chapter was inspired in part as a response to the seminal article on Tuscan slavery written by Iris Origo in 1955 by contesting and expanding on her section on criminality. Origo's paper "The Domestic Enemy" highlights the dangers that enslaved women in the households of premodern Florence posed to Florentines.¹ In her article, she highlights several cases of the violent and property crimes that the enslaved population of Tuscany were prosecuted for. In one of the sections, she devotes a long explanation on the enslaved Maria, who was persuaded to steal from her mistress by her lover, only to be abandoned by him.² Origo takes the deposition at its word – coming from the words of another Maria, a free Florentine and "procuress" for the enslaved Maria. Especially due to the domestic nature of slave labour, including that those enslaved were there to raise children or perform household tasks around the women of wealthy house, Origo argued that fear of the foreign women that Florentines enslaved was a major part of

¹ Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Speculum* 30, no. 3 (1955), 343.

² Origo, "Domestic Enemy", 342.

the ownership of enslaved peoples.³ These fears were highlighted in the letters that Florentines wrote about their enslaved peoples to each other.

Origo's assessment predates the study of the complex social interactions of criminality that scholars have now posited for the early modern period.⁴ In consideration of how court systems were (and are) systems of power operated to enforce established social mores, the assertion of the dangers of enslaved women through their criminal behaviour requires a more balanced view. The simplification of enslaved women as dangerous outsiders served to dehumanize them as the foreign "other". Fear of foreign enslaved women were reproduced in letters, records of criminal courts, and institutional documents, serving the agenda that Florentines created through the Latin Christian rhetoric of Eastern "infidels". Such a simplified understanding of the dangers of slavery downplays the struggles that enslaved women faced in Florence – a foreign land where they had no relations – and perpetuates the rhetoric of otherness that Florentines applied to these women. Origo's article also did not consider the medium of the court record as a source of information – something explored by microhistories since Carlo Ginzburg.⁵ While Origo sympathizes with the plight of enslaved women who were forcibly brought into Florence, any new treatment of criminal behaviour requires a more thorough understanding of how enslaved people figured in the legal systems of Florence.

³ Origo "Domestic Enemy", 340-344.

⁴ For more on the complexities of crime, see Thomas V. Cohen, *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), Thomas V. Cohen and Elizabeth Storr Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome: Trials before the Papal Magistrates* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), Trevor Dean and K.J.P. Lowe, *Crime, Society and the Law in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Trevor Dean and Lowe K J P., *Murder in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁵ For microhistories see, Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992), Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta & Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), and Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) among others.

In studies of women and crime, much of the scholarship relies on crimes that are deemed to be feminine, and overly represented by women in criminal prosecution, such as infanticide, abortion, or violations of sumptuary laws.⁶ Details of accusations highlighted gendered notions of the enslaved women, seen in the focus on their sexual liaisons in the commentary of the crimes and the use of poison.⁷ In cases regarding sumptuary legislation, enslaved women were represented in the records alongside wives, widows, and daughters. Meanwhile, studies of how the enslaved populations interacted with the criminal justice system pay more attention to violent crimes such as homicide and assault.⁸ Violent crime, as a large infringement against the social norms of Florentines, and especially committed by people that were of lower social or legal status, created the most shocks to Florentine sensibility and social order. An analysis of women's roles in court records of violent and deadly criminality sheds light on how the enslaved "domestic enemies" of Florence were perceived and treated as both women and foreigners.

As scholars of criminality and violence have pointed out, judicial records often omit much of the context of these acts of criminality. The modern belief that there was an endemically violent premodern period reflects in part the idea of the civilizing process through state structures. The argument around the civilizing process is based on the increasing preponderance of the state to take over criminal processes rather than for justice by private processes and the

⁶ See Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), especially "Blood Parents and Milk Parents: Wet Nursing in Florence, 1300-1530" 132-164, "Female Celibacy and Service in Florence in the Fifteenth Century", 165-177, Richard Trexler, "Infanticide in Florence", *History of Childhood Quarterly*, I (1974), 98-116, and Maria Serena Mazzi "Il mondo della prostituzione nella Firenze taro medievale," *Ricerche storiche*, 14 (1984).

⁷ Henri Bresc, "Knives and Poisons: Stereotypes of Male Vendetta and Female Perfidy in Late Medieval Sicily, 1293-1460." In *Murder in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 41.

⁸ See Origo "Domestic Enemy", 242-243.

focus on the individual to bear the brunt of their criminal activities rather than a group.⁹ Such a view based on criminal records ignores the relationships and the histories of the people involved in the criminal justice system and assumes that the courts dispensed justice and were antithetical to violence. To mitigate systemic issues in the study of criminality, letters and criminal records cannot be taken at face value. Legal documents tell historian about the social world they were situated in not through their judgements, but through their representations of criminality. From these legal records, it is possible to construct a sense of the social and political ideas of justice, criminality, and social norms at the intersections of gender, class, legal status, and race.

Background

This chapter will use criminal and legal records as a source to consider the nebulous state of enslaved status in Florence. To do this, crime needs to be understood within its social context. Legislations against criminal activity can be found in the statutes of Florence and were instituted by the *Signoria*. The court acted in criminal cases through four different methods: private accusation, initiation by judge or rector, public fame, and denunciation by a public official.¹⁰ In the first case, private accusers had to pay for the cost of the court and gather their own evidence. In all other cases, the judge and the court gathered evidence, and tried to resolve all cases within 25 days. A fine was the most common punishment, or else in Florence, uniquely, people could be sentenced to time in the *Stinche*.¹¹ Most of the people kept there were debtors who could not pay

⁹ Kate Low and Trevor Dean, "Writing the History of Crime" in *Crime, Society and the Law in Renaissance Italy*, 4-8.

¹⁰ Laura Ikins Stern, *The criminal law system of medieval and Renaissance Florence*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 22.

¹¹ Wolfgang Marvin, "Crime and Punishment in Renaissance Florence," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 81, no. 3 (Fall 1990), 577.

back their debts and their stay was financed by their creditors.¹² Witnesses could also be jailed if they were deemed in danger of not showing up to court. The inquisitorial system of criminal courts adopted by states from their ecclesiastical counterparts meant that the onus was on the court to prove the crime, rather than the injured parties. Such a system relies heavily on the accuser, the court's willingness to pursue crime, and the witnesses' forthcomingness with the truth.

The variability of the criminal justice system meant that criminal activity was persecuted unevenly, and that the records reveal more about what Florentines deemed criminal activity than what the word of the law laid out. Three main reasons exist for the lack of consistency in premodern criminal justice. First, criminal records only exist for those crimes that Florentines deemed outside of the public morals of the society. This means that the violent crimes of Florentines against enslaved people were not commonly recorded, especially if they were not deemed criminal offenses. Second, legal systems and criminality were negotiations where interpretations of the law were inconsistent. Understanding how crime was treated requires an understanding of how criminal court systems operated and their goals both within the courts and out of the courts. The inquisitorial system of denunciation depended on people, both public and private, to choose to take their cases to the courts, a process which historians have pointed out makes them consumers of the court system, rather than the courts and the criminal system becoming a pervasive presence in premodern moral life.¹³ Third, the characters of the *podestà*, the *Capitano del Popolo*, and the various officials within the city's executive body were

¹² G. Geltner, "Medieval Prisons: Between Myth and Reality, Hell and Purgatory. *History Compass*, 4 no. 2 (2006): 263; H. Manikowska, "The Florentine Communal Prison –Le Stinche– in the Fourteenth Century," *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 71 (1995), 141.

¹³ See Daniel Lord Smail, *The Consumption of Justice: Emotions, Publicity, and Legal Culture in Marseille, 1264-1423* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

instrumental in the decisions made in the court systems. Despite Florence's legal system opting to persecute more without a private denunciation in the fifteenth century, the lack of a widespread surveillance system meant that Florentines often made the decision whether to take their grievances to the official courts. The use of *consilia* and private intermediaries to mediate disputes was also a way to avoid the criminal system and brokerages of peace through *consilia* between Florentines of either gender allowed people to mitigate the court system well into the fifteenth century.¹⁴

The problem with trying to treat enslaved people as property comes from the fact that people are agents who act and communicate within a society – forming complex relationships with their contemporaries. In Florence, domestic slavery – as opposed to chattel slavery – brought the agency of enslaved peoples into the foreground. They served as servants, but were positioned as property, the inconsistent treatment of slaves by the law reveals its failure to fit and proscribe the real experiences of slaves, brought to the forefront with a thorough investigation of the positions of slaves within legal and institutional systems. The recognized agency of enslaved people was useful to criminal courts but confounded the lines between property and personhood, including the various ideas around free will and the soul. In legal and criminal documents, these confusions turn into problems and inconsistencies of interpretation and execution of the law.

Legislation

One of the key parts of the legislations around enslavement and the status of slaves comes out of creating a legal world in which enslavement operated on every level. The earlier chapter on the political and intellectual development of Florence and the slave trade already

¹⁴ See Katherine J Janson, "'Pro bono pacis': Crime, Conflict, and Dispute Resolution. The Evidence of Notarial Peace Contracts in Late Medieval Florence" *Speculum*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (April 2013), 427-456 and Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

touched on the languages around regulation but this chapter will focus more on what the social and legal ramifications of enslavement legislation reveal about Florentine law. In particular, I will examine the differences that occurred through each redaction of the law in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries on slave legislation. Looking through this legislation will reveal the tensions between property and personhood as well as between the legislative body and the executive in interpreting the boundaries between the written law and its application in society.

There are multiple iterations of legislation on the legality of enslavement and on the crimes associated with enslaved persons. The first of these was written with the regulation of slavery in 1364 and recorded in the *Registro degli Schiavi*.¹⁵ Included in that legislation was the requirement to pay one lira for the importation of all enslaved persons into Florence and register them in the same book. The second is the redaction of 1415 where the statutes of Florence were revised and published as a whole book. This is the last full redaction of the Florentine statutes before the Medici duchy. The entire redaction was transcribed and published in the eighteenth century in Freiberg.¹⁶ The third legislative document comes from the statutes of Florence recorded in 1449 and 1452 which restate many of the previous laws regulating the function of slaves.¹⁷ The timing of the third document coincides with the operations of the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, the Florentine foundling hospital, an institution that had influence in the legal systems of Florence and attempted to influence legislation around slavery. This section will expand on these three documents through an in-depth study to the assumptions behind these legislative moves, to demonstrate the changes of the legislation to include slaves as part of the legal fabric

¹⁵ Archivio di Stato di Firenze (henceforth ASF), Capitoli Appendice 26.

¹⁶ *Statuti populi e communis Florentiae publica auctoritate collecta castigata et praeposita anno salutis MCCCCXV* (Freiburg: Michaellem Kluch, 1778-83).

¹⁷ ASF Statuti di Commune 29 fol. 119v-120v, 153r-154v, 388r-389v.

of Florence, and to highlight the continuities that were restated with each subsequent reformulation of law.

Initial Regulation

The initial legislation that legalized slavery in 1364 included a new set of criminal activities that could result in fines or imprisonment for those who violated the norms of private property already established in Florence.¹⁸ However, it also needed to take account for the fact that this new interaction with private property was regarding people, whose interactions and positions could not be defined by statute alone. The attempt at referring to slaves in passive terms can be found in the language of the legislation and demonstrates the consideration of slaves as objects to be acted upon, rather than subjects with agency. Such an attempt meant that key legislations and considerations involving the regulation of the movement of people were not included. For example, in the cases of enslaved peoples who abscond from Florence, the legislation only covers those Florentines who aided or abetted the enslaved in their escape. There was no recourse to punish the enslaved themselves through public or universal methods, but rather was a private affair between the enslaved and their enslaver. It was assumed that the enslaved would not be able to escape without the help of free Florentines. Since the enslaved were property, the onus for knowing the whereabouts of enslaved persons were on their owners. Thus, it was also the responsibility of the owners to register and pay the tax for the enslaved peoples they brought into Florence, in order that commune officials could catalogue them and aid in their recapture. If the enslaved were like chattel animals – with the comparison Franco Sachetti made about baptizing slaves – then they could not be charged with willfully running away. For Florentines to legislate against an absconding slave, they had to have personhood in

¹⁸ ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 1r-4r or see Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 142-146.

the eyes of the law and that personhood, in Florence, related to the family or the relationship of property ownership to which Christian Florentines were entitled.

Another section of the law refers to the impregnation of the slaves and in this case, the language switches to the feminine use of the Latin term *serva*; “Ac etiam si quis servam alterius carnaliter cognoverit ita quod gravida ex eo efficiatur, teneatur ...serve suis sumptibus et expensis facere partum competenter quemadmodum etiam in famula consuetum est”¹⁹. The legislation exposes the inherently gendered nature of the slave trade and its consequences, with the potential to disrupt the familial structures of Florentine society. The articulation of this problem was written directly after the prohibition on helping absconded slaves, indicating that it was the second most relevant consideration when it came to legislating on slave ownership in Florence. Thus the preservation of property and family were the two most important parts of allowing slavery in the mind of the Twelve Good Men who debated the law.²⁰ Again, the language did not refer to the enslaved women as having any part in their impregnation but rather deals with pregnancy as an inconvenient consequence.²¹ It was acknowledged that the condition of the enslaved woman would deteriorate after pregnancy, or birth, and thus this deterioration

¹⁹ “And if anyone knows another one’s servant carnally and pregnancy is caused by him, bears properly the cost and expense of the [female] servant until birth as if she were his own.” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 2v or Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 144.

²⁰ “Antelati domini Priores et Vexillifer, habita super infrascriptis omnibus et singulis invicem et una cum officio 12 Bonorum virorum Comunis Florentie deliberatione solempni, et demum inter ipsos omnes in sufficienti numero congregatis in palatio populi florentini, premissis et facto diligenti et solempni scrupulino et obtento partito ad fabas nigras et albas secundam formam et exigentiam ordinamentorum dicti Comunis, eorum propriemoto, pro utilitate Comunis eiusdem et omni iure et modo quibus melius potuerunt, providerunt ordinaverunt et deliberaverunt, die 8 mensis martii anno Domini miii clxiii” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 1r or Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 142.

²¹ “Ac etiam si quis servam alterius carnaliter cognoverit ita quod gravida ex eo efficiatur, teneatur predictus huiusmodi serve suis sumptibus et expensis facere partum competenter quemadmodum etiam in famula conuetum est. Et quia ex partu deterior fit, domino vel possessoris eius tertiam partem eius quod ante partum valebat restituere teneatur. Et quod fuerit gravida ex aliquo certo homine stetur assertioni dicte serve cum duobus testibus de publica fama, voce et fama probantibus. Et si ex dicta ingravidatione vel partu vel ipsorum occasione moriatur talis serva, dommo eius vel possessori bone fidei veram existimationem restituere teneatur.” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 2r-v or Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 144.

must be paid for to the owner of the pregnant woman in question. Legal responsibility fell on the father while the wronged party was the owner. Thus, if the owner or the owner's family was the person who impregnated the enslaved woman, it would not be within the jurisdiction of the Florentine courts to account for it.

A complex interplay of responsibility, honour, and property were attested in the rape cases of non-enslaved women, whose honour played, at least rhetorically, into the conversation of compensation. These were negotiable amounts and while women were routinely blamed for their own rape, they also had the legal recourse to argue for their virtue.²² For the enslaved woman, the recompense was a third of her original value before birth and only if she did get pregnant, fixing a set price on the worth of her reproductive abilities for her master rather than in the complex negotiations of that rape trials afforded unmarried victims.²³ In a procedure that relied on the social circles of Florence, the father needed to be attested by two honourable witnesses: “stetur assertioni dicte serve cum duobus testibus de publica fama, voce et fama probantibus”²⁴. The vagueness of the language of enslavement – using a mixture of *serva* and *schiaiva*, in the legislation reveals the legal ambiguities of enslavement and free service. When referring to *famula*, the legislation adds *libera* to indicate that they were referring to a free female domestic servant rather than an enslaved one. the legal condition of the offspring of a "free" *famula* was likened to that of the slave's offspring with a Florentine father in that they both had the same status, that is “*ipso facto*” free – without the need for a court to verify the

²² See Elizabeth S. Cohen, “The Trials of Artemisia Gentileschi: A Rape as History,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 1 (2000): 47-75 and Tamar Herzig, “Slavery and Interethnic Sexual Violence,” *The American Historical Review* 127, no. 1 (January 2022), pp. 194-222.

²³ “Et quia ex partu deterior fit, domino vel possessoris eius tertiam partem eius quod ante partum valebat restituere teneatur.” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 2r or Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 144.

²⁴ “The character of the servant needs 2 testimonies of public fame, voice, and esteem” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 2v or Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 144.

child's legal status.²⁵ Such precise language and the comparison with the free "*famula*" indicated that the mind of the legislator made few distinctions between the social status of the free female domestic servant and that of the enslaved.²⁶ The tensions in the role of enslaved women as both women who carried children and as property can be found in the language of the legal system since people had to act upon the body of the enslaved as a person. Their impregnation was a problem for Florentine society but also the legislation coopted the language of the norms of abuse within domestic households established through free female servants.

In addition, the need to include parts of the legislation on pregnancy and offspring reveals the extent to which enslavement was gendered in Florence and the anxieties that gendered and familial realities caused Florentine enslavers. The illegitimate, yet free, children of enslaved peoples and Florentines did not have a place in society. While free servants had familial relationships that could help mitigate the consequences of the loss of honour and the financial burdens of raising a child, the children of enslaved women were part of the household and the expenses of the enslavers.

Ideas on the inheritance of the status of the father was built within the same framework as the inheritance of "infidel" status by the enslaved party. A person was deemed an "infidel" and thus eligible for slavery if they were of the "*genere*" or the *partibus* of "infidels". This was an inherited status and fixed the idea of "infidels" as an inheritable race.²⁷ For example, the language of the regulation of enslavement written in the *Registro degli Schiavi* indicates the

²⁵ "Et si ex patre libero nascatur talis natus liber efficiatur ipso facto, et sit in omnibus et per omnia et quo ad omnes et ac si ex famula libera natus esset." ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 2v or Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 144.

²⁶ ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 2r-v or Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 144.

²⁷ I use race as the translation for *genere* in its closest approximation (see chapter 3 for more information).

confusion about the position of conversion.²⁸ Such racialization also intersected with the patriarchy in that “infidel” inheritance was mitigated by the Catholic Florentine father. While the language of Catholic Christian is stated in unambiguous terms, there was no legal prescription defining the parameters of Christian-ness. In the paragraph about the enslaved being non-Catholic, conversion did not seem to erase the “infidel” heritage or guarantee freedom.²⁹

Franco Sachetti and Archbishop Antoninus both wrote on the validity of converting enslaved peoples for their souls in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, indicating the lack of consensus.³⁰ The confusion goes beyond the religious identity of the enslaved and touches on the legality and the immortal souls of the enslavers. Personhood and baptism were intricately linked. The criminality of enslaving a Christian woman can be seen in the various lawsuits around Italy where Latin-Christian women sued for their freedom by demonstrating their birth and baptism in Latin Christian lands, at the great expense of the enslavers.³¹

1415 Redaction

In 1415, Florence revised and reissued their statutes – the last redaction during the republican period--and added slavery into the existing language of the legal system. The 1415 statutes addressed enslavement, but no longer required the registration of slaves. The *Registro degli Schiavi* itself had already tapered off in its records of enslaved peoples, until finally ending

²⁸ “Ne quis ob hoc quod retineri non possint christiane fidei schiavi et servi eos baptizari cessaret et ad fidem christianam reducere saltim in mortis articulo, quod per eius est, timens forte ne, si schiavus et servus infirmus evaderet christianus effectus retineri non possit aut vendi aut alienari; et presumatur semper ab origine fuisse infidelis si sit de partibus et genere infidelium” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 3r.

²⁹ “Qui non sint catholice fidei Christiane et ipsos in ipsa civitate comitatum et districtum habere et tenere et vendere et donare et euovis titulo alienare et concedere cuilibet volenti... prout in ipsa reformatione continetur, intelligatur de schiavis et servis infidelibus ab origine sue nativitatis, etiamsi tempore quo ad civitatem comitatum vel districtum Florentie ducuntur vel veniunt essent christiane fidei... Presumatur semper ab origine fuisse infidelis si sit de partibus et genere infidelium” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26 fol. 1r-3r, Ridolfo Livi. *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 142-146.

³⁰ Franco Sacchetti, *I Sermoni Evangelici, Le Lettere, Ed Altri Scritti Inediti o Rari* (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1857), 95-96 and Sancti Antonini Archiepiscopi Florentini. *Summa theologica*, ed. Innocenzo Colosio. (Graz: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959) III, 60, De servitute.

³¹ Sally McKee “Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy,” *Slavery & Abolition*, 29, no. 3 (2008), 314.

in 1397. The attempt by Florence at recordkeeping seemed to be abandoned rather than deliberately ended.³² In Book 3, Rubrica 186 of the 1415 redaction, “*De sclavis et servis et eorum materia*”, the regulation of enslavement was restated, with the laws regarding aiding in runaways and stealing enslaved persons also restated. This rubric summarized in clearer words the legislation laid out in 1364. It clarified the language around the initial regulation of enslavement when it stipulated to presume that someone was an “infidel” if they were descended from infidels or of the race (*genere*) of infidels and were to be converted in Florentine territory.³³ Either by their birth or their race, non-Catholics and non-Christians, including Orthodox Christians, could be enslaved. Conversion would not free them, despite legal statutes indicating that it should be done, because they were from the land and the heritage of the non-Catholics.

The 1415 redaction restated the law in 1364 about the child of an enslaved woman and a free Catholic man taking the legal status of the free father. However, in 1364, the statement of this law was in relation to the “*libera famula*”, or free female servant, and her child being born free.³⁴ The connection to the free *famula* was not restated in 1415, placing the emphasis on the inheritance of the father’s legal lineage rather than the slaves. Slaves and servants were less comparable in this case, perhaps because of the entrenchment of slavery in society and the development of a cultural framework of dealing with slaves in Florence. In the legal document, the omission of “*famula*” indicated that at this point, that Florentine paternity trumped “infidel” maternity. Without mentions of maternal status, the law left out the position of the children of

³² The Capitoli Appendice record itself ends abruptly, with folios 50r-60r numbered and watermarked but blank. ASF Capitoli Appendice 26.

³³ “Et predicta intelligatum de sclavis et servis infidelibus ab origine sue nativitatis seu de genere infidelium natis etiam si tempore quo ad dictarum civitatem comitatum et districtum essent christianae fidei.” *Statuti populi e communis Florentiae*, vol. 1. Libri III, Rubrica 186, pp. 385. Also ASF Statuti di Firenze 29 fol. 153r

³⁴ Et si ex patre libero nascatur talis natus liber efficiatur ipso facto, et sit in omnibus et per omnia et quo ad omnes et ac si ex famula libera natus esset.” ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, fol. 2v or Ridolfo Livi, *La Schiavitù Domestica*, 144.

enslaved men. The status of the children of enslaved men still is not clear and has been left to conjecture.³⁵ It is possible to conjecture that despite being born free, the children of slaves were at a disadvantage to the children of free servants.

Encompassing slaves into the legal code demonstrates the pervasiveness of enslavement in Florence and its continuity past the end of the *Registro degli Schiavi*. In the 1427 Catasto, there was an estimated number of around 300 slaves in Florence – not an insignificant number of people.³⁶ One of the places that slaves were added was in the defined household as subject to justified physical violence. For example, term *sclavae* and *sclavos* appears in a list of household members who could be beaten by the father or the mother without legal recourse, next to wives, vassals, children, and servants.³⁷ Such an addition gives reason as to why enslaved peoples were seldom recorded in the court records as victims, but rather appeared as perpetrators of assault.

Slaves were also added to legislation involving serfs, where they were allowed to be taken prisoner or beaten, without the express permission of the priory of Florence, unlike any other Florentines.³⁸ While it is unclear how this law worked in practise, its statement gave the people of Florence their freedom not to be captured without due process and one that ostensibly made the priors accountable for protecting the freedom of Florentines. The exclusion of enslaved people from the language of this law was probably a recognition of the need to capture absconded slaves, but also demonstrates the increasing state-centred intrusion on individual

³⁵ Kate Lowe, “Black Africans' Religious and Cultural Assimilation to, or Appropriation of, Catholicism in Italy, 1470-1520,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 31, no. 2 (January 2008): pp. 67-86.

³⁶ Jacques Heers, *Esclaves et domestiques au Moyen-Âge dans le monde méditerranéen*, (Paris: Fayard, 1981), 135 and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, “Blood Parents and Milk Parents” in *Women, Family, and Ritual*, 140 n.31

³⁷ Lynn Marie Laufenberg, “Women, Crime, and Criminal Law in Fourteenth-Century Florence” (dissertation, 2000), 212.

³⁸ “Nulla persona cuiusquamque status seu conditionis existat vel universitas presumat habere tenere aut vendere donare vel alienare vel alio titulo transferre in aliquam personam universitatem seu collegium suppositam vel suopositum communi florentis... Predicta tamen non extendantur ad affectus livellos aut contractus non includentes Ius alicuius servitutis nec ad servos vel sclavos masculos aut feminas qui per sclavis reputantur.” ASF Statuti di Firenze 29 fol. 119v-120v.

criminality rather than relying on community justice. Prior permission by the *Signoria* ensured that criminality had to be decided by the central communal government before it could be acted upon, rather than having the community decide on the mores of correct social behaviour.

Enslaved people and people without their freedom were outside of social norms, sometimes called people who did not care about their honour.³⁹ The enslaved, as a legal category, did not possess the honour for the right of movement, unlike Florentines, and thus were liable to be captured outside of the jurisdiction of the commune.

1449 - 1452 Statutes

The 1449-1452 statutes of Florence included several other restatements of previously established legal requirements of slavery. In 1449, restated again, and expanded on, was the law regarding runaway slaves. Florentines who took slaves out of the borders of the city had to show a receipt of ownership of the slave.⁴⁰ One of these is the use of the city, the *contado*, and the *distretto*, to govern the punishment given those who helped enslaved people leave the service of their master. The sentence for helping a woman escape slavery was modified to be more specific. If a person got the woman out of Florentine territory or hid her there, the fine increased fivefold from 200 lire in 1364, with half paid to the commune, half to the owner, to 1000 lire, split the same way.⁴¹ They also must return the woman, or her equal value, to the owner. If the helper got the woman more than three miles from the city of Florence but still within the lands of the commune, the fine was 50 lire. The fine was lowered between three miles and the city to 30

³⁹ “serve le quali non churono [sic] loro honore” AOIF, Filza di Archivio 6205 fol. 600v.

⁴⁰ “a gabella portarum civitatis florentum condemntiam nomine talis emptis et sclave empte et a quo empta fuerit et quando sclavam ad quem conducere vellet Ipsam bulletam presentare” ASF Statuti di Firenze 29 fol. 388r.

⁴¹ ASF Capitolo Appendice 26 fol. 3r.

lire.⁴² The increased specificity of this legislation indicates the level of difficulty in tracking down someone who was able to leave Florentine territory. These boundaries helped to reinforce the control that the commune had over its territorial borders and helped define the limits of the Florentine territory through the imposition of fines according to the distance from the core.

In 1452, it was again reiterated that the enslaved woman had to be returned to the owner within three days of her being declared a runaway. Even those who had information needed to give it to the *Capitano del Popolo* in three days or be fined two lire. These increasingly strict laws indicates that women who absconded from enslavement with the help of Florentines with some regularity - as we will see in the section on runaways. The lack of a state sponsored record like the *Registro* like the one used in the fourteenth century may have contributed to the inability to pinpoint enslaved women versus free women. Again, this legislation does not mention the punishment given to the slaves themselves and does not mention the ability of an enslaved person to use her own will to abscond, but rather assumes that she would need help from someone local and fineable by the Florentine state and the owner.

There was also the restatement of the fact that anyone who got an enslaved woman pregnant would have to pay a third of her value to her owner. If she died in childbirth, they would have to pay the full price of the slave. The redundancy of this law deserves comment considering the institutions around Florence established in the early fifteenth century. The founding of the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* in 1419 and its opening in 1444, along with the many

⁴² “Item quilibet persona que deinceps post diem tam qua prius provisio fuit approbata in consilio comunis dabit operam cum effectu vel causa ex aliquam sclava ut serva pertinens ad aliquem civem florentinum vel ad aliquem A alium habitanam intra civitatem Florentie au fugerit extraterritorum comunis florentio. Et talis fuga sequatur condemnatur et condemnari possit et debeat per furto in libris mille prefato commune florentinis et ad restitutionem dicte sclave vel serve vel euis valute domino illuis. Item quod quilibet divians seu transfugans tris aliquam de sclavis et servis predictis ultra tria miliaria et civitate florentie sed in territorio tamen comunis florentie condemntur in libris quingentis profato communi. Si vero talem sclavam et servam diviaverit seu transfugaverit vel latiare fecerit in dicta civita vel infra tra miliaria extra causam condemnetur in libris tregentis” ASF Statuti di Firenze 29 fol. 388r.

institutions of childhood established between 1415 and 1449 indicated an investment in children.⁴³ However, such investments as contingent on their parentage. Calculations from the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* indicate that between, 1444 and 1453, roughly half of the children left at the foundling hospital were the children of slaves.⁴⁴ Florentines were abandoning a disproportionate number of the children of enslaved women at the Innocenti. Only four of these children were recorded to be the offspring of the owner of the slave.⁴⁵ It seemed that the pregnancy of enslaved women by men other than their owners was enough of a problem that a restatement of the 1364 and 1415 laws was necessary.

Crime

An exploration of the crimes enslaved women committed, and the language with which these crimes were recorded reveals the liminalities of enslaved status. In the same way that free women appeared in the courts, enslaved women also appeared as both defendants and victims. They were also charged with sumptuary crimes.⁴⁶ The fact that slaves themselves were charged with crimes that they must defend from, despite their lack of free will or property, indicated that they were integral parts of the society rather than being narrowly defined by their legal status as property. While it seems disingenuous to focus on the crimes that enslaved women perpetrated on Florentines when they were more likely to be victims of violent crime, looking at how the courts dealt with these cases can shed light on the complexities of their legal status as property and of the acknowledgment of the will of enslaved peoples. This section will begin with an outline of the stories of the enslaved women who were convicted or accused of murdering

⁴³ David Herlihy, "Medieval Children" in *Essays on Medieval Civilization: The Walter Prescott Webb Lectures*, ed. Bede Karl Lackner and Kenneth Roy Philip (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 112.

⁴⁴ L'Archivio dell'Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze (henceforth AOIF), Balie e Bambini 485-486.

⁴⁵ AOIF Balie e Bambini 485 fol. 38r, 209v, 221v; Balie e Bambini 486, fol. 33v.

⁴⁶ Lynn Marie Laufenberg, "Women, Crime, and Criminal Law," 415.

Florentines. A summary of these crimes will also discuss how these records deal with the intersections of womanhood, enslavement, and foreignness in the prosecution of this crime and the sentencing. This section will also cover other times an enslaved person entered the purview of the law, such as when they absconded from their houses or ended up in the *Stinche*.

Appearances of enslaved people within the criminal records of Florence illustrated an often-contradictory notion of the liability of slaves as actors. The criminal justice system in premodern Florence was flexible. There was room to negotiate based on the intersections of one's social status, gender, and wealth and allowed the courts to treat men and women with an eye to social position differently in determinations of criminal liability and thus punishment.⁴⁷

As scholars of criminal law have already pointed out, executions and physical punishments declined in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a general trend in premodern Europe, and this was also the case in Florence.⁴⁸ The creation of the *Otto di Guardia* office in 1378 and the increasing use of anonymous denunciations in the fifteenth century created a culture where communal based justice was diminished in the face of the growing role of official judges, notaries, and court clerks, leading to the cooption of the justice system by the Florentine oligarchy.⁴⁹ Instead of impartial foreign-born judges and parish denunciations of criminal activity, a centralized system began to overtake community-based justice. However, the system of anonymous denunciations did not lead to large indiscriminate prosecutions of criminal activity. Petty crimes, debt crimes, and those activities that did not pose an immediate danger to the regime had punishments that were lightened, especially for the members of the *populo* who

⁴⁷ See Thomas V. Cohen and Elizabeth Storr Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome*.

⁴⁸ Andrea Zorzi "The judicial system in Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" in *Crime, Society and the Law in Renaissance Italy*. Ed. Trevor Dean and Kate Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 55; Marvin B. Becker, "Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Florence," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18, no. 3 (1976), 287.

⁴⁹ Andrea Zorzi, "The Judicial System", 43.

were artisans, workers, and craftspeople. The ruling oligarchy had a vested interest in maintaining social order and safety to keep the support of the lower classes, which resulted in a princely disbursement of justice operated by the Medici which led to pardons, rehabilitation, and peaceable settlements.⁵⁰ Crimes against social order such as sodomy, blasphemy, and prostitution were diffused in society, with prostitution being regulated by the offices of the commune.⁵¹ People whose crimes were not forgiven were usually the transients whose existence brought social disorder and those whose behaviour were transient such as conspirators, murderers, and in our cases, slaves who murdered their masters.

In the following section, I will discuss four cases of murders by enslaved women of their masters or mistresses, dispersed between 1373 and 1486. Three of these murders ended in convictions and executions of the enslaved woman and in one the enslaved woman absconded with the help of the husband of her victim and co-conspirator. These records vary in the amounts of details they give, but the depositions of these women are now lost. The evidence that remains is the summary of the judgement that was written down either as an execution order or as an arrest warrant in the court that dealt with the crime.

The first two women, Marta and Lucia, were accused of trying to kill their mistresses. The details of their plots were preserved in the Florentine criminal courts. These two crimes occurred about 100 years apart, one in 1373, less than a decade after the regulation of the slave trade in Florence, and the other in 1486, when West Africans began to replace the supply of women from the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵² Lucia herself was one of these women, in which the

⁵⁰ Andrea Zorzi, "The Judicial System", 55.

⁵¹ Marvin B. Becker, "Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice," 293.

⁵² See Chapter 3.

record indicates that she was from “Ghinea”.⁵³ The first case, involving Marta, was in the household of Nanni Gondi. This case comes out of the *Capitano del Popolo* records in which the summary of the crime was read out as bans that required the absconded Nanni Gondi and Marta to return to defend themselves or face execution.

Gondi Murder

Marta lived in the household of Nanni Gondi and his wife, Marietta, in Florence. However, no record of her sale occurs in the *Registro degli Schiavi*, operational between 1364-1397. This could be because she was bought elsewhere and brought to Florence, was resold within Florence, or was simply never registered. Marta was a common Christianized name for enslaved women, and one that features prominently in the *Registro*. Marta was accused of pushing Marietta Gondi, Nanni’s wife, down a flight of stairs to the ground and then strangling Marietta with her hands. As with most other violent crimes with free perpetrators, the wording of the proclamation adds commentary about a diabolical spirit. It is the same wording used in Lucia’s case where she murdered her mistress.⁵⁴

The reason for this murder was not given in the inquest for Marta and Nanni Gondi to report to court. It is hinted that Marta and Nanni Gondi were lovers. Neither Nanni nor Marta reported to the courts at their first summoning. The inquest then warns the two that if Nanni Gondi does not answer to the investigation, he and Marta would be deemed guilty and receive a capital punishment, to be beheaded or hanged at the gallows. Gondi would also forfeit his goods to the heirs of Marietta Gondi, his late wife and victim. With these warnings, it would seem that Nanni Gondi and Marta had absconded from Florence. Nanni Gondi’s flight with Marta indicates

⁵³ “Lucia di Ghinea” ASF Otto di Guardia 75 fol. 62r.

⁵⁴ “supradictis nannes spiritu diabolico instigati” ASF Capitano del Popolo 592, fol. 113r; “resopiendum lucia diabolico ductu spiritum” ASF Otto di Guardia, 75 fol. 61v.

that there was cooperation between them in the murder of Marietta. The results of this inquest have also not yet been found.⁵⁵

With the pronouncement of guilt in the legal language, Florence was to make restitution to interested parties by enacting justice on Marta and Nanni Gondi in absentia. Running from a court summons was against the laws of the commune of Florence and if the accused did not return within a certain number of days, they would be deemed guilty, having forfeited their right to a trial. The confiscation of goods as part of the punishment would make restitution to the victim, Marietta's heirs – pre-empting any vendetta. This forfeiture of goods demonstrates the confusion between property and personhood when it came to the enslaved Marta, who was technically the property of Nanni and Marietta. Yet her capital punishment demonstrates that she had the will of personhood to be culpable for a crime, even when the husband was involved, and the law treated her like a person in the criminal system. Marta, as property, was denied to Marietta's heirs due to Marta's actions. The understanding of the actions the enslaved Marta as equal to that of her master, Nanni Gondi, in her culpability in this crime for murder demonstrates that she was still seen as a person by the Florentine government.

Villani Murder

By 1486, the *Otto di Guardia* office had taken over the charge of violent homicide, and it is in their records that the murder of Maria Villani by the enslaved Lucia was recorded. Lucia's case had more detail than Marta's and indicated the fears that Florentines had, not merely because of the foreignness of the enslaved women, but rather because of their use and agency as

⁵⁵ “Nannis et marte et cuilibet eorum contumacia habita pro plena et legitima probatione ipsis que habitis pro confesses et convictis de omnibus et singulis mallis suprascriptis et supradictum nannem in amputatione capitis condemnando ... vel curie florentie ducatur ad locum iustitie con suitum et ibidum eidem Nanni caput de apartibus amputatur ita et taliter quod animo a corpore seperentur et per ut moriatur et quod omnia bona de nannis distrucantur et devastentur et mediatate dictorum bonorum sic devastationum communis florentie confiscandum...ad heridibus dicte mariette” ASF Capitano del Popolo 592 fol. 113v.

both the tools and the provokers of bad behaviour among Florentines. In Lucia's case, the court document – written as a summary of her crime – records that she had planned with her co-conspirators to murder her mistress, Maria Villani.⁵⁶ The record revealed that Lucia tried to poison her mistress twice, the first time she administered mercury and the second time, she was unable to procure poison from her sources.⁵⁷ The story becomes more extraordinary as details emerge.

Lucia, said to be from Guinea, seemed to have been the mistress of her victim's husband, Alberto Villani, for two years, although the exact details of their relationship was not clear in the record.⁵⁸ The inclusion of this detail, without any evidence, was probably to explain the heinous acts that she committed. The *Otto di Balia* recorded that it was her jealousy that had prompted her to act as she did. Lucia had, among her accomplices, the sisters Marsillia and Leggiadra, as well as Simone di Angelo della Perraia and a servant in the house of Villani, Giovanni. These names were listed next to hers in the *dramatis personae* of the crime, where the full names of the free Florentines and Lucia's origins as from Guinea were placed next to each other. It seemed that Marsillia and Leggiadra were the ones that persuaded Lucia to her course of action. Simone was the supplier of the quicksilver that was unsuccessful in poisoning Maria and Giovanni

⁵⁶ ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 60r-62v.

⁵⁷ “lucie et marsilie et in alius locis ibidem circumstantibus postquam commune carmignano comintatus florens loco dicto cerruto et ad in vicem plural genera necis contra dicta donna mariam simul excogitanrum nam et mallum venenum recogitarerum persone dicti domine marie ad manducandum et ipsi domine marie argentum vivum pro mallo veneno ad ipsum dominum marium necandam cum effectu probuerunt et cum hoc via pessimum eorum propositum non succederit.” ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 61r.

⁵⁸ “causas amoris et libindinis contra et ad versus dominam mariam uxorem dicti alberti de vaillanis communicato ad in vicem colloquio et habito simul consilio non simul tantum sed pluries pluries et moltotiens diversis temporibus ab annis duobus” ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 61r.

supplied the clothes and the identity that Lucia adopted for the murder.⁵⁹ Each person had a role in the murder and were subsequently caught and prosecuted.

The murder occurred in October 1486. Lucia was sleeping in the antechamber of her mistress Maria's room. She was dressed in the clothes of Giovanni prepared by Leggiandra and Marsillia. Perhaps she was sleeping also in the place where Giovanni would have slept, pretending to be Giovanni and crossdressing as a man to hide her identity. In the night, she entered a bedchamber and extinguished her lantern, disturbing the sleep of Maria's son, who began to cry, waking up Maria. Maria got up from her own room to console her child. As Maria entered the room, Lucia grabbed Maria by the arm and threw her down into a chest on the ground, got on her knees, and began to strangle Maria with her hands. As Maria struggled, she pulled Lucia's hair, causing Lucia to bite Maria's finger until it bled profusely all over Lucia.⁶⁰

By this point, Maria screamed as loud as she could, saying "Gesù, Gesù, help me! Virgin Maria, help me! Lucia, Lucia, Lucia, Lucia, wake up! Help me!"⁶¹ Her impassioned cries to Lucia, her enslaved servant, to wake up and help her indicated the disguise had worked. Since Lucia stood the darkness wearing Giovanni's clothing, Maria did not know it was Lucia who was

⁵⁹ "Simon tentaverit comparare et emere venenum predicti a quodam aromatario in urbe florenze quod habere non potuit ipsa. Lucia cum dicta Marssila excogitavirunt quodam nocti dictam dominam mariam strangularem et predicta et omnia singula dicta lucia communicavit et nota fecis dicto simoni angili della perraia et leggiadre et cui libet predictorum consentinum approbanti persuadenti nexem predictam et dicta marsillia communicavit et nota fecit predicta omnia et singula dicta leggiandra sorori sue consentianti, approbanti et persuadenti...ipsa lucia comunicato prius consilio cum dicta marsilia et postea cum dicta leggiadra soribus predictis notci intempesta paratis vestibus dicti johannis famuli alberti predicti vestivit se vestibus predictis" ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 61r-61v.

⁶⁰ "ingressa est cameram ubi erat et dormiebat domina maria predicta et primo extinsit lucernam nocensam in camera predicta, diende ascendis super cassam lecti in quo dictam donna maria dormiebat et excitavit quendam filium dicti donne marie cum ea in parti inferiori dicti lecti dormiendem qui pavore preetus ploratum ededit quo excita mater venit ad ...preserverantipsam donnam mariam braccio comprehensam traxit in cassam mox terram et super eam genibus insistens guttre eam comprehentis manibus et suffocabat cum quod ispa donna maria manus invicevit in capellos dicti lucia, ipsam luciam dicitibus apprehendit, et momordit digitum maiore manus dextere ipsius domine marie cum cesura carnis sanguinis usfusione, sic quod lucia predicta suffocavit strangulavit et interemit" ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 61v.

⁶¹ "dictum domiam mariam saepius et saepois proposse clamante Ah Gesù Guesu aiutarmi, virgine maria aiutarmi lucia lucia, luigia luigia state fu, aiutarmi" ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 61v.

responsible for killing her. Whether this account is plausible or not does not factor into the judgement; such a detail in the records added to the perceived diabolism of Lucia's plan, whose betrayal as her mistress was crying for help justified the cruel punishment Lucia received.

Lucia, Simone, Leggiadra and Giovanni were captured, tried, and sentenced. In the end, Lucia was to be carted around the city and tortured by hot tongs until taken outside of the city and hanged in the usual place.⁶² Simone and Giovanni joined her in the cart but were not tortured through their ride, instead required to wear caps indicating their shame. When they reached the execution grounds, Simone had his ear cut off and was sentenced to ten years in the *Stinche* while Giovanni was exiled.⁶³ Leggiadra was also punished by fifteen years in the *Stinche*.⁶⁴ No mention is made of Marsilia, or indeed Alberto Villani's role in these punishments or the courts.

What do these details tell us about the Villani family? First, Lucia seemed to sleep in the bedchamber of Maria's son, indicating a strong bond of trust for Lucia who was probably the child's nurse – if not a wet nurse. Lucia sleeping in the antechamber on the night of the murder was probably a way to disguise herself more convincingly as Giovanni or a stranger from outside. Second, Lucia knew her mistress well enough to expect that Maria would come to

⁶² “consueta ducantur et duci debeanturs per loca publica et consueta civitatis florens in cursu et supra currus et dicta lucia tantum forcibus fercebis debeat cuciaris usquem ad locum iustitiam consuetam et ibidem in loco diputato ipse et qualibet eorum per iustitie ministrum laqueo [noose] suspendatur inta quod ambe et qualibet eorum moriatur, et eorum et cuius libet eorum anime omnino a copore seperantur et condemnaverunt dictorum” ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 62r.

⁶³ “Simone della angeli perraia de commune carmignani comitatus de firenze qualde dicta hora et dicto curru cum mitra in capite et predicta loca ducatur et duci debeatur usquem ad locum iustitie consuetam et ibidem per iustitie ministrum dicti simone una auris a capite abscidatur et amputatur, in super dicem simonem confinaturunt ad standum ipse manandum in caribus stincorem civitatus florentis per tempus et terminum dicem annorum proxime fine hodie initiandorum... Johannem ulivi de cascia vallis darnis superioris famulum dicti alberti di villanis qualem dicta hora et curru et cum mitra in capite et predicta loca ducatur et duci debeas usque ad locum iustitie consuetam in super dicti Johanne confinverunt ad eudem standum repremandum in toto territorio pisano ubi libere per tempus et terminum dicem annorum proxime fuerum iniziandem die quo se ad opsa confinia presentaverit.” ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 62r.

⁶⁴ “Leggiandra filiam dicti jabobi pandicci de camignano comitatus florentin pro tempus et termine annorum quindicem proxia futurum omotoamo die quo in carceres.” ASF Otto di Guardia e Balia della Republica 75, fol. 62r-v.

comfort her son if she heard his cries from her bedchamber. A close personal relationship between Maria and Lucia was likely, considering Lucia lived in Maria's household as a servant and probably accomplished daily tasks for Maria. Third, Lucia had a network of accomplices who had an interest in Lucia killing Maria, whether personal or economic, including those in the household of the Villani family.

A factor to consider when reading such a record is that the language of the crime was mediated by the court and their summary. The court documents of this crime, where the depositions of all the parties involved are usually recorded, are not available, and the *Otto di Guarda e Balia* only recorded a summary of events. We must take into stock what the court records deemed was necessary to include. The roles played by Lucia and her accomplices were used to justify the sentencing, but the piteous cries of Maria, the location of her son, and even the contents of Maria's appeal to help to Lucia, were details included to condemn the convicted and justify the punishment that Lucia received. The wearing of Giovanni's clothes – her crossdressing and her crossing of social barriers – was also one of the details that the court wrote into the sentencing summary. There was no indication of why Giovanni let Lucia use his clothes for the murder – as using Giovanni's clothes might allow Lucia to frame him. However, it was obvious that Giovanni gave Lucia permission, seeing as Giovanni was exiled for his part in the crime. The transgressions of this behaviour – women as men, enslaved murdering masters – was more problematic than the sentencing of Lucia as an enslaved person and as property. It also gave Lucia a masculinity that fell in line with the murder of her mistress with her hands, rather than with poison as was so often accused of women. Since she was the property of the Villani family, her death would have put the Villani family out of the sizable number of florins it took to

purchase her. Compensation by or for Alberto Villani was not mentioned in the record, nor any hint of Villani's involvement, other than his relationship to the condemned Lucia.

Bernardino Murder

It wasn't just wives who were reported to be victims of foreign women. Another case in 1379 involved the poisoning of a man by his enslaved servant. Recorded in the diary of the anonymous Florentine, Florentines saw the enslaved woman pinched with tongs in a cart on the streets, having poisoned a Bolognese man.⁶⁵ Details of the case are recorded in the *Capitano del Popolo* books – the same record as the story of Marta.⁶⁶ The man, named Bernardino Bartoli of Malfagia, said to be from Bologna, owned the enslaved Lucia and lived in the parish of Santa Maria Sopra Porta. She was said to have nothing but a hostile human seed, soul, and intent.⁶⁷ Having bought the quicksilver in the Mercato Vecchio of Florence, she put the quicksilver in an earthen pot and then put it into the body of Bernardino through a *gristere*, or enema, which killed him.⁶⁸ Unlike in the case of the Guinean Lucia, she does not name her co-conspirators, or the courts forgave them, and it is unknown who sold her the mercury. It seemed that only Lucia was in the cart that took her to the stake where she was burned - at least by the eyewitness account of the anonymous Florentine. In the summary of the crime, the executive of Florence wrote that that

⁶⁵ “Oggi a’ di xx d’agosto 1378, fu attanagliata una schiava in su’n un carro, ch’aveva avvelenato un bolognese, che vendeva la malvagia in Capaccia, ch’aveva nome Bernardino di Dardo, ch’aveva messo ariente solimato nel critero. Guastolla messer Cante di messer Jacopo de’Gabriegli d’Agobbio, nostro Capitano” “Diario d’anonimo fiorentino” in *Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV: Annales Ptolemaei Lucensis Sanzanome iudicis Gesta Florentinorum, Diario di ser Giovanni di Lemmo da Comugnori, Diario d’anonimo fiorentino, Chronicon Tolosani canonici Faventini*. Ed. Marco Tabarrini. (Firenze: M. Cellini, 1876), 400.

⁶⁶ “1379, agosto 20 [atti criminali del Capitano del Popolo, Quaderno di Sentenze, a c. 71],” *Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV*, 525-526.

⁶⁷ “non habendo sed potius humani generis inimicum, anomo et intentione venenandi et cum veneno occidendi dictum Bernardinum suum dominum” *Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV*, 525.

⁶⁸ “dicta Lucia deberet facere dicto Bernardino dictum gristere, accepit dictum argentum sublimatum et eum misit in pentola ubi erant omnia parata pro dicto gristere; et dictum gristere cum dicto argento sublimato misit in corpus dicti Bernardini, propter duod dictus Bernardinus mortuus fait et est.” *Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV*, 526.

Lucia must be made an example of, and so that no other slaves dare to poison their lord.⁶⁹ Her punishment was made public and must have been memorable since the sight was recorded as the only item of that day in the diary of the anonymous Florentine. Like the Lucia from Guinea more than a century later, the fourteenth century Lucia was also put in a cart, tortured with hot forceps, and paraded around town until she was taken to the place where she was to be executed and, unlike the Guinean Lucia who was hanged, this Lucia was burned at the stake until dead.⁷⁰

In this case, the reason for Lucia committing such a crime against her master was not recorded. There did not seem to be a sexual component to the relationship between Lucia and Bernardino that was worthy of comment. However, the same language of evil and malicious thought and spirit also permeates this description of the crime. The salacious detail of the crime in the record served to demonstrate the evil of the foreign women who murdered Florentines. In the case of Maria Villani, the evil of the enslaved Lucia also exonerated Alberto Villani from criminal involvement.

Bernardino's murder elicited a strong reaction by the *Capitano del Populo* who stated the rationale for Lucia's terrible fate. The early date of this crime – about fifteen years after the regulation of enslavement – was probably the reason that the court specified that Lucia was to be made an example of in case other enslaved women would start to get ideas. The similarity of this punishment with the one enacted in 1486 on the Lucia who was convicted of killing Maria Villani indicates that this type of torture was the typical death for an enslaved woman who killed her enslavers. Burning seemed to be the more common punishment for poison, as in 1460,

⁶⁹ “et ad hoc ut nulla sclava audeat vel presummat venenare aliquem suum dominus, et ut eius pena aliis transeat in exemplum” *Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV*, 526.

⁷⁰ “Quod dicta Luca ponatur in caretta et ducatur per loca publica civitatis Florentie, et per dicta loca cum tenaglis ardentibus carnes eius adtenaglentur; et quod sic adtenaglata ducatur ad locum iustitie consuetum, et ibidem publice igne comburatur, ita et taliter quod anima ab eius corpore separetur et penitus moriatur” *Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV*, 526.

another Lucia was burned as well for poisoning her mistress after being led in a cart through Florence. However, the difference between the two Lucias was that one was burned, and the other was hanged. It seemed that poisoning –through non-oral means – elicited a strong reaction by Florentines. With the number of enslaved women who were recorded as inventory in kitchens, it stands to reason that fear of poison would be the primary concern for the households. Such a public display of torture would have continued to act as a deterrence for those who may have similar ideas.

In the case in 1486, the husband of Maria Villani was not mentioned in the entire case except as the lover of Lucia, the enslaved woman. This detail provided motive for Lucia, but seemingly also would implicate Alberto Villani in the same crime. There was no incentive recorded for Lucia's co-conspirators, Marsilia, Leggiadra, Giovanni and Simone, but their implication in the crime is evident through their punishment. In fact, Alberto Villani wasn't even named in the list of people who were involved in this case.

Treating enslaved women as criminals demonstrates the awareness that these women were agents who could be deemed criminally liable for the crimes they committed. It is unknown what Marta's punishment would have been, had she been captured and found guilty. However, the difference between being burned at the stake and being hanged indicated that the details of the crimes were considered within the court cases, or that burning was no longer deemed as acceptable a punishment in 1486 as in 1379. Nevertheless, the view of culpable criminality complicates the idea of the enslaved as property, despite the tenuous connection to liability that the possession of these women by evil spirits afforded them. Diabolic spirit was a term used often in cases of murder and applied to both men and women in court records and to both

physical assaults and poison.⁷¹ The association with enslaved women and poison also indicates that Florentines associated enslaved women as categorically women. Awareness of the intersections between femininity, unfreedom, and the corruption of the natural order when women killed men, and servants their masters, the crimes committed by these women were doubly to be feared by Florentine courts. However, they also recognized these women as actors within their immediate social circles, where they were able to procure poison from the people around them and enlist the help of Florentine men and women for their crimes.

Despite the sensational and violent details of these crimes, it is important to remember that murder rates in Florence were not high in this period and crime rates for murder saw a steady decline in the fourteenth century while convictions of each case rose from 67% to 90%.⁷² This statistic does not mean that murders did not happen, but that the number of people who could be victims of murder declined.⁷³ Persecution for violent crime was also gendered. Women were accused of murder at a much lower rate than men.⁷⁴ Capital punishments for women were rare, especially when the founding of the *Stinche* – the Florentine jail – allowed for female prisoners. As Becker points out, the *Otto di Guardia*, despite being a feared institution of state policing established in 1378, was interested in rehabilitation of Florentines who held positions in their community.⁷⁵ Executions were also ordered rarely in the fifteenth century, where the majority of those executed were accused of political crimes (against the state or the Medici).

⁷¹ Lynne Marie Laufenberg, “Women, Crime, and Criminal Justice,” 1, 94, 101, 322, 326, 343, 449.

⁷² Marvin Becker, “Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice,” 287.

⁷³ Not everyone killer was able to be tried or convicted for the crime of murder, for example, in cases of female adultery, men were seldom tried or found guilty as murderers.

⁷⁴ Laufenberg, “Women, Crime, and Criminal Law,” 183.

⁷⁵ Marvin Becker, “Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice,” 290.

Girolami Murder

In a list of executions conducted by the state in the *Codice Sanminiatese* between 1423-1759, those who had very little personal honour or community life dominate the list of executions in the fifteenth century— people such as slaves, foreigners, heretics, and servants who poisoned their masters – but most executions were for people who went against the Medici or the government.⁷⁶ Despite the list being incomplete, for example, it omits Lucia from Guinea in 1486, it is notable in that it lists only one other woman who was executed. This woman was another Lucia, enslaved by Zanobi Girolami, who poisoned her mistress in 1460. Her execution gives context to the visibility of the execution of enslaved women when they upturned social hierarchy.⁷⁷ Lucia, too, was taken through the town on a cart and burned at the stake for her crime, as was the Lucia in 1379. The almost 100-year difference in time and the murder of the mistress rather than the master did not change the punishment for her crime. In fact, this Lucia is the only woman on the list of the executed in the fifteenth century, with most of the others being the punishments in the aftermath of the Pazzi Conspiracy and the fall of Savonarola as political enemies. While the list is incomplete, the fact that an enslaved woman appears as the only woman who was executed by the state demonstrates the liminality of Lucia as a woman, a servant, and a slave. She was worthy of execution in ways that other women were not, but she was also property, and her criminal liability was taken for granted despite her inability to participate under the legal systems.

These four cases of Florentines being the victims of their enslaved servants stands out due to the violence of the acts and the punishments, but also due to the social stations of the

⁷⁶ Marvin Becker, “Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice” 289, Andrea Zorzi “The judicial system in Florence,” 55.

⁷⁷ “1460 (20 Maggio). Lucia schiava di Zanobi Girolami, « attanagliata in sul carro et arsa perchè avvelenò la padrona.” Giuseppe Rondoni, “I “Giustiziati” A Firenze (Dal Secolo XV al Secolo XVIII).” *Archivio Storico Italiano* 28, no. 224 (1901), 223.

persons involved in the crime. As Trevor Dean and Kate Lowe point out, the murder of enslaved women by Florentines could hardly be considered news and was thus not reported in the same way, even if the crimes could in theory be prosecuted by the state.⁷⁸ In cases of the enslaved peoples of Sicily, discussed by Henri Bresc, the killing or mutilation of enslaved peoples could be pardoned or given short sentences.⁷⁹ Only 1% of the enslaved population appeared as culprits in violent crimes, although the victims ranged from their masters to participants of drunken brawls in taverns.⁸⁰ Certainly, with the cases of executions being so low in Florence, the murder of enslaved women was probably not punished with execution, or any major dismemberment. It is certainly more likely that a fine or time in the *Stinche* would be a more suitable punishment for the crime, especially since the death of an enslaved woman through childbirth was merely compensated by the father to the master in the price of the woman, a sign of their small intrinsic value. The reporting of enslaved women murdering their masters thus cannot represent the majority of the victims in slave-master relationships, despite it being the one that brought on capital punishments.

Capital punishment served society more than it served the person serving the punishment or the victims – it was a way to take away those who deflected against social order. While scholars have stipulated that torture controlled by the courts served to obtain confession, the violence embedded in capital punishment and dismemberment provided a release valve to restore the social order to proper form. In the same way that the failed Pazzi conspirators were executed in a public and extrajudicial manner as a display to the Florentine people to reinforce the Medici

⁷⁸ Trevor Dean and Kate Lowe, “Introducing Renaissance Killers”, in *Murder in Renaissance Italy*, 2.

⁷⁹ Henri Bresc, “Stereotypes of Male Vendetta and Female Perfidy in Late Medieval Sicily, 1293–1460” in *Murder in Renaissance Italy*, 48.

⁸⁰ Henri Bresc, “Stereotypes of Male Vendetta,” 48.

oligarchy, the public torture of the enslaved Lucias restored public order as a release valve.⁸¹ The three Lucias and the one Marta's crimes were made public. The horror of their crimes required a punishment that would serve as strong deterrent both for the economic health of the slave trade and for the state to demonstrate the inherent superiority and worth of Florentines over enslaved individuals. It was when social order was upended – with the killing of a Christian wife by an enslaved concubine – that the state needed to publicly discourage such crime with painful and humiliating sentences.

One of the more peripheral aspects that linked someone to criminal activity was when they were called to appear as witnesses before the law. However, to be witnesses required a connection with the truth and the ability to swear to the truth, a condition that required honour or its imposition. When poorer women – whose truths could not be verified on the condition of honour – were interrogated, there was the possibility of torture. These women did not possess any honour, but they were used in an area where truth was to be established, especially in the types of criminal cases that the *Otto di Guardia* were involved with prosecuting. The deposition that Iris Origo studied in her case of the enslaved woman and her lover was given by a free Maria. Thus, control of the narrative fell to those who were not enslaved to recount the crimes of enslaved women.

Poison was also the realm of women and the disenfranchised. The fact that three out of the four enslaved women were accused of using poison or attempting to use poison is not a coincidence. The gender of the enslaved women, from the accusations of sexual misconduct with their masters to the cross-dressing of Lucia, was a part of the consideration of these crimes. Women who were accused of homicide or attempted homicide were usually charged with

⁸¹ Andrea Zorzi, "The Judicial System in Florence" 56-57.

attempting poison. In many cases, the identity of the poison seller was protected, but in the case of Simone della Perraia in 1486, he was punished with the co-conspirators for Maria Villani despite his poison not actually having been the murder weapon.

In cases where the detail was recorded, the enslaved women were the lovers of the masters of the household. In three out of the four cases, the family mistress was the victim of the crime. Similarly, in Iris Origo's account of the enslaved girl who stole from her mistress, love was also the reason behind her crime. These gendered notions of criminal motive exhibit understandings of the sexualities of women and the fear of displacement by enslaved women over Florentine girls. Violent crime by women most commonly had female victims, corresponding with the social positions that made women subservient to, and thus unable to physically overpower, men. The "love" crimes of enslaved women reflected the common perception of women as sexualized beings that needed to be hidden away lest they be consumed by lust. In addition, the idea that the "infidel" birth of these women made them more violent and prone to extreme behaviour – both a reflection and a consequence of their lack of honour – also underlines these convictions. Perhaps most tellingly, the Florentine fear that Christian girls were being trafficked for sexual service and enslavement was not a question of stopping sex trafficking but rather directing it towards non-Christian bodies.⁸² Such bodies, almost uniquely the only female ones deemed transient enough for public torture and execution, demonstrate how perceptions of criminality reflected social prejudices.

⁸² This is particularly prominent in the sixteenth century with the coastal raids of the Mediterranean for slaves, see Robert Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800*, (Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave, 2003).

The Stinche

When discussing concepts of personhood and freedom, it is necessary to address the role of the Florentine jail on how criminality was defined in the commune. The *Stinche*, a jail built by the Florentine republic known to be one of the first in Europe where imprisonment was used as punishment, rather than corporal or monetary sentences.⁸³ Despite claims that premodern Europe's jails were used for prevention, or commutation, the *Stinche* records demonstrate that they were a place where punishments were served through the concept of time.⁸⁴ The uniqueness of the *Stinche* in denying freedom to criminal behaviour serves as a mirror to understandings of the concept of slavery in Florence. The cases of Leggiadra and Simone are a foil to the punishments of the three Lucias. A direct comparison is not possible, due to the different natures of their crimes. The culpability of Lucia whose hand is allegedly the one that killed Maria Villani was far more involved than her accomplices. Yet, looking at the use of executions versus the use of unfreedom and sequestered time as punishment can shed light on ideas of rehabilitation in terms of criminality.

In 1486, the punishment of Simone and Leggiadra in the case of the Guinean Lucia with ten years in the *Stinche* was not a preventative measure against further murder, or a commutation of their judgement as Simone was mutilated prior to entrance into the *Stinche*, but rather time served in the jail seemed to be a punishment. This was during a period in Florence when there were very few executions, in fact Giuseppe Rondoni only records one in 1483 and 1487 before the mass executions of the Savonarola period in Florence.⁸⁵ While this list is incomplete, as

⁸³ Marvin Wolfgang, "Crime and Punishment in Renaissance Florence," 576.

⁸⁴ Marvin Wolfgang, "Crime and Punishment in Renaissance Florence," 579.

⁸⁵ Giuseppe Rondoni "Giustiziati", 224.

previously stated, the low number of executions is corroborated by Zorzi and Becker.⁸⁶ The three Lucia's executions put them in the category of political enemies of the state, deviants, and *miserabili*. Like the burning of Savonarola – their execution served a performative warning to the Florentine people, and to other enslaved peoples, rather as a way of deterring criminal behaviour. The explicit statement in the punishment of Lucia that killed her Bolognese master that her public punishment was a deterrent in the *Capitano* records provides clear evidence of the role of public punishment. Simone's dismemberment of his ear, also rarer during this period than previously, was part of this performance of justice. Giovanni and Leggiadra suffered the same fate by being on the cart that shamed them around Florence. However, Simone and Leggiadra's imprisonment in the *Stinche* was one that served a private function for the individuals involved.

Imprisonment was a punishment that was dealt to both women and men – Leggiadra and Simone both were sentenced to ten years in the *Stinche* (although such a sentence was often shortened if they paid fines). Men and women who were born Christian, that is not enslaved as property, in Florence, with kin (both Leggiadra and Simone were identified by their relationships to other people in Florence), were able to be rehabilitated or at least extorted for the fines given to the commune for a commutation of their long imprisonment. Connecting unfreedom and time served as punishment gives an indication of how Florentines saw the status of enslaved peoples in their households. The birth from “infidel” races was enough to be denied freedom and serve in Florentine households without honour or freedom of movement.

One other role that imprisonment played in the story of the slave trade was providing a way to punish wayward slaves. The *Stinche* was already a place where parents outsourced

⁸⁶ Andrea Zorzi “The judicial system in Florence”, 55; Marvin B. Becker, “Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice”, 287.

parenting to scare their wayward children into good behaviour.⁸⁷ With the recapture of an enslaved woman, she could be put in the *Stinche* with the permission of her master to correct her behaviour.⁸⁸ The enslaved Margherita was listed under a list of people that were taken from the Florentine commune of Pistoia to incarceration at the *Stinche* on the recommendation of her master.⁸⁹ Enslaved women could only leave with their master's permission. This punishment linked the status of children to enslavement. Such a link is a direct reference to the Roman law where children and slaves had the same legal status, and children were emancipated while their parents were alive in the same way that enslaved persons were manumitted. Such a punishment reinforces the patriarchal nature of enslavement as both a spiritual guidance towards Catholicism and as a hierarchical power relationship within the household and society.

Runaways

The call for finding runaways fell to the pages of the *Otto di Guardia* which prosecuted free persons who would have aided any enslaved persons. In these records of the runaways, the onus of reporting fell to Florentines who would be guilty of theft if they were holding or knew any information about the absconded woman. This was attested in the 1364 law that legalized slavery and restated in the 1415 redaction and the 1452 statutes. Florentines were responsible for returning the slaves or at least indicating their knowledge of the slave within three or two days of the issuance of the declaration that the enslaved woman had run away.⁹⁰ The 1364 regulation covered also named officials of the Florentine republic, including the three executive offices of

⁸⁷ Halina Manikowska, "The Florentine Communal Prison", 136.

⁸⁸ "Item quod dicti domini Potestas, Capitaneus et Executor et eorum et cuiuslibet eorum iudices etiam ad civilia deputati et quilibet eorum et etiam officialis grascie supradictus teneantur et debeant, ad instantiam dominorum vel possessorum, capere et capi facere ac mictere et micti, detineri et poni facere in carceribus Comunis Florentie dictos servos et servas ut corrigantur et eos et eas relaxari facere ad voluntatem dictorum dominorum vel possessorum et non aliter. ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, 2v, also see Livi, *Le Schiavitu Domestiche*, 145.

⁸⁹ *Otto di Guardia* 75, f. 110r.

⁹⁰ ASF Statuti di Commune 29, 388r-389v.

the Captain of the People, the *Podestà*, and the Executor of the Ordinances of Justice, and all other people who acted for the commune in any official capacity, who had a duty to recapture enslaved persons and bring them back to their legal possessor.⁹¹ It was assumed that she would have accomplices or required the help of a free person to aid her escape from Florence. While the runaway could be put in the *Stinche* for correct behaviour, in the eyes of the legal system, the burden of criminality fell to the shoulders of the Florentine who encountered the enslaved person.

The criminality of the Florentine accomplice rather than the enslaved does not seem to match the punishment that such enslaved people received when they were tried and found guilty of homicide against their owners. In the case recounted by Iris Origo on the enslaved Maria duped by her unscrupulous lover, Maria was prosecuted and convicted by the commune not for her attempted run but rather for her theft of jewellery from her mistress.⁹² The will of Maria to choose to run away was not considered – almost as if she was indeed immovable property, rather than a person with a mind. There doesn't seem to be a law legislating against the slave herself running away. The law that Maria could be tried for was the crime of theft of goods, not herself as property. The deference to the owners to punish enslaved persons as they saw fit, including sending them to the Florentine prison to correct their behaviour and indicating when they were ready to return to the household, perhaps signified the commune's deference for private property. Not even the officials of the commune of Florence could put an enslaved person in jail without the permission of the owner.

Proclamations for runaways followed a generally formulaic approach, with the name and age of the enslaved person always given. Less common but still sometimes recorded was her

⁹¹ ASF Capitoli Appendice 26, 2v, also see Livi, *Le Schiavitu Domestiche*, 145.

⁹² Origo, "Domestic Enemy" 342.

race, and her clothing. If the *Registro* recorded the number of details it did to aid in the recapture of absconded slaves, it was not reflected in the official record of the runaway slave. In three of the records of runaway slaves between 1478 and 1482, the race of the enslaved woman was only given once as Tatar. The other two women were simply known by their names.⁹³ The lack of identification in the announcement perhaps relied on neighbourhood knowledge of what someone's slave looked like, or on private correspondence, like that found in Franco Sacchetti's letters, to retrieve an enslaved person.⁹⁴ The declaration of a runaway was perhaps a formality that allowed the officers of the commune to question those that could be the escaped slave or her accomplices. Since these proclamations of runaways did not mention any physical details that Florentines had already pointed out as identifiable markers in the *Registro degli Schiavi*, another bureaucratic document kept by the commune of Florence, there seemed to be gaps in legislation, legal records, and their use in the courts of the commune.

Legal Records

Other than records of criminal behaviour, the Florentine commune participated in the lives of its citizens through offices that governed and serviced Florentines. While not actively discussing the lives of enslaved peoples, bureaucratic records are no less important or indicative of the general uncertainty regarding the position of enslaved peoples as both property and people in the eyes of the communal government. The previous chapters have already discussed the contents of the *Registro degli Schiavi* in depth, so this section will focus on bureaucratic records

⁹³ "...unam sciam nomine claram etatis annorum 18 vel circa vestatum? quodam guarnello bigio debens illam consignate vel ... notitiam di illa eroum officio infra primo mai dei ab hodie sub pena furcarorum" ASF Otto di Guardia 61 fol. 68r, see also Otto di Guardia 50 fol. 7r, 63 fol. 26r-v.

⁹⁴ "c'era istanotte fuggita una schiava, d'età di circa a venti anni, la qual'è di pelo e occhi bruni, assai adatta nel busto, cioè ne grassa ne magra; e piccoletta, e non ha il viso molto tartaresco, ma innanzi adatto al modo di qua che no, e non parla molto scorta nostra lingua. Ha nome Margherita... Fuggissi da Marignolla e portonne i panni suoi, i quali erano una gonnella mescolata quasi in su l'azzurro ed e fresca, e uno guarnello e sciugatoio e altre lor bazicature, e una gonnella agnellina vecchia con cintola nera sùvi, e in cappellinetta il più delle volte." Franco Sacchetti, *Le Lettere le sposizioni di vangeli*. ed. Alberto Chiari (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1938), VI. 88.

of tangential organizations where enslaved people were found. Three different types of records will be discussed as part of the daily functions of the state and its reach into the lives of Florentines. The first will be the record of the *Magistrati dei Pupilli* office, which features inventories of typical well-to-do households in the city, the *contado*, and the *distretto* of the commune. The second record will be a brief overview of the *Catasto* to supplement details from the *Magistrati dei Pupilli* records. The third will be notarial documents, specifically wills, manumissions and legitimations that were drafted and undersigned by a notary. Unlike the previous two records, notarial documents were diffused into individual records kept by notaries themselves and their clients, rather than government offices. Nevertheless, notarial documents were part of the way that Florentines interacted with legal processes in everyday life and the method by which Florentines ensured that their actions were recorded and valid in case any of them had to interact with the law more directly. While these three documents are not directly linked to the creation of the law, the bureaucratic records marked adherence to the laws and sustained the legal processes that were required for the functioning of the commune, and were instrumental in the establishment, maintenance, and codification of social norms.

Magistrati dei Pupilli Avanti il Principati (MPAP)

Florence's reach into the lives and properties of its citizens is evident in the aftermath of the Black Death where offices tried to manage the enormous disruption to property ownership as a result of the massive demographic collapse. The *Magistrati dei Pupilli Avanti il Principati* (MPAP) is a collection of inventories made to protect the property of orphaned children without guardians. It did this by creating a list of their inheritance which was placed under the guardianship and administration of the *Magistrati dei Pupilli* office to be held in trust until the heirs became of age to manage the property themselves. The demographic collapse of the Black

Death meant that inventories of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries were especially abundant. These inventories held the administrators of the office accountable, creating a list of all the property of the inheritance that they were responsible for as well as any changes to the inheritance that the administrators made, such as investments, loans, and repayments. Household inventories of well-to-do, or propertied Florentines usually consist of two different sections: the moveable property and the real property (such as real estate).⁹⁵ Practically, these are usually divided as property in the city and in the countryside. The moveable property outlines the lists of items in the household, usually from room to room, and lists all furniture found within the room, including those hidden in chests and out of sight. Most of these inventories of individual items do not have the prices of the goods found within the household unless the price is necessary for the identification of the item itself; however, all the goods recorded in these inventories ostensibly had monetary value.

As property with a monetary value, enslaved women and their children featured in the lists of moveable property that were listed as commonly found items within a household in an urban area, whether in Florence or its surrounding regions.⁹⁶ People were placed as fixtures within the rooms of the house like furniture and accessories. These women were either numbered among the items in a room, in the margins, or entered as a separate line in the inventory. These entries of people usually included a name and sometimes the age. This addition, and the placement of these entries in its own separate sections outside of typical furniture, indicates that the notaries who wrote these inventories understood that enslaved women – despite being rendered as objects, were categorically different from any other household furniture. Their

⁹⁵ ASF Magistrato dei Pupilli Avanti il Principato (henceforth MPAP) 1-4.

⁹⁶ “Maria sclava in locatum cum Janne filio suo” ASF MPAP 1, fol. 338r; MPAP 4 fol. 239v, 382r, 412v. See also Laura Morreale, “Enslaved persons in late 14th-century Florence,” Feature Essay. *Documentary Archeology of Late Medieval Europe*. 30 December 2020. Accessed 5 May 2022. <https://dalme.org/features/enslaved-persons/>.

presence in the list of inanimate objects served as a stark reminder that the commune and the *Magistrati dei Pupilli* office viewed enslaved women as goods rather than people with the value attributed to a commodity rather than a person.

The conflation between people and property poses a problem for the easy categorization of people as property. Associating a person as a commodity doesn't always reflect the realities of the output from enslaved people since their labour could produce commodities and thus had inherent value. By renting out these women or putting them in industry, the enslaved population of Florence generated wealth by their physical labour, their production, and their bodies through breastmilk. As a result of their frequent sexual exploitation, enslaved women also (re)produced children who, upon age of majority or emancipation, were Florentines capable of inheriting, owning, and alienating their own property – in the legal sense if not in fact. In addition, while the children of free men and women lacked the legal ability to form their own contracts and thus were unfree in a limited sense, they were also not listed as household items like enslaved women and their children.⁹⁷ The placement of people into these lists of inventories as objects with pecuniary value and able to be moved or dispossessed by the state on behalf of the heir or heirs was a process of dehumanization and domination, but also signified the lack of understanding of enslaved peoples in the wider household structure.

Enslaved women were associated with the labour they provided, most often found in the kitchen next to standard kitchen supplies, or bedchambers where they nursed children.⁹⁸ This geographic proximity to their labour output is another indication of the uneasy relationship between labour output and commodification. Servant women were never put into these lists, probably because they had relationships outside of the immediate household and were not seen

⁹⁷ This would probably defeat the purpose of the state trying to protect the property of guardian-less orphans.

⁹⁸ ASF MPAP 1, fol. 338r; MPAP 4 fol. 239v, 382r, 412v.

as property. However, they generated much of the same work and value as the enslaved women as property. The placement of these women within the active household, rather than on the peripheral property or land meant that they were domestic servants in direct service to the members of the household. Despite the equation of enslaved people with chattel, slaves were not placed next to animals in these inventories. Animals such as pigs and horses usually filled the section of the inventory reserved for rural property among farmland and vineyards.⁹⁹ These animals also did not have names attached to them, but rather descriptors of age – such as suckling pig or corsair horses – and were in-line with the rest of the items in the rural property.

In the household inventories, many enslaved women were recorded with small biographical details, such as their name or their ages, to further identify them. Since most households only had one or two enslaved persons, the names were probably not used to distinguish between different enslaved persons but rather to identify them as enslaved persons to the office. The need to identify the enslaved and the provision of the detail in a seemingly neutral list of items creates questions for how enslaved people occupied the space within their households. While it is true that household items such as a *padella* or a saltshaker could be carried out of the kitchen as the enslaved woman can leave the kitchen, the *padella* needed to be acted upon, while the woman was her own agent. There was also no need to distinguish from one *padella* from the other or register how old an “old” *padella* was, but such identifying markers were required for enslaved women and their children in these inventories. The enslaved woman whose name and age were recorded in the kitchen was not limited to her life in the kitchen. As seen from previous discussions, including the criminal co-conspirators of this chapter, enslaved women often had rich neighbourhood associations and lives. These records, while

⁹⁹ ASF MPAP 152, fol. 216r-v.

comprehensively giving an insight into a typical Florentine household, renders immobile and static a class of people that had dynamic identities and relationships with the world around them.

Catasto

The *Catasti* of 1427 and 1458 also did not present any consistency in the reporting of the enslaved, sometimes putting them with the *bocche* that the rest of the dependents in the household were, and sometimes as assets, next to stakes in the *Monte* or country houses, even while free children were in the *bocche*.¹⁰⁰ Placing a person under *bocche* entitled the household to a deduction of 200 florins for the support of these mouths while investments were taxable, thus it would have been financially beneficial to put enslaved women under the category of *bocche* since they did not feature into the category of salaried worker that lived within a household.¹⁰¹ The mixture of people with investments in the *Catasto* reflected the wider uncertainty between the categories of people and property that enslaved peoples presented to Florentines.

The children of enslaved women placed in these inventories point to the tensions with the application of the law where the father's status was passed down. This placement also did not work in the social world where enslaved peoples and their children functioned. This problem was confounded by the question of the children of the enslaved – whose placement in inventories next to their mothers was a departure from the lack of maternity that Florentines otherwise attributed to their enslaved servants. With the high number of abandonments of the children of

¹⁰⁰ Spinetto di Lucha Pitti lists Altravilla, his illegitimate daughter with Lucia, the slave of Alessandro del Monte, as one of the *bocche* in his catasto record of 1457 while his father, Lucha di Buonacorso Pitti lists his slave under assets next to his Monte accounts. ASF Catasto 792-1960 (Microfilm) 25r-27v.

¹⁰¹ Also see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy *Tuscans and their Families*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 12 and *Online Catasto of 1427*. Version 1.3. Edited by David Herlihy, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, R. Burr Litchfield and Anthony Molho. [Machine readable data file based on D. Herlihy and C. Klapisch-Zuber, Census and Property Survey of Florentine Domains in the Province of Tuscany, 1427-1480.] Florentine Renaissance Resources/STG: Brown University, Providence, R.I., 2002.

enslaved mothers at the *Innocenti*, the erasure of motherhood and therefore familial relationships served to alienate the mothers further from establishing their positions in Florence. However, placing them next to their children in inventories – while their children were freeborn – both places the stain of enslavement on these children and acknowledges the maternal lineage that was passed down. It also points to the fact that the placement of these enslaved women as items within a household inventory was not a direct reflection of their legal status since the children who did not inherit their legal status were also placed with them in the list. The inclusion of these children might be more realistically an indication of the social status of enslaved women and their children. The conflation between social and legal status can be seen in this bureaucratic office's record where the enslaved mother and the free child were placed together as a single unit. The association of the child with the mother in the kitchen was a result of the labour performed by the mother and the stain of enslaved status that she gave to her children.

Notarial Documents

One of the most important aspects of Florentine archival records was their dependence on notaries to officiate almost all documents that pertained to the movement of property that could be governed, or disputed, legally. This includes wills, manumissions, and legitimations, that Florentine people used to record their lives, and by extension, the lives of the people they held as property. Notarial documents outlined the slave's introduction into Florence to her manumission, whether as a separate legal action or as part of a testament. Her children's legitimations – in the case that the father required another heir – would also be recorded. The sale of an enslaved woman was recorded as a contract between the seller and the buyer, and will often include the name, race, and age of the woman. She might be rented out by her owner, with the rental contract

officiated by a notary or she might be resold by her original buyer.¹⁰² The constant contact that a propertied household had with their notary ensured that enslaved peoples featured in notarial documents at all stages of their lives in Florence.

The language of purchase followed the same guidelines as other large purchases that required notarization and authentication. The need to catalogue the enslaved woman was not as detailed as found in the *Registro degli Schiavi*. They are only identified by their name, age, and race – with the race ostensibly to demonstrate that they were not native Florentines and thus able to be sold according to the laws of Florence. The language of purchase follows that of other large and expensive transfers of property, such as the purchase of land or housing. Enslaved people were bought individually, with the agreement between two people. The records of her enslavement and origins were not given in the purchase.

More interesting are the documents that manumit the enslaved women, as these documents mention the knowledge that the woman was born-free and returning to her natural state of freedom. The language used by the notaries seemingly understands that enslavement was a temporary condition and that the women themselves, despite being termed “infidels” possessed a natural freedom when born that was taken away when they were enslaved by Latin Christians. There was no mention of the religion of the emancipated slave – whether she would return to the religion of her birth or remain in Florence as a Latin Christian. Since one of the rationales for enslavement was that those born from “infidels” would be enslaved, the Christianisation of the manumitted woman might have been given as a justification for her freedom, however this is not mentioned in the manumissions. Enslaved women who were manumitted were returned to their

¹⁰² ASF NA 14895, fol. 190r.

original state, and some were mentioned as becoming a citizen of Rome.¹⁰³ The lack of religious justification might be because the notaries were not concerned with the spiritual side of the emancipation but rather the legal terminologies that would ensure that the woman would not be liable to be enslaved again. A woman could sue for her freedom with the notarial document indicating her emancipation.

The most likely time an enslaved person in Florence would be manumitted was through the last wills and testaments of their Florentine owners. Most of the time, the newly freed individual was given a stipend, but seemed to continue to live in, or at least close to, the household of their owners.¹⁰⁴ Sometimes they continued to live and work for their former owners as paid servants. In the case of Lucia, the enslaved mother of Francesco Datini's heir, she was married to one of Datini's associates with a dowry.¹⁰⁵ She was not mentioned in Datini's will, presumably because she was already provided with a husband and a dowry. The manumission of enslaved people in their households seemed like one of the ways that Florentines reconciled themselves with the ownership of people after their death.

In some records, an enslaved woman was well cared for after the death of her main owner. However, manumission and a good stipend usually came with the preamble that she gave good service and was honourable. For example, Agnolo Vettori's testament included the care of his freed servant Agnesa.¹⁰⁶ Vettori's will was written in 1483 but mentions that Agnesa was freed on 17 May 1475. The fact that she was still in Vettori's will meant that she was probably still working and living closely with the Vettori family. She was to be given 12 bushels of good

¹⁰³ NA 9039 197r-198r, 333r-334v, NA 9041 f. 27r, NA 9042 f. 143r, NA 9040 218v, 245v.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy*, 144.

¹⁰⁵ See Joseph P. Byrne and Eleanor A. Congdon "Mothering in the Casa Datini" *Journal of Medieval History* (Vol. 25 no. 1, 1999), 35-56.

¹⁰⁶ NA 1790, f. 53v.

grain – which he stipulated to mean not powdery, 5 barrels of good wine, and 12 Florentine soldi or things of equivalent value, as well as allowing her to stay in the house for the duration of her life, and – Vettori further stipulates – Agnesa’s heirs would be free. Many manumissions mention this detail, even though the law would have prevented her children from being enslaved unless the child had an enslaved father.¹⁰⁷ Much of the management of these items would be left to his heirs in the future, and it is uncertain how closely they would have followed the letter of Vettori’s will after his death.

Legitimations of the children of the enslaved came out of the necessity of finding an heir amidst the high infant mortality. The children of enslaved people were widespread. In the 1458 Catasto, Thomas Kuehn found 141 children whose mothers were identified as enslaved women and 69 whose mothers were identified as *serva*, which could mean servant or slave out of a total of 407 illegitimate children.¹⁰⁸ In this period, roughly half of the children abandoned to the *Innocenti* were also the children of enslaved women. These numbers indicate the amount of exploitation that an enslaved woman would find in Florence but also give some ideas to the frequency of sexual assault. Since only legitimate children could inherit the property of the father without dispute, legitimation was one of the ways to ensure that property was not split up among relatives. The protection of the family property was a “legal and moral imperative” for Florentines, and frequently found in official documents.¹⁰⁹ The wealthy merchant Francesco Datini legitimated his daughter, Ginevra, the daughter of his slave Lucia, because he had no

¹⁰⁷ NA 9039, f. 197r.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy*, 144.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Kuehn, “Inheritance and Identity in Early Renaissance Florence: The Estate of Paliano di Falco” in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*. ed. William Connell (LA: University of California Press, 2002), 151.

other heirs.¹¹⁰ His wife only received a living stipend and the usufruct of their house. However, even despite the legitimation of his child, Francesco Datini's property was mostly divided and given to charity - especially important in the later founding of the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, the Florentine Foundling hospital. This division was probably a result of both the gender of Ginevra and her illegitimate birth.¹¹¹ Thomas Kuehn's work on legitimacy in fifteenth-century Florence indicates that even legitimations did not result in a universal heir.¹¹² In notarial records, official documents of legitimation gave the name of the mother, regardless of whether she was enslaved or free. In one case, the mother, Lena, was previously freed by the father of the child, Filippo Ricci, and was stated as previously the slave of Filippo, having been restored to her natural condition.¹¹³ The formulaic document demonstrates the maternal line through the legal processes that legitimated a child, linking the legitimated child to her enslaved mother and proving their previous illegitimacy via the fact of the mother's enslaved status. The strength of the maternal lineage and the taint of former enslavement was written into the cultural fabric of Florence and permeated the legal documentations of slavery in Florentine lives.

Conclusion

While enslaved peoples number very few in Florence, their existence required the calibration of the legal system to accommodate people as property and permeated the seemingly innocuous daily activities of the state. The sordid tales of poison and murder make for interesting reading, but they also tell an important tale of the consequences and the unfeasibility of owning and treating people like property. This chapter hopes to address this incongruity by detailing the ways that Florentines paid for the dehumanization of the women they treated as slaves within

¹¹⁰ Joseph P. Byrne and Eleanor A. Congdon "Mothering in the Casa Datini" 52.

¹¹¹ Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy*, 201.

¹¹² Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy*, 167-205.

¹¹³ NA 9040, f. 107r.

the context of the legal records and the legislation that prescribed the status of these enslaved women. Using a narrative structure with the information provided by Florence's criminal records, it is possible to imagine the spaces, the social structures, and the rationales behind these actions.

Legislation prescribed an idealized way of enacting the processes of enslavement in Florence that could not address all the complications of owning people as property. By treating enslaved people as purely property, legislation failed to address and protect free, freed, and enslaved people in Florence. This led to the courts being forced to be the deciding factor in the treatment of enslaved peoples as legally liable people and as objects, giving a wider interpretation of the written law or the lack thereof. The lack of proper legislation also caused confusion in the ways that enslaved and free people interacted with the bureaucracies and offices of the communal government. In the end, the processes of enslavement and the objectification of people, while a powerful tool, cannot wholly encompass all the experiences of personhood experienced by enslaved people in Florentine laws and society. Such experiences are qualified by the legal systems of the commune, but also mitigated by its complex processes and failures as the courts tried to reflect the social mores of Florence.

The attempt, in this chapter, to bring the people in these tales to life also tries to attempt to mitigate the dehumanisation of people in the study of the history of slavery. Challenging the assumptions about court records, and with an eye on the missing pieces of criminal activity, the demonization of these foreign women requires reconsideration. Relying only on the words of the enslavers reflects their language and their worldview, while running into the problems of treating their omissions as historical realities. It is easy to emphasize the victimhood of Florentines when they stressed it themselves in their own records, but it is just as important to remember that they

were victims of the people they saw and used as objects. In the end, these Florentine murder victims were rather victims of the lack of imagination of the Florentine legislation and the inability to confine humans as solely property.

Conclusion

The study of slavery continues to be a topic that needs to be reinserted into the historical narrative. The perpetuation of a vision of historical development independent of the influence of enslavement in the Mediterranean is a result of the wholesale purchase of an agenda that sublimates the diversity of the human experience for the benefit of a European narrative. Wilful omissions, both on the part of past scholarship and their subjects, make up a major part of the necessity of (re)visiting enslavement as a historical practice. The history of slavery runs parallel with the history of Europe. As scholars have already pointed out, slavery was a continuous and evolving institution in Eastern and Western Europe from the antiquity until modernity.¹ My interjection into this continuous phenomenon investigates enslavement in late medieval and early modern Florence between its official regulation in 1364 to the beginning of its change into a strategy of statecraft in 1500. Enslavement's permeation into every facet of society can be seen in the wide range of topics covered in the study's four chapters.

The lack of direct discussion regarding the everyday details of enslavement practices requires reading against the grain of major sources and placing these sources in their social and cultural world. Demographic calculations and quantitative analysis in premodernity are both difficult to ascertain and require deep reading to understand how these numbers fit into the social context of the time. Any quantitative analysis that only focuses on the numbers runs into the problem using a modern lens to draw conclusions on premodern society. In addition, calculations in relation to the demography of enslavement and Florentine society has already been done by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, David Herlihy, Sally McKee, Richard Goldwithe, Thomas Kuehn,

¹ See Christopher Paoella, *Human Trafficking in Medieval Europe: Slavery, Sexual Exploitation, and Prostitution*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

and Monica Boni.² This study builds on these works to add context for the modern reader but also attempts to access the *mentalité* of enslavement through a close reading of sparse sources. In the study of premodern slavery, absolute numbers are not as important as the social and cultural impact that the functions of enslavement had on the society that allowed the practise.

This study is organized into four major parts, all of which investigate a different facet of slavery before and during this period to provide both an overview of enslavement in Florence and to integrate the study of Florentine slavery with wider discussions on gender, sexuality, and race. While numbers, data, and economic considerations form a necessary part of the discussion, this study's main focus is qualitative discussion of people, including their motivations, ideologies, conscious and subconscious biases, and realities. Starting with the intellectual development of enslavement from Roman law to humanist philosophy, I reconciled Roman law, canon law, political philosophy, and humanist ideas of freedom and citizenship with the practise of enslavement in Florence. I began the discussion around three key political and intellectual historians of the twentieth century; Hans Baron, Quentin Skinner, and J.G.A. Pocock. Their arguments for the continuity of Roman legal systems and their novel interpretations by Florentines in developing their political consciousness provided the framework for an in-depth study on the ideologies behind slavery. In terms of humanist texts, I looked at how Florence was defined to draw the limits of foreignness and belonging as a changing relationship in the late medieval and early modern period.

² Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and Davied Herlihy, *Tuscans and Their Families*. (Westford, CT: Yale University Press, 1978; Sally McKee, Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy." in *Slavery and Abolition*. (Vol. 29, No. 3. Routledge: 2008); Richard Goldwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), and Monica Boni, *La domesticité en Toscane aux XIVe et XVe siècles* (Dissertation, 2006).

In the second section, I evaluated how slavery functioned socially through letters, *ricordanze*, notarial documents, diaries, and official state registers. Understanding enslavement through the lived experiences of enslaved and enslaving people allows an understanding of how the practise permeated all facets of Florentine life, particularly in the intersections between the private and public sphere. As domestic labour was the main rationale behind enslavement pre-1500, enslaved women (90% of enslaved people were women) were both an outsider within the home and an insider outside of it. I contend that in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence, relationships between enslaved and enslaver were constant negotiations that generated both cooperation and animosity. To do this, I look at specific examples such as the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* and its reliance on both enslaved labour for its operation and the overrepresentation of the children of enslaved women in its foundlings. I also consider three different households in Florence with a careful reading of their letters - especially by women - to evaluate the relationships between enslaved domestic service, women in the domestic sphere, and their neighbourhood relationships. However, these discussions are still firmly rooted in the power dynamics of both gendered, sexualized, and racialized ideas of slavery that Florentines both inherited from the middle ages and morphed to serve their lived experiences and needs in regards to their enslavement practises.

The third section engaged with the most recent historiographical works on the creation and permeation of premodern race and the critical theories that enable a more nuanced view of enslavement and power structures as intersecting with class, gender, religion, appearance, and geographic location. Working with a critical definition of race as one that is predicated on hierarchy and the selection for essentialized traits, rather than based on biological traits that reinforce present-day racial boundaries, allowed a nuanced understanding of how Florentines

were able to create and manage these boundaries over time as a relationship of power. I evaluate the language and linguistic choices that Florentines made when they categorised and justified enslavement. By looking at the things that Florentines recorded as extraordinary, and through that, how Florentines then created the boundaries for the ordinary, it is possible to see the language of otherness through genealogies, physical features, markers, and religion. For example, the application of the Florentine terminologies of *nero* and *ghezzo* to enslaved peoples and their children point to the notability of darkness as a category. The complex descriptions of enslaved bodies, their marks, and their origins, as well as deliberate records of colour in enslaved peoples, demonstrate the categories Florentines saw when they considered those that were eligible for enslavement. Thereby Florence created a hierarchy of essentialized traits within the practises of enslavement. The records of the cultural practices of enslavement, such as marks, or pierced ears, indicate that factors of race were not just biological, but also in socialised differences.

The last section dealt with crime, criminality, and official records within the context of the Florentine legal systems and bureaucratic interventions. I begin the discussion with the premise, as established by microhistorians and legal historians such as Thomas Cohen, Daniel Lord Smail, Elizabeth Cohen, Guido Ruggiero, and Edward Muir, that criminal courts are a site of negotiation where law codes were applied with discretion based on a myriad of different factors.³ While sources limited the discussion to summaries of criminal judgements and legislation, analyses of how the legislation was written, rewritten, as well as applied or ignored,

³ Tom Cohen, *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).; Dan Smail, *The Consumption of Justice: Emotions, Publicity, and Legal Culture in Marseille, 1264–1423* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Elizabeth Cohen and Thomas Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome: Trials before the Papal Magistrates*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, *History from Crime* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

revealed Florentine perceptions of criminality and immoral behaviour. This section also dealt with the occurrences of slavery in the official records of Florentine law - not just in the criminal sense, but in the way that the communal government and its citizens kept records and interacted with the law in their daily lives. Enslaved people, as part of this complex network of state and personal relationships, appear in the many ways people worked with and against their governments and their fellow Florentines. In the attempt by the state to regulate the daily lives of Florentines, not just by punishing deviance, but also in record keeping, social welfare, and taxation, the commune demonstrated, and created the vehicles for Florentines to demonstrate, their complex relationships with enslaved peoples in Florence.

These four chapters provide an overarching examination of slavery through the roughly 150 years that is known in Florence as the “Renaissance”, punctuated by the wealth of Florence as an international power. While the official regulation of slavery in Florence in 1364 fits within the framework of rebirth, it is important to remember that these legislative changes occurred in the context of the wider Mediterranean world in which Florentines participated as part of the larger cultural and material exchange. The exchange of people, both voluntary and trafficked, meant that norms of behaviour, languages of belonging and negotiations of boundaries were part of a continuous network that spanned unbroken from the Roman period. In this way, this study uses Florence as a microcosm as a part of the wider argument for a shared cross-cultural, cross-religious Mediterranean culture of slavery.⁴

At the same time, this study also highlights the specific conditions in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence that make it an important intervention for the history of slavery. These conditions are both a result of the historiographical importance placed on Florence as a part of

⁴ For more on this argument, see Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

the European narrative, and Florence's specific mixture of republican rhetoric, private and public records, institutions, and peripheral connection to the Mediterranean. Florence in the historiographical imagination has been a place that was, from the inception of the periodization of the Renaissance by Burkhart, one of the key places shaping the Western European ideology of progress and modernity. Despite challenges by historians as early as Johann Huizinga (1919), this idea persists today with the fuzziness of the period between 1350-1500 in Florence being claimed as both the mediaeval and the early modern.

While this study challenges trecento and quattrocento Florentine exceptionalism by placing its slavery practises in context with the larger exchanges of the Mediterranean and as a continuation of established norms, it also revealed some of the unique characteristics of enslavement in Florence. Each chapter was able to access unique Florentine sources, such as the *Registro degli Schiavi*, the *Balie e Bambini* records at the *Innocenti*, and the wealth of private *ricordanze* and notarial documents, to provide a different view of slavery through the genre of each source. Florence's position also as a retail market for human trafficking during this period also meant that it was particularly susceptible to market changes - as can be seen in the uptake of the West Africa-Lisbon source of trafficked peoples as early as 1461.⁵ The languages Florentines used to describe the race of people differed from those on the frontlines of the source of enslaved peoples, such as Venice and Genoa, but still correspond to general markers of geography, culture, religion, and physical characteristics. It was also quick to adopt new vocabularies and geographies, as seen in the location of Lucia from Guinea, whose unfortunate story was highlighted in chapter four. Thus, slavery in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence was exceptional as both a case study and a critical juncture.

⁵ See Chapter 3 on race.

I hope what emerges is a nuanced look at both the practises of slavery and its ideologies relating to this particular place and time. Inserting enslavement into the discussion of Florentine history reveals how every facet of Florentine life shaped and was shaped by their participation in slavery. The use of slaves has wider cultural ramifications than its numbers suggest. Since histories of thinkers, patrons, artists, and writers cannot be complete without consideration of the societies that they shaped and were shaped by, looking at the histories of the people that worked for and were often exploited by those that left behind records is a necessary exercise. By giving these enslaved women names, and understanding their personal histories, it is possible to see how they fit into the larger ideology of history.

In stories of the progress of European history, Florence stands out as a city that believed in freedom, liberty, and republican statehood. Parallel to the view of Enlightenment as the progenitors of the modern age through its focus on reason, nature, and humanity, premodern and early modern Florence has stood as a bastion of secularism, individualism, and republicanism. However, such a view of the Enlightenment is disconnected from the reality that empire, slavery, and environmental destruction supplied the wealth that fueled the leisured philosophers in the *salons* of France, Scotland, and Prussia. This is also paralleled by a history of Florence that ignores its participation in racialization, slavery, and sexual exploitation. While we celebrate the humanity and *caritas* that led Francesco Datini to fund, Brunelleschi to design, and the *Por Santa Maria* to manage the Ospedale degli Innocenti, we should also realize that the necessity of the *Innocenti* came in large part from the need to find a place for the children resulting from the rape of enslaved women by Florentines. Datini's rationale probably came from the enslaved Lucia, his servant, who provided him with his only child, the daughter Ginevra, and the

Innocenti itself employed enslaved labour and purchased lactating women to run the hospital and feed the children they saved.

With a fuller picture, it is possible to understand that the idea of Europe was created on an incomplete reading of history. As history grapples with itself as a discipline and an ideological tool, it is important to fill in this incomplete reading to reconsider the idea of Europe. This study attempts to add a facet of that by discussing the women who lived, worked, and died as casualties of the European narrative. Ultimately, this study argues that these women have earned a place in the revaluation and rewriting of this narrative.

Appendix

Appendix A – Abandoned children with Enslaved Mothers (1450-1454) AOIF B+B 486

Page	Date	Bambino	Sesso	Mother	Nome	Owner	Father	Balia	Owner of Balia	Brought to Innocenti
3v	19/11/1450	Pontrenemo e Innocenti	M	schiaiva		Giovanni di Maso Giugno				
5r	3/12/1450	Antonia e Giovanna	F	schiaiva		Bernardo Compagni	Antonio di Papi			
6r	25/12/1450	Nastasia e Innocenti	F	Schiava	Caterina	Bernardo		schiaiva	Bernardo Causi	
6v	04/1/1450	Tomasso e Innocente	M	schiaiva		Niccolo di Giovanni di Pradro Lanaiolo		Ginevra (schiaiva)	Giovanni di Quinenechi	
15v	11/4/1451	Benedetto e Francesco	M	schiaiva		aldecotto di [left blank]				
19v	27/4/1451	Pace e Maria	F	schiaiva		Ghaleotto Guigni				
22r	11/5/1451	Bercatio e Ferrino	M	schiaiva		Lazari di Ghattieri	Francesco di Niccholo Ferrini			
23v	19/5/1451	Bernardo e Innocente	M	schiaiva	Giovanna	Parente di Giovanni di Piero Parente				
25v	1/6/1451	Giovanni e Seo	M	schiaiva		uno d' Albizzi				
26v	10/6/1451	Barnaba e Innocente	M	schiaiva	Chaterina	Andrea di Lapo Guardi				
33v	30/6/1451	Matteo e Francesco	M	schiaiva	Madallena	Antonio Matteo e Francesco				
34r	30/6/1451	Piera e Giovanna	F	schiaiva	Giuliana	Jacopo Mortigli				
35v	3/7/1451	Piero e Pagholo	M	schiaiva	Maria	Ridolfo di Bardi				
42r	27/7/1451	Tubio e Feo	M			Chardinale dalle Ullecta				Chaterina schiaiva
44v	25/8/1451	Bartolomea e innocente	F	schiaiva		Alchanto del Guglio				
45r	17/8/1451	Lisabetta e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Luigi Parratesi	Antonio (famiglio di Luigi)			
46r	12/09/1451	Esmeralda e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Francesco di Altobancho degli Alberti				
47r	14/9/1451	Francesco e Innocente	M	schiaiva	Marta	Tanburni di Nicholo Chambini				
47v	17/9/1451	Filippo e Innocente	M	schiaiva		Antonio d'Antonio				
48r	20/9/1451	Mattea e Domenicha	F	schiaiva		Nicholo Renini				
50r	19/10/1451	Benedetto	M	schiaiva	Chiara	Ugholano				
50v	27/10/1451	Lisa	F	schiaiva		Piero di Bardi				
51r	3/11/1451	Santi e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Alessandro di Bardi				
52v	7/11/1451	Domenicha Innocente	F	schiaiva	Marta	Ugholino Martelli				
55r	29/11/1451	Pellegrina e Ginevra	F							schiaiva
56v	12/12/1451	Alessandra e Ginevra	F	schiaiva						
57r	14/12/1451	Orsa e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Bentivenni di Bartolomeo dello Scarfa	Antonio di Ghesi di Buono da San Gimignano			
58v	26/12/1451	Rinbaldo	M	schiaiva						schiaiva (Casa Carducci)
61r	16/2/1451	Margherita e Chaterina	F		Chaterina	Antonio d'Antdatta				schiaiva (Margherita)
62r	16/2/1451	Antonio e Lorenzo	M	schiaiva		un di Pazzi	un chonadino			
63r	20/2/1451	Lodovicho e Domenicho	M	schiaiva		Andrea di Laferro	Giovanni d'Antontio Baldovini			
66r	9/3/1451	Anna e Tomasa	F	schiaiva		Piero daiese giudice e dottore		schiaiva	Giovanni Charducci	
67r	21/3/1451	Antonio e Benedetta	F	schiaiva		[line broke]	cristofano di tomasso tintore di seta			
69r	26/4/1452	Talana e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Tomasso d'Agnolo Chorbinegli		schiaiva	Antonio Boucregli	
69v	14/5/1452	Bartalo e Agnolo	M	schiaiva	Chaterina	Piero del Ghuanto				
70r	14/5/1452	Ginevra e Alessandra	F	schiaiva	Chatera	era libera	Fabiano di Santi Die (fuori Firenze)			
70v	22/5/1453	Liperata e Innocente	F	schiaiva	Madalena					
72r	27/5/1452	Marino e Francesco	M	schiaiva		Mariotto Banchi				
74r	4/6/1452	Domenicho e Innocente	M	schiaiva		Domenicho				
76v	9/6/1452	Alessandra e Madallena	F			Francesca da Barberini	Matteo Domenicho			Giana schiaiva (Francesca Barberini)
77r	10/6/1452	Mea e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Piero Pechori				
77v	11/6/1452							schiaiva Caterina	Ridolfo di Gugliemo Altoviti	
78v	12/6/1452	Angelica e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Andrea Betti				
84r	17/7/1452	Baronto e Givoanni	M							
85r	25/7/1452	Jacopo e Salomea	F	schiaiva	Aghata	Guidi di Piero de Recci				
86v	3/8/1452	Francesco e Innocente	F							schiaiva
88r	26/8/1352	Chontessina e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Jacopo Villi				
89v	16/09/1452	Madalena e Innocente	F	schiaiva	Chaterina	Jacopo di Pagnolo Ridolfi				
92v	6/10/1452	Rinaldo e Busteacho	M	schiaiva		Mario Donati	Busteacho (famiglio di Mario)			
94r	8/10/1452	Marcho e Matteo	M	schiaiva		Nicholo Tournabuoni				
95v	23/10/1452	Simona e Taddea	F	schiaiva	Chaterina	Domenicho Guingni				
96r	27/10/1452	Taddea e Innocente	F	schiaiva	Maria	Pagholo Baroncegli	Jacopo di Domenico di Bastiano			
98v	10/11/1452	Vespasiano	M	schiaiva	Marta	Messer Salustro da Perugia				
99r	16/11/1452	Lapo e Nabale	M	schiaiva			Girolamo da Chermen			
99r	16/11/1452							schiaiva Chaterina	Giovanni Ghori	
100v	26/11/1452	Cleopea	F	schiaiva	Maddalena	Niccholaio degli Alessandri				
101v	12/12/1452	Vincenzo e Ghabriello	F	schiaiva		Giovanni				
102r	12/12/1452	Lionetta e Lucia	F	schiaiva		uno de Panciatechi				
102v	21/12/1452	Nicholetta e Tomasa	F	schiaiva		Angnolo Buoni				

103r	22/12/1452	Agostino e Tomasso	M	schiaiva		Domenico di Tandì			
105v	23/1/1452	Orsina e Angnesa	F	schiaiva					
106v	1/2/1452	Asimo e Mariotto	M	schiaiva		messer Angolo Aomaiuoli e Paghoni			
107v	7/2/1452	Ugenio e Aghostino	M	schiaiva		Parente Parenti			
108r	9/2/1452	Vettorio e Apollonio	M	schiaiva		Francesco Tosingli			
111r	22/2/1452	Antonia e Franca	F						schiaiva Marietta
116r	23/3/1452	Mariotto e Antonio	M	schiaiva		Andrea Massini			
118v	1/4/1453	Francesca e Domenica	F	schiaiva	Gita	Filippo Brachazio			
112v	11/4/1452	Anna e Nofra	F	schiaiva		Iacho d'Orsini Lamfredini			
123r	23/4/1453	Mariello e Marcho	M	schiaiva		Mauro Ceffini			
125r	30/4/1453	Filippa e Simona	F	schiaiva		Alamano Salviati			
127r	11/5/1453	Veronicha e Giovanna	F	schiaiva		Piero di Pazzi			
132v	12/6/1453	Basilio e Nazareo	M	schiaiva		Jacopo di Ludovico della Chasa	Piero Bucherelli		
136r	19/7/1453	Giovanni e Charbinello	M	schiaiva	Chaterina	Mona Antonia donna di Barolomeo Chorbin Vieri di Tommaso di Bartolomeo Chorbinelli			
138r	26/7/1453	Ansidonea e Vettorea	F	schiaiva		Taddeo Rocherelli			
139r	1/8/1453						Giuliana schiaiva	Bartolomeo del mastro Lorenzo	
151r	29/11/1453	Fealiza e Mattea	F	schiaiva		Gallo Setaiole	Francesco e Matteo (in servarese)		
152v	12/11/1453	Piera e Giovanna	F	schiaiva		Piero Bernardi			
154r	19/11/1453	Verdiana e Maria	F	schiaiva		Chambino Chambini	Zanobi Marchia nelli di Priotore		
157v	3/1/1453	Basilio e Saladino	M	schiaiva		Saladino (famiglio di Doneo Adimari)			
160v	18/6/1453	Antonia e Lucrezia	F	schiaiva		Domenico di Lionardo			
164r	11/2/1453	Chiara e Buona	F	schiaiva		Zanobi di Tomaso Ginori	da Benischalperese		
166r	20/2/1453	Maria e Marietta	F	schiaiva		Mano Temperani	da Genoa		
168r	5/2/1453	Nicholo e Martino	M	schiaiva		Filippo Chami	il Testa Buga pettinatore di lana		
172v	17/3/1453	Ventura e Femina	F	schiaiva		Pappi Villani			2 schiave
173r	20/3/1453	Giulia e Pollonia	F	schiaiva		libera			
174v	24/03/1453	Buona Vetura e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Domenico di Tano			
175v	1/4/1454	Cristofano e Innocente	M	schiaiva		Cristofano del Bugliafo			
176r	1/4/1454	Lionardo e Innocente	M	schiaiva		Lionardo Manelli			
176v	2/4/1452	Chornelo e Innocente	M	schiaiva		Francesco Ghiudetti			
177v	4/4/1454	Ambrogio e Innocente	M	schiaiva		Jacopo Villani			
178r	7/4/1454	Ghostaza e Giovanna	F	schiaiva	Maria	Alessandro Acciughi	Jacopo dei Pazzi		
179r	8/4/1454	Mariotto e Antonio	M	schiaiva		Piero Breagli			
184r	7/5/1454	Martignano e Michele	M	schiaiva		Antonio di Messer Lorenzo Ridolfi			
186v	24/5/1454	Mattina e Zanobia	F	schiaiva		Jacopo Esorssi			
187r	26/5/1454	Giovanni e Ghardo	M			Michele			Marta schiaiva di Baveso Daverazuo
188v	5/6/1453	Sisto e Chornelli	M	schiaiva		Jacapo da Bardi			schiaiva
189r	3/6/1453	Ansuina e Elena	F	schiaiva		Bernardo Salviati			2 schiave
190r	10/06/1454	Giesto e Barnaba	M	schiaiva		Piero Fornaio			
192v/	19/06/1454	Maddalena e Francesca	F	schiaiva		chasa Martelli			
197v	27/06/1454	Bartolomeo e Giovanni	M				schiaiva	Zanobi Altovitti	
200r	4/7/1454	Chanbino e Ventura	M	schiaiva					
201r	7/7/1454	Romolla e Pacholla	F	schiaiva		Antonio di Pachollo in Fiesole			
204v	14/7/1454	Franchesina e Checca	F						2 schiave
205r	17/07/1454	Barbera e Orsina	F	Schiaiva	chaterina	Bernardo Ridolfi			
207r	12/8/1454	Domenico e Aghostino	M	schiaiva	Zita	Benedetto di Giovanni di Pazzino Ciccipoc Michele			
208r	26/8/1454	Aghostina e Innocente	F	schiaiva		Domenico dal Griesondo setaiuolo			
215r	22/9/1454	Giovanni e Matteo	M	schiaiva		Giovanni Giugni			
219r	27/10/1454	Simone e Taddeo	M	schiaiva		Sesolaio di Gentile di Somala			
220r	29/10/1454	Ginevra e Simona	F	schiaiva		Piero da Agostini Martini			
220v	31/10/1454	Giovanni Batista	M	schiaiva		Orlandi di Guisti			
222r	11/11/1454	Venna e Martina	F	schiaiva					
222v	14/11/1454	Giovanna e Tita	F	schiaiva			Chambio da Bisonsa		
224v	17/11/1454	Lionarda	F			Paciatta			schiaiva
226r	22/11/1454	Cecilia e Innocenta	F	schiaiva					

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