Mothers, Children, and Servants:

Gender, Social Power, and Domestic Service in *Trecento* and *Quattrocento* Tuscany

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History

Domestic servants were essential fixtures in the elite Tuscan home. They aided in their mistresses' childbirths, were the godmothers of elite children, served as wet nurses, and helped raise these children. While awarding their wealthy employers a degree of leisure and fulfilling a key role in religious ritual, the use of domestic servants in *Trecento* and *Quattrocento* Tuscan homes and families reinforced social hierarchies. These hierarchies were primarily performed through the relationships that mistresses and masters had with their domestic servants, both enslaved and salaried. The hierarchies that were constructed and reinforced within these relationships were not primarily predicated on race or ethnicity, as they had been elsewhere in Europe. Instead, they rested instead on ideas of gender and class, social categories often inextricably linked. These class- and gender-based hierarchies ultimately determined one's value within domestic relationships, both within and outside of the walls of the Florentine *casa*.

This question of value is best explored through two sets of relationships: that of a woman, either upper-class or a slave or servant, and her child and that of a female slave or domestic servant and her employers and their social networks. These relationships were part of a larger, interconnected nexus. A female slave or domestic servant in a middle- or upper-class Florentine *casa* enabled the family system of the elite by caring for the children of their employers. At the same time, servants were taken advantage of by their masters or other men in the household, birthing illegitimate children and increased complications in an already complex system. How a mother interacted with her child was intrinsically tied to her social status. Wealthy mothers were able to give their children comfortable lives through their domestic servants, while denying servant women the same proximity to their children. Poor women were valued less as mothers and women, both socially and in the context of the *casa*.

The idea of the *casa* and women's value within the domestic system was not strictly limited to the relationship of mother and child or mistress and servant. Indeed, domestic relationships involved other members of the community outside of the domicile's walls. This is particularly true in the context of godparentage and wet-nursing. The selection of godparents for a child functioned as a domestication of business relationships, solidifying economic and social alliances while concurrently adding a familial element. The godparents chosen for elite versus non-elite children were vastly different and reflected the implicit value of the child. Similarly, wet-nursing often took place outside of the home. The Florentine elite had a tendency to use their slaves and domestic servants – whose roles in the *casa* were functionally the same – as wet-nurses, often at the expense of the slave or servant's own child. These children were almost always sent to one of the city's foundling hospitals. Conversely, elite children were often sent to wet nurses' homes outside of the city, as it was believed that being out of the city improved a child's health. Even in relationships that took place outside of the home, these domestic – or domesticated – relationships reflected the class- and gender-based hierarchies that determined a woman and her child's value.

I have based largely on two primary sources: a collection of letters written by Margherita Datini, written to her husband Francesco, commonly known as the Merchant of Prato, and the *ricordanze* (Engl., record books) of Matteo di Niccolò Corsini, his son Giovanni di Matteo Corsini, and *his* son, Matteo di Giovanni Corsini.[i,ii] These each provide a different view into the elite Florentine household. Due to her husband's absence, the young Margherita was left largely in charge of the home and the people inside of it. Her letters provide a unique and valuable look into how elite women interacted with their domestic servants. The Corsini *ricordanze,* written by elite men, provide a different view of the Florentine household. "*Ricordanze"* were commonplace books, typically written by merchants in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Tuscany. The books contain accounts of the author's business dealings and travels, but also function as diaries that detail important family events, from birth and baptism to death. These books, as Raul Mordenti defines them, were pluralistic and multi-generational, and were typically self-celebratory in nature, so they were censored and embellished accordingly.[iii] Nevertheless, a cautious analysis of the Corsini books reveals how elites imagined themselves and their families, their relationship to religion, and how elite families functioned.

It is important to note that these sources make little, if any, reference to the ethnicity of their domestic employees. If a female servant or slave was ethnically othered—that is, treated differently based on her ethnic origin or race --from her masters in the Datini or Corsini households, it was seemingly not of any importance to the sources' authors. This could be for multiple reasons. In considering the audience of the letters or commonplace books, the ethnicity of a domestic servant or slave could have been well-known or understood between author and audience, and therefore not a point of emphasis. Ethnicity and race could have also could have just not been something that Renaissance Tuscans thought of as important. The key thing to remember here is that the ways in which Renaissance Tuscans thought of ethnicity was dissimilar to what modern audiences would define as ethnicity. In his *Libro segreto,* for example, Gregorio Dati routinely points to the perceived difference between the Florentines and the Genoese, a distinction that would be unperceivable to a modern, but especially non-Italian audience.[iv] Conversely, Dati makes note of ethnicity in a more traditional sense once in describing a sexual encounter with a Tatar woman that he had met in Valencia, which resulted in *an illegitimate child.*[v] *The definition of "race" and "ethnicity" in the late medieval Italian context* was complex, and should only exist within itself.

The issue of race in how the Renaissance *casa* operated daily is of similar importance, or lack thereof. Ethnic otherness did exist in late medieval Italy, especially regarding the races of slaves, despite its absence in the Datini letters and the *ricordanze*. In "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," Iris Origo points out that many serving maids of Florentine ladies "seemed to belong to a different race from the Florentine."[vi] Many of these slaves were Tatars, but included Russians, Circassians, Greeks, Moors, and Ethiopians.[vii] Race along these lines was noted in a Florentine slave register.[viii] In these slave registers, the ethnic origins of the slave was listed as an institutional, demographic marker. The race of slaves was also mentioned in more personal written sources of the day. Francesco Petrarch, for example, argued that the beauty of Venice had been "afflicted… with deformed Scythian faces, like when a muddy current destroys the brilliance of a clear one."[ix] Nevertheless, Sally McKee points out that the presence of ethnically- or racially-othered servants in Renaissance art "suggests that they were few enough to be exotic but common enough not to look out of place as servants."[x] Even though race-thinking existed in Tuscany, as it did throughout medieval Europe, ethnicity played a much lesser role in the selection of domestic servants than gender or class. In combing through slave purchase records, women were the predominant class bought in the Italian slave markets.[xi] Slave women, like poor women, had to find their places within the Florentine household.

Domestic service was a common occupation for the female Florentine poor, though was not exclusive to the lower strata of Florentine society, and was an occupation undertaken by all ages of women.[xii] Female domestic servants tended to enter the *casa* young, typically as preteens or young teenagers, with the hopes of opening the door to marriage and saving up enough money to secure a dowry.[xiii] Other women became domestic servants because of their inability-- or lack of desire –to marry. Such was the case of a servant named Caterina, who became a domestic servant after she "refuse[d] a husband."[xiv] Widows often became servants upon the deaths of their husbands. In the extant written sources, the way in which a servant was addressed and the title that she is given denoted her age and position in the smaller social hierarchy of the household. The word *monna*, sometimes spelled *mona*, was a term of respect given to women who were married—or widowed –or were at least middle-aged.[xv] Young, unmarried domestic servants were simply referred to by their names. These patterns can be seen in the letters of Margherita Datini as well as in the Corsini *ricordanze*, though servants' ages are rarely given.

Female slaves and domestic servants tended to command a higher price than their male counterparts. This was especially-- and unsurprisingly --true of young women.[xvi] A female slave, typically bought from the Venetian or Genoese market, cost between 26 and 192 *lire*, with some variation between the 1370s and the 1490s.[xvii] A female servant was paid between eight and nine *florins* a year on average.[xviii] Women had a high market value *because* of their femaleness. They were able to provide sexual pleasure to their masters and were able to nurse the children borne by their mistresses. Beyond nursing their mistress's children, female slaves and servants could be rented out, a lucrative business that, as Cristoph Cluse argues, contributed to the rape of women by their masters.[xix] In addition to duties performed with her body, female servant had a variety of responsibilities based contemporary prescribed gender roles. Her duties made her an ever-present fixture in an elite child's life, from birth through childhood.

Very few extant written sources describe what happened in the birth chamber in any great detail, likely because birth was a universal and, for the most part, unremarkable.[xx] Wealthy urban Florentines often gave birth in their country estates, removed from the hustle and bustle that came with city life. Within this country estate, the birthing chamber was a gendered, specifically female, space. Fathers were kept outside of the birthing room, though kept close enough to record the time of birth with remarkable precision. The birthing chamber itself was commanded by a *levatrice*—a midwife whose job was to deliver the baby without putting the mother or baby in danger.[xxi] In addition to the midwife, a woman would be assisted at birth by a paid birth attendant, the *guardadonna* (lit.: woman watcher).[xxii] She was somewhere between the medical professional of the *levatrice* and the domestic servants who assisted in the birth process.

Beyond the *guardadonna,* who was a paid specialist, Renaissance depictions of birth scenes in art illustrate the presence of servant women in the birthing chamber. These illustrations are especially prevalent in the *deschi di parto,* a symbolic tray given to a mother upon a successful birth. These trays, often commissioned, were painted and typically depicted birthing scenes. An examination of the ways in which women were depicted on these trays done by Jacqueline Marie Musacchio reveals a distinction between the different roles that women had based on their clothing and actions in the painting.[xxiii] An elite woman who had just given birth and her friends and relatives were depicted in richer, more colorful garments typical of wealthier women. The new mother typically sits up in bed, greeting her well-wishers. In contrast, servant women are dressed more simply, and are taking care of the baby in some way, usually washing it. One of the best examples of this dynamic is a 1440 altarpiece by Osservanza Master, entitled *The Birth of the Virgin*. Modeled after a contemporary birthing scene, Osservanza Master depicts St. Anne lying in bed, a well-dressed woman sitting at her feet. Simply dressed servant women attend St. Anne and her baby, the Virgin.[xxiv] Similar dynamics are depicted on birth trays and in other paintings.[xxv] These visual examples can help historians begin to reconstruct the birth room and its power relationships.

Almost absent are written and visual sources about how domestic servants gave birth. Neither the Corsini *ricordanze* or the letters of Margherita Datini describe the conditions of a poor woman's childbirth. The process was undoubtedly painful and was oftentimes deadly, especially without the comforts enjoyed by their elite counterparts. This is slightly ameliorated by the fact that domestic servants were likely able to use some of their master's resources that would be inaccessible to women not employed in a household. Either way, poor women's births were wrought with problems that their mistresses did not usually face. Foundlings who ended up in l'Ospedale degli Innocenti, for example, were often given to the hospital unwashed, which would have been the job of the midwife or attendants.[xxvi] How a child arrived at the foundling hospital was reflective of the conditions in which they were born. The lack of comforts and luxuries almost guaranteed that poor children suffered.

After birth, a newborn was brought swiftly to their local baptismal fount. Infant baptism had both a religious and social function. Baptizing a child at infancy was necessary for a child to obtain salvation— especially important considering the infant mortality rate notorious to the medieval period –because it allowed a baby to be cleansed of the original sin caused by Adam and Eve.[xxvii] Baptism shortly after birth would allow a child to spend less time in Purgatory and gain a place in Heaven if they should die in infancy. Along with the function of salvation, baptism after birth was, St. Thomas Aquinas argued, an introduction into Christian life.[xxviii] A child baptized in infancy received an introduction into the faith that would allow it to have a strong faith life in the years beyond infancy.[xxix] An infant's baptism was also its introduction into the Florentine community at large. The child joined the proverbial Church family and became a parish member upon baptism. The social consequences of baptism were heavily based on the socioeconomic position of the mother.

One example of these social consequences is the selection of godparents. Godparents, especially godfathers, spoke on the infant's behalf at its baptism, vouching for the validity of the baby's faith, and became guardians for babies should anything happen to the birth parents. As Louis Haas points out, godparents were rarely blood relatives, and were often chosen for the purposes of maintaining social bonds.[xxx] Godparentage could be a way to maintain friendships but was more often used to affirm business relationships. Gregorio Dati, for example, chose thirteen godfathers for his son, Niccolò, all of whom were his work colleagues.[xxxi] Godmothers appear much fewer in written sources, which Christiane Klapisch-Zuber argues is the consequence of godmotherhood's subordinate character to godfatherhood. In contrast, Haas points out that godmothers were of much lesser importance to the male-dominated *ricordanze* than godfathers.[xxxii] When godmothers were designated, they tended to be from either less prestigious families or were servants, a symptom of social stratification. The aim was to ensure that wealthier children had a contingency mother, even if that came at the cost of a poor child.

These trends are reflected in the Corsini *ricordanze.* In the *Memorie familiari di Matteo di Niccolò Corsini,* the *Memorie familiari di Giovanni di Matteo Corsini,* and the *Memorie familiari di Matteo di Giovanni Corsini,* the names, birthdates, and details of baptism are all written in considerable detail. An account of the baptismal sponsors is mentioned for almost every child.[xxxiii] These godparents are written as "holding" the baby during the ritual.[xxxiv] Mostly male sponsors are named, and there is some degree of name recognition that points to other elite Florentines that denote relationships between aristocratic families. For instance, one of the co-fathers of Matteo Corsini's daughter, Chaterina, is aristocrat and artist Ugolino Martelli.[xxxv] In contrast, co-mothers were rarely listed despite their vital role in the birthing process. Corsini mentions women as co-mothers in four descriptions, almost always when there were no godfathers at the baptism. They are noted as being from less prestigious families. In one case, Corsini describes the woman who held his son, Lodovico Nicholaio as "Salvagia *povera,"* Salvagia the poor.[xxxvi] It can be assumed that Salvagia was a servant of the Corsini family that had helped her mistress during birth. In contrast, Giovanni Corsini makes no mention of women in his descriptions of births and baptism.

Who, then, served as godmothers or godfathers for poor children or children that elite men had with their female servants? If the Corsini writers had children with their servants, which is likely, they did not mention these illegitimate children in their *ricordanze*. For orphaned or abandoned children, Nicholas Terpstra argues, godparentage was not traceable, and these godparents had very little impact in the lives of abandoned children.[xxxvii] Illegitimate children had with "pauper" women, however, did have baptisms. Artist Benvenuto Cellini, for examples, writes about how he impregnated a fifteen-year-old girl but had the child baptized and given appropriate godparents.[xxxviii] Usually, however, godparents to lower-class children were less prestigious. In a March 1395 letter to Francesco Datini, Margherita Datini mentions that Francesco asked an agricultural laborer called Schiatta to be the godfather of "the little slave girl."[xxxix] Despite being the children of wealthy fathers, babies born to poor women were considered less valuable in the solidification of business relationships through godparent selection.

Baptism was as crucial for a newborn's spiritual health as breastfeeding was for its physical health. In Florence's middle- and upper-class families, a mother breastfeeding her own child was a rare sight. This was not unique to Renaissance Tuscany: elite women throughout medieval Europe had employed wet nurses to feed their children. The use of wet nurses was distinctly related to the primary function of elite women in their households: to bear children, especially sons, that would be heirs to the family's economic and cultural capital. The contraceptive quality of feeding one's own baby, coupled by notoriously high infant mortality rates, led middle- and upper-class women to employ wet nurses. In theory, nurses allowed for more pregnancies and therefore a higher chance of successfully producing an heir. These *balie* (sing., *balia*) were staples in elite Florentine families that helped the *casa* function.

Choosing a suitable wet nurse was an important task that was not taken lightly. In a 1397 letter to one of her husband's employees, Margherita Datini put forth the guidelines for how to find a satisfactory milk-mother. According to Datini, one should pay for one good wet nurse rather than a string of wet nurses. Her reasoning is that, with a string of high-quality *balie,* "the child will not be exposed to so many conditions."[xl] As Christiane Klapisch-Zuber points out, moral qualities were not a consideration in the choice of a wet nurse in Renaissance Florence. According to Klapisch-Zuber, "Girls that had been seduced, 'bestial' Tartar slave women, or mothers who had abandoned their children all made good nurses if their milk was 'young' and abundant."[xli] It was the perceived notions of femininity and gender that factored the most into the choice of a nurse, not racial stereotypes.

Ethnicity, therefore, had no bearing in the selection of a wet nurse, contrarily to historical Italian belief and those throughout Europe. In the third quarter of the thirteenth century, for example, physician Aldobrandino of Siena argued that the wet nurse should physically resemble the mother. He specifies that a wet nurse should have "a good color of mixed red and white."[xlii] Albertus Magnus and Michaelis Scotus put forth similar colorized beliefs, arguing that non-white women were unsuitable to nurse European babies. In northern Europe in the early modern period, British women in the colonization of Ireland tended not to employ Irish women as wet nurses, citing a fear that the baby would inherit poor moral character that was inherent to the Irish.[xliii] The lack of mention of a *balia*'s skin tone in letters written by Margherita Datini and the *ricordanze* of the Corsini family reinforce the fact that it was youth and femininity, not race, that made a suitable nurse.

The frequent mentions of wet nurses in Margherita Datini's letters to her husband reaffirm that a *balia* was an essential figure in the Tuscan family. In her letters to her husband written between March 1395 and 1398, Margherita details her search for a suitable wet nurse for babies that were not her own.[xliv] The fact that Margherita was searching for a wet nurse on behalf of someone else's child illustrates the fact that the choosing of a *balia* was often the job of a woman. This seems to have been a difficult search, as many of Datini's letters say that she had not yet found a wet nurse. In between the search for and selection of a permanent wet nurse, Datini employed a "woman who will care for the baby until I can provide someone really suitable."[xlv] The relationship between Datini and the wet nurses under her employ seem to be professional, mostly with a deal of respect from the employer. For example, Margherita mentions that she sent for the wet nurse named as Monna Giovanna later than she had hoped, and would not impose on the nurse further at such a late hour.[xlvi] In a later letter, however, Margherita condemns a wet nurse for her deception of pretending that she would give milk when she had none, and chastises the same nurse's attitude of not taking her duty as seriously as she should have.[xlvii] These letters show the how wealthy women thought of their wet nurses and the importance that the *balia* had in the Florentine kinship system. For the most part, wet nurses were women who had recently given birth and whose babies had died shortly thereafter, though this was not always the case. Female slaves and domestic servants were often taken advantage of and impregnated by their wealthy masters, which caused them to lactate.

Rape also caused an influx of abandoned children, most of whom were sent to live in one of Florence's two foundling hospitals: l'Ospedale degli Innocenti and Santa Maria della Scala. In his diary, Piero di Francesco Pura da Vicchio, a milk-father, wrote of a child that he had received from Santa Maria della Scala named Valoriano. The child stayed with his family for about a month before returning the foundling hospital per the request of a servant woman of Giovannozzo Pitti, who was likely his mother.[xlviii] Valoriano's story exemplifies the fraught situation of slaves and servants. Their own children were taken from their breasts and replaced by their mistress's child.

Milk parents—a wet nurse and her husband –formed strong kinship ties to their charges, which was crucial in the psychological well-being of the child. The fact that employers forbade wet nurses, or "milk mothers," to breastfeed multiple babies at the same time helped to build these relationships, making the bonds between milk mothers and children especially strong.[xlix] Take the case of Ginevra Datini and her milk father, for example. Ginevra was the illegitimate daughter of Francesco Datini and one of his slaves. Because she was unable to have children herself, Margherita treated Ginevra as her own. Like many elite children, Ginevra was sent to her milk parents' home for nursing.[l] In 1395, the couple decided that four-year-old Ginevra should come back to the Datini family in Prato. In a letter response to the summons, Ginevra's milk father says that "the love that my wife and I have for her [Ginevra] has become as if she was our own child."[li] Milk parents and their charges became their own kind of families, which were fundamental in a child's early development. The practice of wet nursing complicated the view of breastfeeding as a bonding experience exclusive to a mother and her child.

While wet nurses were staples in the Florentine family, they were also convenient scapegoats in the event of a child's death. Giovanni Corsini's *ricordanze* exhibits this complex relationship. Corsini lists two wet nurses by named: Nanna and Piera. The fact that Corsini mentions their names points to the importance of these women. Unfortunately, the contexts in which they were named is much darker. Nanna appears in the death record of Loretta Margherita, who died just before her second birthday. Corsini says that Loretta was in Nanna's care and when she died.[lii] The mention of Piera is more graphic and accused the nurse of killing her charge.[liii] While it is possible that the wet nurses had something to do with the deaths of the children, it is also likely that the deaths were accidental. The position of wet nurses as in charge of the children and their socially subordinate positions as poor women made them convenient sources of blame.

The job of the wet nurse did not end after weaning, usually happened a few months after the child's second birthday.[liv] Servant women became fixtures in Renaissance childcare, the *educazione dell'infanzia.* An upper- or middle-class child learned Latin and scripture from their tutors regardless of gender.[lv] Before and between their lessons, nursemaids-- slave or servant women who had also acted as their wet nurses --looked after the students. Just like Juliet's nurse in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* these nurses stayed with these children for extensive periods of time. At the same time, the servant mothers could not raise their often-illegitimate children. That was the job of Florence's foundling hospitals.

The relationships between female slaves and domestic servants, families for which they worked, and their social networks was remarkably complex. Those doing domestic work became essential figures in the late medieval family nexus in Florence. They tended to their mistresses during and after birth, served as co-mothers to elite women's children, nursed babies that were not their own, and assisted in raising the children that they had nursed. At the same time, slaves and domestic servants, the later of whom were mostly poor women, lost their value as mothers. Masters took advantage of their slaves and forced them to relinquish their children to one of Florence's foundling hospitals, and then used their breast milk to nourish another woman's child.

Through the examinations of the beginning stages of life, we can begin to unpack the role that female identity at the intersection of gender and class had in the experiences that women had in the late medieval life course. The contrasted experiences of elite Florentine women, who are disproportionately overrepresented in primary source material, and their slaves and domestic servants provides an ideal lens into this theory. Women who were wealthy, who married well, and who bore heirs were able to be comfortable in their experiences. They were privileged enough to rely on another woman's labor and body to nurse their heirs and to serve as replacement mothers. Simultaneously, the servant woman was unable to access the same resources and was, more egregiously, mostly unable to provide the same care for her own child.[lvi] The poor woman, therefore, was valued less than the elite woman societally and within the *casa*, despite being an essential figure in the elite kinship system in which she worked. The Florentine *casa*, which I have defined as domestic relationships, was not only ever reliant on social hierarchies, but also served as a microcosm for this same stratification.

The value of one's womanhood in *Trecento* and *Quattrocento* Tuscany was predicated on her place in domesticity. The ideal Tuscan woman was a faithful wife and loving mother. Motherhood, however, was a classed phenomenon. An elite woman was able to give her children the highest level of care, often at the expense of lower-class children. In a city where womanhood and motherhood were practically synonymous, the womanhood of domestic servants and slaves in the Florentine domus was complex and complicated. While nursing and caring for a middle- or upper-class woman's child, the poor woman was unable to properly care for her own children. The mother’s social power, or lack thereof, was tied directly to the inherent value placed on the Florentine child. At the same time, a mother’s ability to care for her child was tied with her own value, as both a woman and a member of the greater social nexus in Renaissance Florence. In examining the dynamics of gender, class, and social power in late medieval Tuscany, one need not look beyond both the proverbial and literal social walls of the *casa*.

Notes

[i] Datini, Margherita. *Letters to Francesco Datini.* Carolyn James and Antonio Pagliano, trans. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

[ii] Corsini, Matteo di Niccolò; Corsini, Giovanni di Matteo; Corsini, Matteo di Giovanni. *Libro di ricordanze dei Corsini, 1362-1457.* Armando Petrucci, ed. Roma: L'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1965.

[iii] « *Un livre de famille est un texte mémoriel, tenu au jour le jour, pluriel, multigénérationnel, et qui concerne essentiellement la famille… Cela paraît d'autant plus vrai que ces livres sont également appelés à construire un modèle exemplaire à partir des événements familiaux, qui seront par conséquent transfigurés et embellis, censurés et modifiés du seul fait de cette exigence d'autocélébration.* » "A family book is a memorial text, day-to-day, plural, multigenerational, and essentially about the family… It seems all the more true that these books are also called to build an exemplary model from family events, which will therefore be transfigured and embellished, censored and modified, just because of this requirement of self-celebration." Mordenti, Raul and Bérard, Claude Cazalé. « Les livres de famille en Italie. » *Annales : Histoire, Sciences Sociales,* 59e Année, No. 4 (Jul.-Aug. 2004), 785-804. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27587521. 793-794.

[iv] Dati, Gregorio. *Il libro segreto*. Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1968.

[v] Dati, 32.

[vi] Origo, Iris. "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies,* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Jul., 1955),. 321-366. 321.

[vii] Ibid.

[viii] Archivo Stato di Firenze, Classe XI, Dist. 8, No. 81. *Registro degli schiavi in Firenze.* Found in Zanelli, Agostino. *Le schiave orientali a Firenze nel secoli XIV e XV.* Firenze: Ermanno Loescher, 1885.

[ix] Petrarca, Francesco. *Opere di Francesco Petrarca,* X2. Roma: Società editrice Dante Alighieri, 1904.

[x] McKee, Sally. "Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy." *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 3 (Sept., 2008),305-326. 312.

[xi] McKee, 307.

[xii] Klapisch-Zuber, Christiane. "Female Celibacy and Service." *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy.* Lydia G. Cochrane, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp. 177.

[xiii] Terpstra, Nicholas. *Lost Girls: Sex and Death in Renaissance Florence.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 15.

[xiv] Archivio di Stato, Florence, *Manuscritti* 96, fol. 24 (March 27, 1492). *Ricordanze di Bartolomeo Salvetti.* Found in Klapisch-Zuber, 165.

[xv] Klapisch-Zuber, 172. In her introduction to the translation of the *Letters to Francesco Datini,* Carolyn James erroneously argues that the term *monna* was used strictly for widowed women.

This is impossible, however, as Margherita Datini uses the term for herself, despite not being widowed.

[xvi] McKee, 317.

[xvii] Male slaves cost between 25 and 117 *lire* within the same time span. See Table 6, McKee, 318.

[xviii] Klapisch-Zuber, 176.

[xix] Cluse, Christoph. "Frauen in Sklaverei: Beobachtungen aus genuesischen Notariatsregistern des. 14 und 15. Jahrhunderts." In *Campana pulsante convocati: Festschrift anläßlich der Emeritierung von Prof. Dr. Alfred Haverkamp.* Frank G. Hirschmann and Gerd Mentgen, ed. Trier: Kliomedia, 2005, 78-86. Found in McKee, 320.

[xx] The exception to this, as Louis Hass points out, were live births that occurred after miscarriages. He specifically cites the case of the birth of Benvenuto Cellini. Haas, Louis. "Per la Grazia di Dio Partori Uno Babino: The Birth Process." New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, 37-38.

[xxi] *Levatrice* literally means "the lifter." The job of the midwife was to "lift" children—the literal term that Renaissance Italians had for delivery of a baby. See Haas, 41.

[xxii] Haas, 43.

[xxiii] Musacchio, Jacqueline Marie. *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, 126.

[xxiv] The altarpiece was likely commissioned by either the church or a wealthy that sought to have their world represented in sacred art. Osservanza Master. *The Birth of the Virgin,* 1440s. Tempera on panel. Museo d'Arte Sacra, Asciano. Found in Musacchio, 11.

[xxv] See the Florentine birth tray in Musacchio, 28 and Ghirlandaio, Domenico. *The Birth of the Virgin,* c. 1490. Fresco. Santa Maria Novella, Florence. Musacchio, 125.

[xxvi] "We did everything to warm her [the baby's] head and dry out all her parts. We had her umbilical cord tied and we washed away the blood with warm white wine." Archivio Innocenti Firenze, XVI, 1 fol. 33v. Cited in Haas, 47.

[xxvii] *"Unde necessarium fuit pueros baptizare, ut, sicut per Adam damnationem incrrerunt nascendo, ita per Christum salute consequantur renascendo."* St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae Tertia Pars 60-90.* Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2012. Quaestio 68, Articulus 9, Respondeo.

[xxviii] "*Fuit etiam conveniens pueros baptizari ut a pueritia nutriti in his quae sunt Christanae vitae, firmius in ea perseverant, inuxta illud Prov. XXII,* adolescens inuxta viam suam, etiam cum seneuerit, non recedet ab ea. *Et hanc rationem assignat Dionysius, ult. cap. Eccl. Hier."* Aquinas, Quaestio 68, Articulus 9, Respondeo.

[xxix] Aquinas cites Proverbs 22:5-6 here. "Thorns and snares lie on the path of the perverse; he who guards his soul stays far from them. Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." *Berean Study Bible.*

[xxx] Haas, Louis. "Il Mio Buono Compare: Choosing Godparents and the Uses of Baptismal Kinship in Renaissance Florence." *Journal of Social History,* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter, 1995), 341-356. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3788544.

[xxxi] "*…Ginevra ha partorito al un figliolo molto attraente che abbiamo battezzato. iv. d'aghosto. Gli sponsor erano i miei colleghi tra i protabandiera della compagnia della milizia.*" "Ginevra gave birth to a very attractive baby boy who we had baptized on August fourth. The sponsors were my colleagues among the Standard-bearers of the Militia company." *Two Memoirs of*

Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati. Gene Brucker, ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1967, PN.

[xxxii] Haas, 347.

[xxxiii] The exception to this is Matteo Corsini's son, Bartolomeo, who passed while returning from baptism at San Giovanni. "*Naque Bartolomeo, Aghostino dì. xxvj. d'aghosto 1389 e morì tornato che fu da batezare da San Giovani.*" "Bartolomeo was born on the 25th day of August, 1389 and died returning from baptism at San Giovani." Corsini, 93.

[xxxiv] For example, Giovanni Corsini writes in his description of the baptism of Giovanni Bernardo "*Tennolo a bateismo Giovanni di Lucha (sic.) di Ghirighoro di Fetto Ubertini, ser Naddo di Giovanni Dei orafo, Manetto di Simone delo Sapuluccio…"* "He was held at baptism by Giovanni di Luca di Ghirighoro, Sir Naddo di Giovanni Dei the goldsmith, Manetto di Simone dello Sapuluccio." Corsini, 145.

[xxxv] *Naque la Chaterina… che lla (sic) tenoro a batesimo, Lorenzo di Meo Belotti, del popolo di San Filice in Piaza, e Ugholino Martelli, del popolo San Lorenzo…"* "Chaterina was born… and was held at baptism by Lorenzo di Meo Belotti of the people of San Felice in Piazza, and Ugolino Martelli of the people of San Lorenzo." Corsini, pp. 89.

[xxxvi] Corsini, 91.

[xxxvii] Terpstra, Nicholas. *Abandoned Children of the Italian Renaissance: Orphan Care in Florence and Bologna.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005, 11.

[xxxviii] Haas, 342.

[xxxix] Letter 88, March 22, 1395. Datini, 165.

[xl] *"il bambino non sarà esposto a così tante condizioni."* Datini, Margherita. Archivio di Stato di Prato, Datini Busta 1089 (I), *Lettere di Monna Margherita a lui e altri (1384-1418),* Filze Margherita to Francesco, letter from Prato to Florence. Mona Margherita to Francesco di Marco, 5 April 1397.

[xli] Klapisch-Zuber, Christiane. "Blood Parents and Milk Parents." *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy,* trans. Lydia Cochrane. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

[xlii] MacLehose, William. "*A tender age:" cultural anxieties over the child in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, citing from *Le régime du corps: de maître Aldobrandin of Sienne: texte français du XIIIe siècle*, ed. L. Landouzy and R. Pépin. Paris, 1911. Found in Winer, Rebecca. "Conscripting the breast: lactation, slavery and salvation in the realms of Aragon and kingdom of Majorca, c. 1250-1300." *Journal of Medieval History,* Vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 164-184. DOI: 10.1016/j.jmedhist.2008.03.006

[xliii] "*For besydes the yonge children bee like apes, which affect and Imitate what they have seene done before them, specially by their nourses whom they love soe well: moreover, they drawe into themselves, together with their sucke, even the nature and disposition of ther norses…*" Spenser, Edmund. *A Veue of the Present State of Ireland,* 1633. W.L. Renwick (ed.). London: 1934. Spenser refers to marrying the Irish or allowing an Irish woman to nurse a British child as an infection.

[xliv] Letter 88, March 22, 1395. Datini, 165.

[xlv] Letter 174, August 22, 1398. Datini, 281.

[xlvi] Letter 175, August 22, 1398. Datini, 283-284.

[xlvii] Letter 240, August 3, 1406. Datini, 379.

[xlviii] Extract from the journal of a Florentine *balio,* Piero di Francesco Puro da Vicchio. Found in Klapisch-Zuber, pp. 163.

[xlix] Klapisch-Zuber, 159.

[l] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber argues that, out of 386 nursed children in Florence between 1300-1530, 71 were nursed in the employer's home. 43 were nursed in homes in the city of Florence. The remaining 272 were nursed in the country. Although less common, the salary for a nurse in the employer's *casa* was about 100 *soldi* a month, while a nurse outside of the employer's home made an average of 62 *soldi*. Klapisch-Zuber, 136.

[li] Archivo di Stato di Prato, Datini 1109 II, *Carteggio Prato*, Filze Piero di Strenna, letter from Montelupo to Prato, Piero di Strenna to Francesco di Marco, 8 August, 1395. Found in "Marriage, Family, and Children in the Datini Family Nine Texts (1375-1401)." *Medieval Italy: Texts in Translation.* Katherine L. Jansen, Joanna Drell, and Frances Andrews, trans. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009, 443.

[lii] "*Morì a dì 31 di marzo 1447 a hore.xxj. in circha. Sotterossi a San Giovanni in Sughana. Era in casa di monna Nanna balia della detta in detto popolo."* "She died on March 31, 1447 at about twenty hours. She was buried at San Giovanni in Sughana. She was in the house of monna Nanna, wet nurse, said the people." Corsini, 145.

[liii] "*Naque Horlando e Rafaello a dì 30 di Marzo 1457 a hora 7 3/4 in mercholedì. Ucciselo la balia che fu monna Piera donna di Chaio, in San Chasciano vixe."* "Horlando Rafaello was born on March 30, 1457, at 7:45 on Wednesday. He was killed by the wet nurse, which was monna Piera, the wife of Chaio, and was buried in San Chasciano." Corsini, 147.

[liv] The general prescription for how long a child should be breastfed was two years. According to the nitrogen levels found in the remains of the Medici children, it has been determined that they had been breastfed for a range of two years and three months to two years and eight months. Giuffra, Valentina and Fornaciari, Gino. "Breastfeeding and Weaning in Renaissance Italy: The Medici Children. *History of Breastfeeding Medicine,* Vol. 8, No. 5 (2013). 101089/bfm.2012.0060.

[lv] Margherita Datini's letters give us an idea of what a child learned. She remarks that her young niece, Tina, was learning to read the Psalter and was in need of "a small prayer book that has the seven psalms and the Office of the Virgin with good lettering." Letter 45, March 21, 1394. Datini, 108. She also mentions that Ser Lapo's son, had been reading and focusing on his abacus. Letter 197, February 19, 1399. Datini, 323.

[lvi] As we see in the case of Ginevra Datini, this was not a universal experience. However, the case was typically that of servant women having to relinquish their children to foundling hospitals. Servant women, therefore, were typically not able to be mothers to their own child.

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