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Premodern representations of rape are sporadic, they usually relate to biblical, legal or literary material, and they hardly depict actual historical events. Here, I will examine two sets of images from late-medieval Tuscany, which address wartime sexual violence with different ideological focus: some illustrations from the *Nuova Cronica* of Giovanni Villani (1341-1348) and the first part of Giovanni Sercambi's *Croniche* (c. 1400). These images are based on contemporary accounts, which makes them rare documents of this kind from the period. The two authors perceived sexual violence from the different viewpoints of the alleged perpetrator (Villani) and the potential victim (Sercambi), which lead to diverse narrative strategies. The images and texts give us an insight to the complex links between the circumlocutory formulations in the chronicles and the implied visualization of rape. This indirect visual language connected the harm to female population to the breach of the city-gates and destruction of the walls.

The conceptual frameworks defining rape vary across cultures, epochs and genders.[1] The perception of wartime sexual violence in late-medieval Italy was bound to the legal rhetoric of gender and sex crimes. As (non-marital) intercourse was anyhow considered sinful, the violent component aggravated but did not change the category of the act. Medieval misogyny regularly insinuated that women have insatiable desires and find pleasure in sexual aggression; and in the dominant binary medical views on gender they were often described as incomplete males.[2] Furthermore, rape was habitually equated to abduction, which downplayed the significance of possible female consent vis-à-vis familial control.[3] These views followed the social compartmentalization of victims in Roman law, and they influenced canon law and secular legislation in the Middle Ages and beyond.[4] Under various rubrics freeborn Roman women (daughters and wives) could press rape charges in Antiquity, but this right was not accorded to prostitutes, foreigners or slaves.[5] The legislation was primarily concerned with the

sexual integrity of women, an important asset for the family (for their husbands and fathers) rather than her physical injury. In medieval Italy the control of the male guardian over the female body was retained.[6] Although marriage (and rape) was a matter for canon law and the church, it had also implications for the urban community and therefore it was regulated in secular law from the 12th century.[7] Despite the geographical and chronological variations of the statutes, the general conceptual matrix of sex crimes operated with comparable distinctions.[8]

Since this legal framing of sexual assault focused on the harm to the social status of the individual, it situated the issue in the broader context of the family, and by extension, the public space of the city.[9] This collective aspect becomes more pronounced during mass rapes of entire female populations. The attack on women transforms into a shared social harm inflicted on the community.

Sexual violence belongs to the general economy of war, thus the type of the military engagement, the chain of command and the objectives of the armies have a significant impact on its escalation.[10] In late-medieval Italy pitched battles were rare, therefore the main forms of armed conflict were raids and sieges.[11] Although raids comprised sexual violence against the population, this was seldom recorded, since the devastation of the countryside and the livestock was considered more problematic than the rape of peasant women, who had no citizenship and whose marriage status was dubious.[12] During raids the townsfolk found shelter behind the wall, and the attack usually ended with the departure of the enemy after the surrounding areas had been pillaged. The situation of the siege was markedly different, since it meant the complete encircling of the city and attempts to breach its walls.[13] Before the widespread use of cannons and gunpowder to destroy the defensive fortifications in the fifteenth century, starvation was one of the most successful means to break the defenders.[14] Defamatory races outside the walls were organized to humiliate them, often involving prostitutes.[15] Unless the terms of surrender

were negotiated, the city was not only taken but it was usually sacked following a successful siege.[16] As M. H. Keen noted, besides the robbing, ransoming and murdering of the inhabitants, the eventual demolition of the walls and burning down of the city, a key characteristic of the sack was the mass rape of the female population.[17] The slaughter of non-combatants males were justified in Deuteronomy 20:13-17, with the capture, and in some cases murder, of women and children.[18] Although the use of excessive force loosely connects these examples to abduction, the differences are more pronounced, since the aggressors had no intention of marrying the victims and thus obtaining social and monetary gain.[19]

The use of formulaic or indirect terms to describe sexual violence was widespread in the era. Boncompagno da Signa's *The History of the Siege of Ancona* (c. 1198-1201) gives a detailed account of the imperial blockade on the city in 1173, which was lifted after the intervention of Aldruda Frangipane, countess of Bertinoro.[20] The siege was unsuccessful, yet Boncompagno's narrative constantly alludes to the possible sack of the city. Noblewomen offer their milk and flesh to starving defenders and would prefer to be thrown into the sea "than to come in the power of those who give preference to their frenzy [*furorem*] over the law, and whose leaders do not want or do not know how to show mercy."[21] In her speech the countess emphasizes that her personal motivation was the protection of the noblewomen in the city.

> So it was, the wretched affliction of the Anconitan citizens that brought me here, and the tearful entreaties of noblewomen, who fear, more than words can express, falling into the power of the besiegers, since they would subject their bodies to eternal shame [*ludibrio*]. This damnable troop of brigands is led by blind opinion, nor does it spare anyone, while the possibility of committing a crime is at hand. Each and every one of you knows the nature of the circumstances, so there is no need to specify the details.[22]

The passage does not specify the exact form of the atrocities, yet it suggests that "the nature of the circumstances," was common knowledge in the period. It shows that for contemporary audiences generic and brief indications of sexual violence suffced to invoke the gruesome aspects of war. This restricted language is paralleled by the absence of personal testimonies from soldiers about their sex life (consensual or not) in renaissance military memoirs.[23] It must also be noted that the veracity of all such laconic claims can neither be universally accepted nor rejected, and it is not my intention to prove or disprove whether these violation did or did not take place. Rape, together with massacre and cannibalism, was customarily used to characterize the cruelty of others.[24] Nevertheless, Stephen Bowd in his systematic study on mass murder of civilians during the Italian Wars (1494-1559) argued that this body of evidence is relevant beyond its authenticity: the nature of the reports can give an important insight into the perception of mass crimes.[25]

Images add a further layer of complexity to this question. The illustrations depend on the text in the sense that the description of the event establishes its narrative context, essentially denying or describing rape in a circumlocutory manner. In turn, the image restates the generic message by reinforcing or underplaying some elements of the text. The issue of medieval and early modern rape imagery in Western art has been examined by Diane Wolfthal in her groundbreaking monograph *Images of Rape* (1999).[26] Wolfthal convincingly showed that images in the period oscillate between misogynistic and critical representations and argued that the depictions of wartime sexual violence usually adopted a condemnatory approach without sanitizing the inherent aggression of the act. While the findings of this study confirm Wolfthal's general theoretical framework, the analysis of this two-tier literary-pictorial discourse reveals diverging ideological constructs behind the critical perceptions in Florence and Lucca.

The strong link between narratives and illustrations is a key aspect of the material, even if references to sexual violence in the texts and depictions can remain implicit. Images in both

chronicles sometimes indicate the presence of women and show the atrocities against them, but they also often erase them from the representation. The omission of women from the visual realm can partially be explained by rules of decorum and the reluctance of the authors (and perhaps the illuminators) to depict sexual violence because of the shame and dishonour they implied. The circumlocutory and oblique terms used in the texts is matched by the absence of women in the images. Furthermore, Yael Even has shown that Italian audiences channelled experiences of sexual violence into representations of mythology or religion instead of overtly visualizing them, and John R. Hale signalled out the *Massacre of the Innocents* or the slaughter of St. Ursula's virgin companions as comparable substitutes.[27] The two Tuscan chroniclers relied on literary parallels, and they referenced the Trojan war. Villani added images depicting the destruction of Troy (18v and 19v), which foreground the subsequent devastations of Italian cities in the narrative.[28] Sercambi wrote a long meditation on the various cruelties committed during the conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans, including rape, mutilation and cannibalism.[29]

Fully explicit (and to a large extent eroticized) representations of sexual violence will become the norm only in the sixteenth century.[30] Before, in the absence of such straightforward visualization, images of rape operated with a mediated language of gestures and often with the absence of female figures. Wolfthal highlighted the grabbing of the wrist in Picture Bibles from the twelfth century in France, which accompany Old Testament narratives such as the rape of the Levite's wife, Dinah or Tamar.[31] More pertinent for Villani and Sercambi are her remarks on the connection between buildings and sexual violence.[32] The sporadic visual evidence in the chronicles recognizes the importance of the city walls as a physical and symbolical protective boundary, and the catastrophic consequences of its breach.[33] This interpretation of the walls paralleled the widespread understanding of enclosures (households or convents), meant to defend the honour of unmarried girls, married women and nuns inside the city.[34]

Doors and windows on buildings were compared to the orifices of the body, and their control simultaneously served protection and confinement.[35] Furthermore, in religious painting closed doors and windows are visual signs of purity and untouched maidenhead.[36]

In the chronicles the sack can be indicated by the besieging army entering the city through the gate or demolishing its walls. In light of the accompanying textual references to rape, the destruction or crossing of the physical boundary can be seen as analogous to the harm to women, despite their absence from the imagery. The imagery is admittedly polyvalent, it can describe for instance formal entries of kings, popes, bishops, or delegations to cities. It does not explicitly and exclusively denote mass rape. Yet, here the symbiotic relation between text and image may invite the viewer to visually link the fate of the city to its women, and vice versa. For the late-medieval period eye it is significant that similar readings of women, violence and defenses occur in several contemporary texts. The metaphor is widely employed in the text and illuminations of *The Romance of the Rose*.[37] Villani's compatriot, Giovanni Boccaccio in *The Nymph of Fiesole* (1344-46) reports the rape of Mensola as "wildly knocking against the gate [*picchiar l'uscio furioso*]" and "entering with great fight [*battaglia grande*]" amidst shrieks and drops of blood.[38] He refers to the penis as Master Mace [*Messer Mazzone*] and as castle [*castello*] to the vagina. This figurative language compares the violence to a siege. Jean Gerson in his *Treatise against the Romance of the Rose* (1402) offered a similar comparison: "for the doors and walls of a city, according to the laws, are called sacred because if someone submits them to force or passes through them without permission, he receives punishment. Thus it is with the private parts of a woman: he receives punishment who either commits rape or who, without using force, improperly transgresses upon them."[39] Following Boccaccio and Gerson, I will evaluate the possible links between these literary tropes and some elements of the imagery and examine the ways the architecture together with the presence or absence of women can visualize the collective harm of sexual violence.

Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Florence

In the absence of strong centralized power in Italy, armed conflicts could take a number of forms.[40] The friend-foe antagonism might emerge between otherwise identical communities living in close proximity or within a city itself, and the Guelf-Ghibelline opposition could contribute to the escalation of the conflict.[41] Giovanni Villani's *Nuova Cronica* document some aspects of these struggles between Florence and its neighbouring cities. Villani does not endorse sexual violence as a weapon of war. Quite the reverse, in several occasions he goes at great length to discard any accusations that would suggest Florentine involvements in such matters and construct the rape-free image of his native city. On the other hand, he admits the threat of wartime sexual violence regarding the French military exploits in Sicily.

The illustrated copy of Villani's *Nuova Cronica* is dated between 1341 and 1348 and it contains 271 miniatures (ms Chigiano L VIII 296, Vatican Library, Vatican).[42] Although the exact circumstances of its production cannot be established, the close adherence of the images to the text and the absence of instructions given to the illuminators may suggest that the author himself supervised the pictorial program of the luxurious manuscript.[43] Serving several times as prior of the city, representative of the Peruzzi company and later investor of the Buonaccorsi firm, Villani witnessed the political and economic expansion of Florence in the beginning of the fourteenth century.[44] He was a supporter of the Black Guelf faction, and in his chronicle he not only recounted the myths around the foundation of Florence, but he also created an elaborate narrative of its recent history to justify its policies.[45] He reported on Florentine military activities, and although his remarks are usually restricted to the general political aspects of these conflicts, on some occasions the situation of women is considered as well.[46]

Villani's narrative strategy is apparent in his version of the fictional sack and devastation of Florence under Totila.[47] [Fig. 1] Villani reports that when Totila learned that his

plot to take Florence had been discovered, he gave the order to his troops to slay everybody, and those who could not escape were killed, dismembered or captured.[48] After "consuming [*consumata*] the people and the goods," the city is destroyed and burnt down. Although Villani follows the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae* (c. 1183-1235) for the main line of the story, he elaborates on several details, for instance the victims are not simply described as "men" [*homines*] but rendered as "young and old, men and women" [*piccoli e grandi, uomini e femmine*].[49] The miniature on folio 36r shows Totila ordering the demolition of the city. The defeat is expressed by the destroyed city wall encircling the Baptistery which is left intact. The violence against the population is indicated by the beheading of bishop Maurizio and two other male figures. Despite the absence of the halo, the iconography of the decapitation (especially the kneeling posture) is similar to other representation of martyrdom and implies that the bishop and his companions are like martyred saints.[50] The disregard of religious authority and denial of customary safe-conduct of the clergy are comprehensive signs for all the atrocities.[51] To make matters worse, the miniature on the next page (fol. 36v) shows the rebuilding of the city of Fiesole, a causal consequence of the destruction of Florence.

The demolition of Florence is mirrored by the taking and destruction of Fiesole in 1010.[52] [Fig. 2] The text of the *Chronica de origine civitatis Florentiae* is enlarged to emphasize the magnanimity of the Florentines.[53] Villani underscores that after entering into the city by ruse, the Florentines captured it "without killing almost anybody or doing any other harm [*fare altro danno*], except to those who resisted them."[54] The formulation in the text downplays the violence of the attack and justifies it as a necessity to overcome opposition. Also, the expression *altro danno* is generic enough to comprise robbery and rape, and it rejects these possible accusations without specifying them. The restraint during the attack is coupled with the subsequent offer to the inhabitants of Fiesole, excluding the defenders of the citadel,

to move to Florence with all their belongings. Villani contrast the generosity of the Florentines

to the aggression and cruelty of Totila, since they spare the population of Fiesole.

The miniature on folio 49v is more ambiguous. It shows two defenders in the citadel

and the Florentine army facing them (recognizable by the flag with the red Guelf cross on white

background and the Florentine lily on a shield).[55] The soldiers stand on the demolished wall

indicating the successful taking of the city. Two women wearing their cloaks [*mantello*] over

their heads and five children (including two babies on their arms) are about to depart with

barely anything: the lack of household goods or men depicts a situation different from the one

described in the text.[56] The cloaks are not ornamented, which might suggest that these women

are commoners, but still wives of citizens.[57] The composition also resembles to the depiction

of fleeing women and children during the first sack of Troy in the lavishly illuminated copy of

Guido delle Colonne's *History of the Destruction of Troy* in Madrid (fol. 25v, ms 17805,

National Library of Spain), thought to have been produced in Venice after 1340.[58] The loss of

the city connects both events and justifies the visual parallel. The direct dependence of this

Villani miniature on a Trojan prototype remains a possibility, but it must be noted that the motif

was widespread in Byzantine art as an element of the *Israelites Passing the Red Sea*

compositions.[59] In any case, the women are exposed in a double sense: the city wall is

destroyed, and they are outside of its ruins, left at the will of the enemy soldiers. This exposure

is reinforced by the absence of men and the loss of marital protection it entails. On the other

hand, the visual emphasis on the defenceless group of refugees underlines the magnanimity of

the Florentine besiegers, who do not use the opportunity to harm women or children, and they

extend safe-conduct to them (as opposed to Totila, who violated the terms even with regard to

the Florentine clergy).[60]

Villani's understanding of a rape-free Florentine army can be examined regarding the

siege of Pistoia in 1306, since for this event the parallel accounts of Dino Compagni and

Giovanni Sercambi are also available.[61] Like Dante, Dino was a supporter of the White Guelf faction, and he offers an alternative narrative of the siege, from the viewpoint of the victims. The two cities had a long and violent history; on folio 72v (1228) and 87r (1253) of Villani's chronicle previous Florentine attacks on Pistoia are illustrated.[62] By 1300 Pistoia was the stronghold of the White Guelf and Ghibelline factions, and it was unsuccessfully besieged by the Florentines in 1302 and 1303.[63] In 1305 under the leadership of Robert of Anjou, Duke of Calabria and later King of Naples (1309-1343), the combined forces of Florence and Lucca surrounded and starved the well-fortified city for eleven months until its surrender. Both Villani and Dino report that as supplies were getting scarce, women and noncombatant men were bringing additional food to the city, so the Florentines started to cut off the noses or legs of those who were caught.[64] Yet, Villani is silent about the other atrocities committed against women, of which Dino Compagni gives a detailed description.

> Because of the shortage of food, messer Tolosato degli Uberti and Agnolo di messer Guglielmino [de' Pazzi], the magistrates, sent away all of the poor, the children, the widows, and almost all the other women of low status. Oh what a cruel thing this was for the citizens' spirit to bear: to watch as their women were led to the city gates, placed in the hands of their enemies, and locked outside. And those who did not have powerful relatives outside, or who were not received out of gentility, were shamed by their enemies [*vituperata*]. The Pistoiese exiles, recognizing the women and children of their foes shamed a number of them [*ne vituperarono*]; but Duke Robert protected many.[65]

The truth of Dino's testimony cannot be established with certainty, yet his version of the siege indicates that the perception and description of a rape-prone Florentine army was a possibility. Only soldiers, men, women of high birth and their daughters could stay in the city, which implies that a significant number of married women and girls had to leave. Dino evocatively describes the closing of the gates and the abandonment of the women to their fate, since safe-

conduct was not negotiated for them. His emphasis on the pain of those (male) citizens who witness the subsequent violence reveals the collective social harm resulting from the mass rape outside the walls. The term *vituperare* (to shame) remains circumlocutory as opposed to *sforzare* (to obtain something by force) or *violare* (to violate), which underline the use of force or violence and therefore indicate the physical brutality of the aggression in Italian. *Vituperare* highlights the social damage and humiliation caused to the honor of the family (to the parents or the husband) and the meaning shifts to the shame and exclusion rape-victims experienced in medieval societies.

Dino's detailed reconstruction of the context is one of the most straightforward accounts from the period. Some former Black exiles from Pistoia, tried to protect female members of their family from harm (Black and White Guelf antagonism could emerge within families), and defend even solitary women and girls. Robert of Anjou also attempted to prevent the situation from escalating, but he did not have complete control of his troops and the mob. According to Dino, outside these islands of safety, the Florentine soldiers and Pistoiese exiles used the situation for rape and revenge. Villani's complete silence is telling, since two other accounts of the siege mention atrocities even if they are less explicit regarding the fate of women. According to the *Storie Pistoresi* the young maidens [*le giovani*] were sold like slaves [*li schiavi*].[66] The Lucchese chronicler Giovanni Sercambi's version of the siege is more laconic than Dino's; it nevertheless confirms the cutting off of the legs of men and the noses of women and admits that "all the women and girls [*femmine e fanciulli*] who were not armed were chased out from Pistoia, and the besiegers took [*piglavano*] the women [*femmine*]."[67]

In Villani's chronicle the siege and taking of Pistoia is accompanied by two miniatures. Folio 187v shows the Florentine and Angevin army outside the fortified city, and folio 188r represents the situation after the siege with the destroyed fortifications. [Fig. 3] To mark the successful siege, the Angevin (golden lily), Florentine (red lily) and Lucchese (horizontal

bicolor of white and red) flags replace the Pistoiese (red and white checker pattern) ones over the city.[68] Conforming to Villani's textual account, the two images do not show any Pistoiese citizen (male or female), and only the demolished walls together with open gates of buildings suggest their defenceless exposure. The miniature accompanying the final victory on folio 31r in Sercambi's chronicle visualizes a different moment, the Florentine and Lucchese army entering the city through the main gate. [Fig. 4] On the left the besiegers camp is indicated by three tents with Florentine and Lucchese flags. Here as well, the two falling Pistoiese flags and Florentine and Lucchese flags replacing them express the capture of the city. Women are not present in this image either, therefore their seizure is erased from the visual testimony. The breaching of the gate (and the wall) may remain the only metaphorical indication of the atrocities.

Villani's attempt to dissociate Florence from sexual violence is present also in the story of the military alliance between Pisa and Florence in 1117. Pisa asked for protection against Lucca, while their troops were besieging a Saracen stronghold in Mallorca.[69] [Fig. 5] Villani explains the measures taken by the Florentine army to avoid any attack on women in Pisa while their men are away.

> [They] encamped two miles outside the city, and in respect for their women they would not enter Pisa, and made a proclamation that whosoever should enter the city should answer for it with his person; and the one who did enter was accordingly condemned to be hung. And when the old men who had been left in Pisa prayed the Florentines for love of them to pardon him, they would not. But the Pisans still opposed, and begged that at least they would not put him to death in their territory; whereupon the Florentine army secretly purchased a field from a peasant in the name of the commonwealth of Florence, and thereon they raised the gallows and did the execution to maintain their decree.[70]

The existence of the decree itself acknowledges the threat posed to the women of the city even by their allies. The text does not specify whether the disobedient soldier actually did commit something beyond entering the city. The long negotiation between the Pisan elders and the Florentines involving the request for pardon underscores the determination of the latter to prevent any subsequent accusation of sexual violence or adultery, whilst the purchase of land highlights the importance of territorial jurisdiction.

The image on folio 59v shows the hanged man on the left, the Florentine troops in front of the tents with their shield prominently showing the Florentine lily, and Pisa on the right with its gate turned towards the camp. The arched gate is not closed or barred: the black empty space indicates frail state of the city and by the extension of the metonym, the precarious situations of its female inhabitants. In turn, the availability of the gate reinforces the virtuous and rule-abiding behaviour of the Florentines. They are positioned as a protective force between Pisa and the hanged aggressor, who represents the threat to the city and its women.

Villani's acknowledgment of wartime sexual violence can be seen in some representations of women, who actively protect themselves from the rape-prone Angevin army in Sicily.[71] Already before the passage on the Sicilian Vespers in 1282 Villani recounts that "the French kept the Sicilians and the Pugliese worse than servants, they did evil to [*villaneggiando*] and raped [*isforzando*] their women and daughters."[72] The uprising in Palermo began as a French soldier grabbed a woman to rape her [*farle villania*] on the way to the Easter celebrations, then she cried for help, and everybody started to fight to protect her.[73]

The image on folio 124r shows the massacre of the Angevin soldiers in Palermo, who can be identified by the golden fleurs-de-lis on their blue shields. [Fig. 6] In the foreground five dead bodies can be seen: three French troopers in their military gear and two naked figures, presumably citizens of Palermo (the nudity might allude to their innocence, but it can also refer

to the despoiling of corpses after a battle). On the right two Aragonese soldiers (with a flag and a shield showing red pallets on golden background) follow the fight. In the background there are three buildings: two townhouses and a basilica (identifiable by its aisle and nave). The inhabitants of the city and two Aragonese soldiers are shown preventing the aggressors from entering into the buildings. The image implies the threat of sexual violence, which initiated the conflict. The attack on the church suggest that the sanctuary of the building is not respected and it cannot offer protection to women against the aggressors. In the upper windows of the two houses two female figure can be seen. French soldiers trying to intrude through the open doors do not simply breach the enclosure of the building but they threaten its female residents. The woman in the centre is depicted throwing a block of stone from a window at an Angevin trooper. Her active participation in the fight may signal the initial resistance against sexual violence to be attempted by French soldiers.[74]

Similar active engagement marks the account of the subsequent siege of Messina in 1282. Villani states that parts of the perimeter were not sufficiently fortified, allowing the French army to storm and sack the city, and the walls were raised with the help of the women and children.[75] He relates the song, which commemorated their efforts to build the walls by carrying stones and mortar, dishevelling their hair in the process. The miniature on folio 126v shows two women bringing a basket with stones and a board with mortar on their heads while a child is constructing the wall. [Fig. 7] On the left the French cavalry is depicted approaching the city (identifiable by the fleurs-de-lis on the shields and the flag), and the Aragonese allegiance of Messina is indicated by the flag above the gate. The gate itself is shut, and together with the already built frontal part of the wall it stands between the aggressors and the women of the city. The episode and the image underscore the physical as well as the symbolical importance of the city wall as a protective boundary.

Lucca and Mercenary Companies

Villani's chronicle indicates one possible condemnation of sexual violence. The denunciation is implied through rape-free characterization of the Florentine troops (as opposed to the rape-prone portrayal of the Angevin army). And in the imagery city-walls and gates can reinforce the potential threat against female bodies. If we now turn to Giovanni Sercambi's chronicle, we find that enclosures and openings play a comparable metonymical role in the images. However, writing c. fifty years later, Sercambi's ideological standpoint was different. He was interested in the impact of mass rape on urban communities. He describes sacks of cities (even if his remarks remain generic regarding his hometown, Lucca) and addresses the menace of free companies. Although mercenaries appeared in the ranks of communal armies from the thirteenth century, the situation changed in Italy after 1350, with the influx of soldiers from the Hundred Years War.[76] Commissioners sometimes could not impose their political preferences on their soldiers of fortune, and independent companies could ransom entire cities by the threat of pillage and rape.[77]

The first part of Sercambi's *Croniche di parte de' facti di Lucha* (ms. 107, Archivio di Stato, Lucca) narrates the history of Lucca between 1164 and 1400, accompanied by 651 images; the second part covers the events between 1400 and 1423 (the year before the author's death), and it is not illustrated.[78] The text is considered autograph work of Sercambi and the miniatures were created in the same workshop (perhaps even by Sercambi himself, but definitely under his supervision).[79] Therefore this codex also represents a strong symbiosis between the textual and visual parts in terms of authorial intention. Member of the *Consiglio Generale* (General Assembly) from 1372 and of the *Tasca degli Anziani* (Elders' Council) from 1390, he was part of the city's political life.[80] Because of his involvement in regional politics, Sercambi witnessed some events at close range.[81] Generally a Guelf sympathizer, he also highly praised Emperor Charles IV for ending the Pisan domination of the city in 1369.[82]

Sercambi mentions briefly about the sack of Lucca in 1314 by the Pisan and German troops of the Ghibelline Uguccione della Faggiuola that the city was robbed.[83] The Sienese chronicler Paolo di Tommaso Montauri gives more detail, according to him the Guelf sympathizers had to escape the city or they were captured for ransom, and "to the women and maidens many evil things were done, and they were shamed [*donne e donzelle lo' fu fato molte vilanie e vituperate*]."[84] For the Guelf Sercambi, the Ghibelline rule of the city meant the complete loss of liberty.[85] He equates in a metaphor the subsequent capturing, ransoming and selling of the city to prostitution: "and so Lucca remained a servant like a whore [*meretricie*] in the brothel [*luogo lupanario*]."[86] Although the metaphor had strong misogynistic aspects and in this context it primarily refers to the exchange of money, it connects the lack of political independence and the defenceless exposure of prostitutes to sexual intercourse. Sercambi returns to this image later when describing the desolation of war in the year 1398.

> I will return to tell how so many cities, castle and towns of Italy, and especially in the areas of Tuscany and Lombardy, were destroyed, burnt down and demolished down to their foundations in that war. […] And the most noble and gentle women [*nobili e gentili donne*], and women of honest life [*d'onesta vita*], and virgins [*vergini*] and those who had given their bodies to the service of God in chastity and virginity, now like whores [*meretrici*] are submitted to the filthy lust [*socto luxuria*] of ruthless soldiers, who treat them as worthless and make of them shameful brothels [*di loro fare luogo lupanario e dizonesto*].[87]

The passage enumerates the protected female members of the society; in addition to virgins, noblewomen and nuns the category of women leading an honest life (i.e. they are not prostitutes) is mentioned as well. Nuns could be included to suggest that the sanctuary of holy places (convents) was not always respected, and the military activities sometimes resembled foreign invasions.[88] Sercambi's formulation suggests that in some cases sexual violence led to

forced prostitution and the establishment of brothels. Even if the passage is a rhetorical element to emphasize the horrors of war, it acknowledges the existing connection between rape and prostitution in medieval societies. Rape victims (married and unmarried) were regarded as sullied, they were at times dismissed by their husbands or families; and their social status was close to prostitutes or to maintain themselves they indeed became prostitutes.[89]

In the chronicle, the sack of Arezzo in 1381 by the free company of Alberigo da Barbiano is reported.[90] According to Sercambi, the company was hired by the Guelf faction of Arezzo to take the city back from the Ghibellines.[91] The citadel remained in Guelf hands, and it was used by the company and the Guelf faction to infiltrate Arezzo. The first miniature on folio 102v shows the negotiation between the involved parties in front of the gate. [Fig. 8] The flag with the Guelf cross on the wall and among the troops might refer to the allied soldiers holding the citadel and attacking the city at the same time. However, after entering, the mercenary company looted the city and attacked the people regardless of their allegiances.

> All the women were taken, Guelf and Ghibelline alike, in such a number that it was a pity, and they were shamed [*vituperandole*]. And after some days, the aforementioned count Alberigo, who wished that the women should not lose their honor [*non dizonestarsi*], proclaimed that all women should gather in the church of Santa Maria de' Servi, and many of them came, even if several of the young and beautiful ones remained hidden. And upon seeing such a multitude of women of every sort, it was granted to everyone to leave the city with not more than a loaf of bread. Then they were accompanied to the borders of Arezzo, but many of them returned saying: I do not know where to go. Or told a member of the company: this was my house, give your life up to me, and you can do to me whatever you like. And this is how the city was treated, and whoever saw that he cannot be so cruel not to feel pity for them; to see so many gentle

youngsters, maidens, and nuns shamed [*vituperate*], and many of them travelled the world as whores [*molte itene puctane per lo mondo*].[92]

Sercambi's account relates to his personal experience, since he served as ambassador of Lucca to count Alberigo, when a sum was paid to guarantee the safety of the city from the company.[93] The possibility that he amplified the extent of sexual violence in Arezzo to justify the ransom paid for the security of Lucca cannot be ruled out. Excessive exaggeration of the facts was unlikely given the close ties between the two cities, and Sercambi description corresponded to what people were ready to believe about the taking of Arezzo. After the first days of raping the leader of the company tries to pacify the situation by offering safe conduct to women from the city. The rationale behind the offer is that by going to other parts of Italy, they can deny the harm committed against them, and therefore present themselves still as honourable women (no longer possible in their native city). The distrust towards the count is manifest in the absence of girls in the crowd, since the citizens might have suspected a ruse behind the gathering (to lure them out from their shelters). The reported dialogues exemplify the cruelty of the situation and the proposed solution. Some begged the mercenaries to marry them and rectify the harm in terms of social status (and perhaps to avoid further exposure to repeated gang violence). Prostitution is presented as the consequence of the sack.

The miniature on folio 102v shows the troops entering to the city through its gate. [Fig. 8] The evocative aspects of the text are almost entirely missing. Women are simply not depicted. The soldiers carry the flag with the Guelf cross; therefore, the miniature might suggest that at that moment the citizens of Arezzo were still in control of the situation. The flag over the city is damaged and difficult to identify. The image is similar to the one accompanying the sack of Pistoia on folio 31r. The flags and the movement of the troops through the gate expresses the military victory and it may also foreground the subsequent fate of the women in the city.

Sercambi also relates the attack on Bologna in 1399 by the company of count Giovanni da Barbiano, Alberigo's brother. Previously in 1396 the company also attacked the countryside around Lucca in order to destabilize the city.[94] The fragmentary text of the chronicle suggests that after negotiations about peaceful passage had failed, the company pillaged the neighbouring areas and abducted some women from Bologna, who were outside the walls.[95] Sercambi states that "it would neither be good nor honest to write or even to think that many of them were retained in dishonesty [*con dizonestità ritenute*]," and also the commune of Bologna was stirred up because of "the shame, which has been allowed to happen to these women [*vituperio consentito*]."[96]

The miniature on folio 330r shows the moment of abduction, and it is the most explicit representation in the two chronicles. [Fig. 9] Bologna is depicted on the left with the Guelf cross, while a group of mercenaries on horse and on foot capture three women. The white flags of the company might allude to the failed negotiations about peaceful passage. The women wear long robes [*gonnella* or *tunica*] and their blonde hair is uncovered but not dishevelled at this stage.[97] On the right two of them are being escorted away. They are depicted in different poses. The one in red robe holds her face with her hands on the cheeks, which indicates sadness, pain and suffering.[98] The pose of the other who is dressed in green is less visible, but it seems that her arms are tied (or perhaps crossed) in front of her chest and she is led away. They are guarded by two men in red hoses or stockings [*calze*] according to contemporary fashion.[99] The soldier behind the women carries a shield and a broadsword, and wears a helmet and a shorter jacket [*zupone*], whereas the higher status of the mercenary leading them away is indicated by his longer tunic [*gonnella*] and chaperon [*cappuccio*].[100] Furthermore, next to the city another trooper with a shield is grabbing a woman by her robe, as she runs towards the gate. She looks back at her captor, her outstretched arms with the hands turned inwards express

rejection and opposition.[101] Her gestures and attempt to get to the gate underscores visually the shelter provided by the city and its walls.

The military reality of siege and sexual violence remained a feature of warfare during the Renaissance and beyond.[102] The imagery in Villani's and Sercambi's chronicles are among the handful visual representations available to us, which at least implicitly address the contemporary fate of women during war before 1400. Although for both authors, condemnation of wartime rape was without question, they denounced it on different ideological grounds. Villani's constructs a Florentine army as rape-free, sometimes by overlooking evidence to the contrary or distancing it from the rape-prone French troops. The rejection of sexual violence is based on his civic pride. For Sercambi this was no longer an option, he laments openly about violence against women in other cities and compares his own urban community to a prostitute without legal protection. His refusal of rape is constructed on the grounds of a potential threat. Their different viewpoints show that the condemnation of sexual violence in the epoch was not a universal moral position rooted in the corporeal harm against women, but a relative stance associated with the socio-political status of one's city. In this respect, the finding of this study nuances Wolfthal's thesis on late-medieval condemnatory attitudes by exposing the ideological motivations for such views. This certainly weakens their universal aspect, but on the other hand, it allows the fuller understanding of their historical context.

The images in both works operate with the metonymical connection between the female body and the city. The violation of women is suggested through the building or demolition of walls and entering or exposing gates. This visual link reinforces the collective dimension of sexual violence. Women and their bodies can evocatively be compared to the enclosure of cities, since the physical harm inflicted on them, in the late-medieval legal perception of rape, is a social harm inflicted on their male relatives who constitute the primary fabric of the political community. The two chroniclers, Villani and Sercambi participated in communal

governments and their position reflects the views of the male population. They exemplify the civic denunciation of sexual violence that appear also in fourteenth-century political allegories. The *Injustice* fresco by Giotto di Bondone in the Arena Chapel (1303-05, Padua) and in the damaged *War* fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Palazzo Pubblico (1338-39, Siena) depict rape as a characteristic exclusive to tyrannical rule, a threat to the peace, harmony and wellbeing of a city and its citizens.[103]

Regardless their politically motivated components, this civic denunciation of rape appears to be a significant alternative to the images of sexual violence in fourteenth-century Italy. They frame the issue in terms of collective loss. In this respect they differ from the widespread legal iconography of marriage and coercive sexuality in the mock-cases of Gratian's *Decretum*, which continued to revolve around the issue of consent and validity of marital union.[104] They also diverge from the equally numerous representation of sexual violence against women in the narrative poems on the Trojan war and the origins Rome.[105] In these 'romances' the abduction and violation of Hesione, Helen, the Sabine women and many others serve as misogynistic justification for military conflict rather than a condemnation of such practices. Although by the fifteenth century this civic alternative gradually faded away with the transformation of the communes into seigneurial regimes, its remnants influenced the self-fashioning of Florence as the last stronghold of liberty and republicanism under Coluccio Salutati.[106]

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[98] François Garnier, *Le Langage de l'Image au Moyen Âge: Signification et Symbolique* (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1982), 181-183.

[99] Levi Pisetzky, *Storia del Costume*, 23-27.

[100] *Ibid.*, 32-46 and 63-68.

[101] Garnier, *Le Langage*, 175-180.

[102] Bowd, *Renaissance Mass Murder*, 80-112 and 147-151.

[103] Chiara Frugoni, *Una lontana città: Sentimenti e immagini nel Medioevo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), 152-158; Maria Monica Donato, 'Un ciclo pittorico ad Asciano (Siena), palazzo pubblico e l'iconografia 'politica' alla fine del medioevo', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, 18 (1988): 1127-1130; Péter Bokody, 'Justice, Love and Rape: Giotto's Allegories of Justice and Injustice in the Arena Chapel, Padua', in Anna Kerchy and György Szőnyi (ed.), *The Iconology of Law and Order* (Szeged: JATE Press, 2012), 55-66.

[104] Anthony Melnikas, *The Corpus of the Miniatures in the Manuscripts of Decretum Gratiani*, vol. 3 (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1975), 970-1145.

[105] Buchthal, *Historia Troiana*, 14-31; and Susan L'Engle, "Three Manuscripts of the Roman de Troie: Codicology, Pictorial Cycles, and Patronage," in Constanza Cipollaro and Michael Viktor Schwarz (ed.), *Allen Mären ein Herr: Ritterliches Troja in illuminierten Handschriften* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2017), 67-128.

[106] Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966), 28-46; Jerzy Miziołek, "Florentine Marriage Chests Depicting the Story of Lucretia and the War with Giangaleazzo Visconti," in Francis Ames-Lewis and Piotr Paszkiewicz (ed.), *Art and Politics* (Warsaw: Institute of Art, 1999), 31-43; and Cristelle L. Baskins, *Cassone Painting, Humanism and Gender in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 128-187.