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Nakedness and Other Peoples: Rethinking the Italian Renaissance Nude

Jill Burke

*We discovered innumerable lands, we saw innumerable people and different languages, and all were naked.*¹
(Amerigo Vespucci, letter to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, 1500)

This essay proposes that we question the current understanding of the Italian Renaissance nude by examining contemporaries' perceptions of nakedness. Despite the importance of the nude for the development of Western art, there have been few studies that consider how the revival of the nude form in fifteenth-century Italy was understood by people at the time.² Most scholars, understandably, see the new fashion for portraying naked figures in the fifteenth century as a direct reflection of the enthusiasm for classical antiquity during this era. Without denying the crucial importance of antique precedents, I wish here to investigate another possibility: that travellers' accounts of naked natives encountered on European voyages of exploration, particularly those to sub-Saharan Africa, influenced the creation of what has been called a 'Renaissance anthropology' – debates about the nature of mankind.³ This provided a new conceptual filter through which the nude figure was seen – and in some cases, these accounts may have directly affected the iconography of otherwise puzzling images.

The article has four main inter-related areas of focus:

1. the increased nakedness of depictions of Adam and Eve from the early fifteenth century, placed in the context of Renaissance understandings of the development of early mankind – and an emphasis on nakedness as a symbol of human potential;
2. a survey of Italian travel accounts that invoke stereotypes of nakedness as a symbol for peoples understood to have no civic society, religion or social differentiation;
3. the increased presence of black Africans in Italian cities (particularly as slaves) over the course of the fifteenth century – with an analysis of Pisanello's *Luxuria* in this context;
4. Florentine links with the Portuguese voyages to Africa, and descriptions of battling tribesmen, as a means of interpreting Antonio del Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Naked Men*, a seminal work in the development of the nude form.

Detail from Filarete, *Trattato d'architettura*, 1465 (plate 10).

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1 After Hans Burgkmair, *Natives of Guinea*, 1508–70. Woodcut, 17.5 × 24.4 cm. London: British Museum. Photo: © Trustees of the British Museum.



1. Nakedness and Potential: Adam, Eve and the Beginnings of Humanity

Allegedly the first depiction of sub-Saharan African natives dependent on an eyewitness account, Hans Burgkmair's 1508 woodcut of a family from 'Guinea', was originally to the left side of a printed frieze which shows examples of various peoples from Africa and India, but that was reproduced afterwards as an independent plate (plate 1).⁴ This image shows a man, standing, about to throw a barbed spear, or *assegai*. The mother of the family is seated on a split log, with her baby son straddled over her leg. To the right an older son seems to be dancing – with one leg and arm bent he sways precariously to one side whilst gazing at his father. The faces of those portrayed, not surprisingly, conform to European expectations of sub-Saharan Africans – curly hair, round eyes and generous lips, their darker skin indicated by dense parallel hatching.

The nakedness of the figures, the baby on the mother's lap and the harsh landscape may have been for many viewers reminiscent of familiar visual tropes. The pose of the dancing boy, for example, echoes the figure to the right of centre at the top of a Florentine print of naked dancers (see plate 22), a pose which is also taken up by a figure on Antonio del Pollaiuolo's *Dancing Nudes* fresco at Arcetri of around 1464 (see plate 21), discussed below. A print of *Adam and Eve and their Children* by Cristofano Robetta of around 1500 (plate 2) also offers a compelling visual comparison of a naked family in an unforgiving landscape. There was even a direct borrowing here perhaps – the bare-branched tree framing the right-hand side of each image next to naked women with crossed legs holding babies on their laps.⁵ However, whilst Adam rests on his mattock, exhausted by his agricultural labours, the barbed javelins borne by the Guinean man suggest that these peoples have no settled agriculture. Whilst 'in Guinea', people are naked apart from their jewellery; the nakedness of Robetta's family is shown to be transitory – Eve holds a distaff, ready to transform fibres into wearable cloth.

Robetta's treatment of Adam and Eve represents a new iconography that became popular in the fifteenth century, and directly contradicts the biblical account. In

2 Cristofano Robetta, *Adam and Eve with Children*, c. 1495–1500. Engraving, 17.3 × 13.9 cm. London: British Museum. Photo: © Trustees of the British Museum.

3 Unknown Artists, *The Expulsion and Labour of Adam and Eve*, from the Creation Cupola, 1220s–1290s. Mosaic. Venice: Basilica of San Marco. Photo: © 2011, Scala, Florence.



4 Masaccio, *Expulsion from Paradise*, 1426. Fresco, 208 x 88cm. Florence: Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine. Photo: © 2011, Scala, Florence.



Genesis, when God made Adam and Eve ‘they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed’. The serpent persuades Eve to get fruit from the tree of knowledge and give it to Adam to eat, ‘and the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons’. God noticed, cursed them and banished them from the garden, but before doing so made them coats of skins ‘and clothed them’, as shown, for example in the Genesis mosaics at San Marco in Venice (plate 3).⁶ They are then

expelled and condemned to labour to find food and shelter.

In the Biblical account, total nakedness is suitable only for the prelapsarian state. Clothing becomes necessary when shame enters Eden. Accordingly, whilst Adam and Eve are always shown completely naked before eating from the tree of knowledge, they should be shown simply clothed, or at least with genital-covering at their expulsion. This is, indeed, the case, to my knowledge, in all Italian representations of Adam and Eve up to the early fifteenth century.⁷

The post-fall couple start to be entirely divested of clothing in the 1410s and 1420s. Pioneers of this iconography are Masaccio (in the Brancacci chapel frescos of 1426–28, plate 4) and Jacopo della Quercia (on the Fonte Gaia reliefs in Siena of 1415–19 and the doorway of San Petronio in Bologna of 1425–38).⁸ By around 1500 a naked expulsion is the norm, despite the fact that it directly contradicts the biblical account.

More curious still is the increasing tendency to show Adam and Eve naked at the subsequent part of their story. The couple labouring – Adam tilling the fields with a mattock or hoe, and Eve making yarn with a spindle or distaff – was an iconography typically used to demonstrate human craftsmanship, as in the 1330s reliefs attributed to Andrea Pisano on the Florentine Campanile.⁹ The iconography of the couple labouring naked seems to be linked with their presence at the beginning of ‘Famous People’ (so-called ‘uomini famosi’) cycles, which gained in popularity from the early Quattrocento.¹⁰ The earliest example is perhaps the lost cycle from the late 1430s in the Orsini palace on Monte Giordano in Rome, which showed human history from Adam and Eve to the present day. There is a copy of this cycle in contemporary drawings now in Milan, and this iconography was later replicated in the Florentine Picture Chronicle of the late 1460s (plate 5).¹¹ Soon after, this theme is abstracted from its context by Antonio del Pollaiuolo, in two drawings of the 1470s (plate 6 and plate 7) which contrast the hard stone of their surroundings with Adam and Eve’s naked flesh, indicating the difficulties of a life without the comforts of civilization.¹² The Robetta print (see plate 2) is one of

5 Circle of Maso Finiguerra (?), *Adam and Eve*, from the *Florentine Picture Chronicle*, c. 1470–75. Pen and brown ink and brown wash over black chalk, 32.6 × 22.5 cm. London: British Museum. Photo: © Trustees of the British Museum.



three of the same subject attributed to the artist, all from around 1500.

How then can we account for this stripping of the first couple? One important reason behind this shift could be the desire to emphasize the couple's historical existence as the progenitors of all humanity. Clothes, as crafted objects, are victim to the whims of stylistic fads, but 'the artifice of Nature [i.e. the naked body] is supreme, no period fashions change it', as the character of Leonello d'Este said in Angelo Decembrio's *On Literary Polish* (c.1462).¹³ Debra Pincus has suggested that Adam and Eve's presence on the Arco Foscari in the Doge's palace in Venice (executed by Andrea Rizzo in the 1480s) was due to their ability to 'represent man in his quintessential state'; the naked Adam is a reminder of the necessity of creating an ordered state to enable humanity to be raised from the sinful status of animals.¹⁴ In other words, mankind is shown naked on the Arco Foscari to remind the viewer of the potential of humans to create both order and disorder, to raise themselves up to angels or down to animals – an idea that was famously articulated in Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Mankind* of 1486: 'We have given you, Adam, no definite place, no form proper only to you ... You can degenerate and fall to the lower beings who are the animals, you can, if you decide, regenerate yourself and climb towards the higher beings who are divine.'¹⁵

Adam and Eve's position in 'famous people' cycles suggests the potential of human ingenuity and craftsmanship; their original nakedness is a sign of their subsequent achievement in creating civilization. This idea was not new, but was revived and stressed repeatedly in fifteenth-century texts and images.¹⁶ Polydore Vergil in his *On Discovery* of 1499 (a book that was to become, in the words of Brian Copenhaver, 'a foundational work of reference for early modern European readers') explains that the first person to invent clothing was Adam 'since Adam made himself a garment of skins after God had created him', and thus 'later generations surely took their example from the garments Adam made'.¹⁷ Equally, in his *Book of the Craftsman* (c. 1400), Cennino Cennini starts by explaining how Adam was the first person to invent crafts like painting.¹⁸ As Copenhaver has

noted, the emphasis on technological achievement at the end of the fifteenth century was linked closely to the need to show how humankind had been raised from a bestial condition.¹⁹

Thus, when a Renaissance viewer saw Adam and Eve naked, they are likely to have understood the implications of this in terms of the next part of the story – nakedness signified the potential to be clothed. This interpretative framework may have been strengthened by newly discovered (or recently popularized) classical texts that discussed the development of early humans. Most notable are: Vitruvius's *On Architecture*, known since antiquity but newly fashionable in the early fifteenth century; Diodorus Siculus's *Library of History*, translated into Latin in 1450; and Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, rediscovered by Poggio Bracciolini in 1417.²⁰

These texts differ in many aspects, but they agree that mankind's original state was basically animal-like, with no clothing, proper language, or ability to make permanent dwellings. So, for Diodorus the first people 'led a wretched existence, having no clothing to cover them'. For Vitruvius, humans used to live 'like wild animals in the forests, caves and woods'. And for Lucretius, 'for many centuries men led their lives / Like roving animals ... [they did not know] how to work with fire [or] to use the skins of animals for clothes'.²¹ Other accounts of creation that might be now considered more fanciful also stressed primitive nakedness – Plato's *Protagoras* describes how Prometheus left humans 'naked, unshod, unbedded, unarmed', and thus stole 'wisdom in the arts together with fire' as a gift for mankind.²²

6 Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *Adam*, 1470s. Pen and brown ink and wash with some black chalk on mounted paper, 28.3 × 17.9 cm. Florence: Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Galleria degli Uffizi. Photo: © 2011, Scala, Florence.

7 Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *Eve and her Children*, 1470s. Pen and brown ink and wash with some black chalk, 27.6 × 18.2 cm. Florence: Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Galleria degli Uffizi. Photo: © 2011, Scala, Florence.





8 Attributed to Buonaccorso Ghiberti, *Early Man*, from his *Zibaldone*, mid-fifteenth century. Pen and ink. Florence: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (Banco Rari, 228, 5r). Photo: © Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence.

9 Cesare Cesariano, *Early Mankind*, from *Di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione de architectura libri dece traducti de latino in vulgare affigurati*, Como, 1521, book 2, 31v. Engraving. Paris: L'École nationale supérieure. Photo: © Beaux-arts de Paris/L'École nationale supérieure.



Most of the Renaissance illustrations we have of early humanity, besides Adam and Eve, are from editions of Vitruvius. They emphasize nakedness as the primal state. Examples include: Buonaccorso Ghiberti's drawing of a naked man sitting in a tree (plate 8), in the margin of his translation of Vitruvius, dating to the later fifteenth century;²³ and the well-known illustration of early humanity discovering fire by Cesare Cesariano (plate 9), to accompany his 1521 printed translation of the text.²⁴ In Filarete's architectural treatise, the *Libro Architetonico* of around 1464, he combines both biblical and classical accounts by arguing that Adam must have been the first builder. When it rained, he put his hands over his head, and then went on to build a roof out of branches, or perhaps entered a cave in order to protect himself from the elements.²⁵ In the 1465 manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, this part of the text is illustrated by a completely naked Adam (plate 10), sheltering himself from rain.²⁶

This interest in early humanity is reflected in contemporary written sources. Bartolommeo Scala echoed Lucretius' account of early man in his *Dialogue of Consolation* of 1463, when he said that the first men were 'rough and uncouth ... without culture, without shrines, without a settled home'; these 'naked and shaggy creatures' used tree trunks for shelter.²⁷ The emphasis on nakedness as a spur to human inventiveness was also taken up in the treatises on the dignity of mankind. Giannozzo Manetti's *On the Dignity and Excellence of Humans* (1452–53) argues that people are different from beasts partly because of their ability to craft things – the 'marvellous works of painting, sculpting, building, industry and crafts'.²⁸ Marsilio Ficino took up this idea in a confraternal sermon of the 1470s, arguing that humans differ from other animals because they can adapt themselves to a variety of arts, whilst animals (such as spiders weaving webs or birds building nests) are restricted to one kind.²⁹ Benedetto Morandi, in his treatise *On Human Happiness* of 1468–70 argued that the clothing of nature (fur,



10 Filarete (Antonio Averlino), Adam, from the *Trattato d'architettura*, 1465. Pen and ink. Florence: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (Fondo Principale, II.I.140, 4v). Photo: © Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence.

scale and quills) 'conceded to the brutes' by God was 'most sordid and abject'; humans are able to make better clothing with their 'genius and reason'.³⁰ In this way, making Adam and Eve naked beyond the Fall emphasizes their role as the source of human history, as opposed to existing within a temporally static sacred narrative of sin and redemption. Nakedness relates to an early state of humanity that continued beyond Eden, and refers to the unique potentiality of humans to clothe themselves.

2. Nakedness and the Exotic

Why do we see such an interest in early mankind in the mid-to-late Quattrocento? In his 1521 commentary on Vitruvius, Cesare Cesariano remarked that recently in 'many places overseas' Spanish and Portuguese explorers had found people who live like the primitives described in the treatise.³¹ The equation of early humans with some recently contacted non-European cultures is worth investigating further. What were Italian Renaissance perceptions of these 'primitives' overseas?

The Council of Florence-Ferrara (1435–41) offered the opportunity to meet people from faraway lands first hand, and because of the many Byzantine delegates, has traditionally been taken as a point when Renaissance elites became more closely acquainted with Greek culture. This includes access to Strabo's *Geography*, introduced to Italians in a series of symposia by the Byzantine scholar Gemistos Plethon, and circulated in manuscript form amongst the Florentine elite.³² In 1441 four Ethiopian delegates attended the council, and an account of an interview with these visitors appears in Poggio Bracciolini's *On the Vagaries of Fortune* (*De Varietate Fortunae*) of around 1447, alongside the tales

of Niccolò dei Conti, an Italian traveller in India.³³ The council is thus sometimes recognized as a key turning point for European knowledge of Africa.³⁴

Suggestively, during the Quattrocento the location of terrestrial paradise – the place where Eden could be found on earth – shifted from Asia to sub-Saharan Africa. According to Alessandro Scafi, the earliest evidence for the change can be found on a map of the 1410s by the Venetian cartographer, Alberti de Virga, and although the change is not consistent, the African paradise appears on maps up to around 1500.³⁵ Giovanni di Paolo's predella scene of c.1445 (plate 11) contains a schematic *mappamundi* of this type. To the left-hand side of the panel, God points at a terrestrial orb, with coloured bands representing the elements, planets, sun and zodiac signs. The simplified map in the middle shows Africa at the top, with Europe to the right and Asia to the left. At the very summit of the map is the Mountain of the Moon, believed by some to be the location in Africa where Eden was located.³⁶ Adam and Eve are shown being expelled naked by a naked angel.

None of the protagonists attempt to hide their genitals with hands or clothing. Handily located plants and flowers instead save the audience's embarrassment as Adam and Eve are ushered out into a fertile landscape of fruit trees and flowers, the four rivers of Paradise flowing from the earth below them. Ingeborg Bähr has reconstructed the original location and patronage of this altarpiece in the church of San Domenico in Siena, and argues that through this altarpiece the Dominicans were underlining their commitment at the council to conversion and missionary work.³⁷ Whether Bähr's interpretation is correct or not, it is suggestive that this naked Adam and Eve are being expelled into Africa, just a few years after the ecumenical council.

Cesariano explained that he knew about these naked cave-dwelling foreigners because of an abundance of printed accounts of Iberian voyages.³⁸ The Italian peninsula provided a ready market for tales of faraway peoples and adventures. Even the travels of John de Mandeville, a text written in the mid-fourteenth century with a tentative relationship to actual travel, had no less than twelve Italian editions between 1480 and 1505, more than anywhere else in Europe, bearing the title of 'A most beautiful treatise of the most marvellous things'.³⁹ Accounts of Portuguese voyages of exploration circulated in manuscript form in the 1450s, with some being read out publicly. This was the case in 1486 when a letter was read out in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence describing the King of Portugal's success at converting a 'lord of Guinea' to Christianity and sending out experts and merchandise to 'introduce [the natives] to a human and not a bestial life'.⁴⁰ This may have been a reference to the King of Congo, Nzinga Nkuwu, who in 1485 undertook 'to renounce idols and the practices of sorcery'.⁴¹ Columbus's voyages of 1492 were immediately celebrated by short printed pamphlets of rhyming couplets, sung by professional



II Giovanni di Paolo, *The Creation of the World and the Expulsion from Paradise*, 1445. Tempera and gold on wood, 46.4 × 52.1 cm. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: © 2011, Scala, Florence.

12 Unknown Illustrator,
Columbus's first Voyage to the
New World, from *La Lettera
Dellisole Che Ha Trouato
Nuouamente Il Re Dispagna*
[...] *Tracte Duna Pistola
Dixpofano Colōbo & messer
Giuliano Dati*, Florence,
1493, frontispiece. Woodcut.
London: British Library
(shelfmark IA.27798). Photo:
© The British Library Board.



storytellers, *cantastorie*, and then sold on for profit to their audience.⁴² The first printed travel anthology was printed in 1507: Francanzano da Montalboddo's *Paesi novamenti ritrovati* (Newly Found Lands), which put together accounts of Spanish and Portuguese exploration.⁴³ The discovery of the Americas in 1492 as a kind of cognitive break, as suggested by some scholars, is not borne out in these texts.⁴⁴ Montalboddo's anthology suggests that Renaissance Italians looked upon the voyages of Columbus as an extension of the Iberian explorations that had been going on for decades, while the Portuguese voyages to Africa were equally acknowledged as discovering lands and peoples unknown to the ancients.

These travellers' accounts are revealing of attitudes towards nakedness in Renaissance Italy. Although many of the peoples these travellers met were clothed and lived in complex societies, in every account there are also tales of naked natives. I reproduce here some extracts from a variety of texts describing journeys to very different parts of the world between 1341 and 1503 in an attempt to evoke the generic, almost monotonous, nature of these descriptions.

almost all of [the natives are] naked; the unmarried women go naked, giving no signs of shame. (Niccoloso da Recco, Canary Islands, 1341)⁴⁵

In Ethiopia, and in many other countries, the folk lie all naked in rivers and waters, men and women together ... and the women have no shame of the men. (John Mandeville, 'Ethiopia', 1357–71)⁴⁶

wild Arabs ... wander through the desert naked like wild beasts. (Niccolò Conti, India, 1444)⁴⁷

almost all these people go naked continually, save a goat skin with which they cover their shameful parts; the blacks of Senega almost all go naked. (Alvise Cadamosto, 'lower Ethiopia', 1447)⁴⁸

the inhabitants of this island and of all the others I have discovered or of which I have heard all go naked, men and women, just as their mothers bore them into the world. (Columbus, Bahamas, 1493)⁴⁹

they go around as naked as they were born with no shame at all. (Girolamo Sernigi, southern India, 1498)⁵⁰

everyone goes around naked, though it is true that the women, when they have known a man, cover themselves with leaves of trees or a piece of cotton cloth. (Michele da Cuneo, Cuba and Hispaniola, 1495)⁵¹



13 Unknown Illustrator, Amerigo Vespucci's Voyage to the New World, from *Lettera di Amerigo Vespucci delle isole nuovamente trovate in quattro suoi viaggi*, Florence, 1505, frontispiece. Woodcut. London: British Library (shelfmark G.6535). Photo: © The British Library Board.

they always go naked except for a goatskin which they wear on their natural parts and their buttocks. (Giovanni Buonagrazia, west coast of Africa, 1502–03)⁵²

everyone goes around naked, both men and women, without covering their shame at all, just as they emerge from the belly of their mothers. (Amerigo Vespucci, Honduras? [exact location unclear], 1503)⁵³

Nakedness can be portrayed in these accounts as a mark of bestial passions – violence and sexual profligacy. But the naked state can also indicate childlike innocence, lack of shame and lack of pretension. These conflicting interpretations often hover together in the same text. In many of these accounts, the natives would not seem naked to a modern audience; a common formulation is ‘completely naked but for ...’; most of these peoples wore cloth or skins to cover their genitals. This trope, as Karen Ordahl Kupperman has pointed out for early modern English texts, often bore ‘little relation to what travellers actually saw’ – natives could be described as naked even when their bodies were largely covered. This is because nakedness was not merely about covering the body, but implied the lack of an entire social system; these people were figuratively naked even if they wore some clothes. In Italian city-states – as elsewhere in Europe – clothing went hand in hand with social roles, to the extent that nakedness was associated with the loss of status or even individual identity. Niccolò Machiavelli, for example, revealed the social role of clothing in his *Storie fiorentine*, published in 1532, when he had one woolworker rally his comrades with the words: ‘Strip us all naked and you will see that we are alike; dress us in their clothes and them in ours, and without a doubt we shall appear noble and they ignoble, for only poverty and riches make us unequal.’ Similarly, a comic story by Giovanni Sercambi written around 1400 tells of a Lucchese furrier, Ganfo, who forgot who he was in a public bath because he had no clothing with which to identify himself.⁵⁷ Thus to be a society without clothes, is to be one without any social hierarchy or delineated communal roles – that is, not really a society at all.⁵⁸

The frontispiece of the 1493 translation of Columbus’s first letter to the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella (plate 12) shows the King of Spain sitting on his throne to the lower left, pointing to three boats on the sea behind him, the largest of which is about to make landfall.⁵⁹ The rich dress of the king and the European sailors contrasts with the throng of naked and near-naked natives of both sexes who can be seen on shore. They are gathered in an indistinguishable crowd, with long hair, walking in the same direction in a sheep-like daze, their simple wooden houses behind them. The nakedness of these native peoples, which contrasts with

the hats and doublets of their discoverers, is pointed to in Giuliano Dati’s translation of the Latin text, made up of jaunty rhyming couplets intended to be read aloud – ‘Not dressed in clothes or with weapons or shields / but all their members were naked’.⁶⁰ The woodcut’s composition was re-used a few years later (reversed and more crudely executed) for the first Florentine edition of Amerigo Vespucci’s *Letter on the Newly-Found Islands* of 1505 (plate 13). A similar ‘herding’ motif of indistinguishable naked people was also used for the depiction of sub-Saharan Africans on Martin Waldseemüller’s *Universalis Cosmographia* world map of 1507 (plate 14).

14 Detail from Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Vespucii alioru[m]que lustrationes*, 1507, showing Southern Africa. Engraving, 128 × 233 cm. Washington, DC: Library of Congress. Photo: Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.



3. Africans in Italy

Alongside travellers' accounts and exotic animals, the Portuguese voyages also brought African slaves to Italy in increasing numbers over the fifteenth century. There were slave girls from Africa in Italy from at least the very early fifteenth century, though there may have been relatively few of them. For most of the middle ages, the source of slaves for the Italian elite was through Genoese and Venetian merchants trading in the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea.⁶¹ Sub-Saharan slaves begin to appear more frequently in the second half of the century, especially from the 1460s, judging from the merchant account books analysed recently by Sally McKee.⁶²

African slaves were common in southern Italy, especially Naples and Sicily from early in the century, and were frequent in the northern courts of Ferrara and Mantua by the 1440s. They are documented in Florence from 1461, but were probably present before this. Florentine merchants such as Bartolommeo Marchionni, and the Cambini bank were profitably involved in shipping slaves from Portugal to Italy.⁶³ There is a horrifying account of these slaves being brought to market on the Algarve in August 1444, a group of around 250 captive black Africans 'virtually or completely naked, and in chains' screaming and crying as their families were split up.⁶⁴ One Florentine buyer, Giovanni Guidetti, explained that he needed extra money to buy clothes for his three young slave girls in 1461 as they were naked when he bought them.⁶⁵

African slaves were both clothed and baptized by their European owners, and so could be understood as having been saved both from their errant paganism and 'beastly' way of life. Most slaves brought to Italy worked in urban areas in domestic service, and many were young women in their teens. It seems that they were (like most domestic servants) deemed as sexually available for their masters.⁶⁶ There were a significant number of children born to slaves who were left at the foundling hospitals in Florence – between 14 and 30 per cent – according to tax records.⁶⁷

It is in this context that Pisanello's drawing now commonly called *Luxuria*, or *Lust*, but also recently identified as depicting *Venus* (plate 15), can perhaps be interpreted. Now in the Albertina Museum in Vienna, it was drawn probably in Ferrara or Mantua, sometime in the late 1420s or early 1430s.⁶⁸ This pen and ink drawing on reddish prepared paper depicts a woman, completely naked, lying on her right-hand side, with a hare at her feet. She is reclining on a sort of animal hair rug, with long curly tendrils at the top smoothing out towards the bottom. Her hair is a halo of tight curls springing from her head. Her body is not the kind of smooth skinned voluptuous form that is typical of later reclining nudes, but spare and rangy, with jutting hips and muscled arms.

Although this is a well-known drawing, it is perhaps more innovative than has previously been recognized. Pisanello was a keen observer of nature. He drew extensively from life and is especially known for his portrayal of animals, from horses and dogs, to more exotic African animals like cheetahs. He also seems to be the first person to draw repeatedly after the naked model, something that probably did not become common workshop practice until the 1470s.⁶⁹ Because of what we know of Pisanello's working practices, and because of its departure from any antique model in terms of pose and body type, it is possible that *Luxuria* was originally derived from a live model. There are only a handful of drawings recognizably after the female nude body dating from the fifteenth century.⁷⁰ A drawing of such an early date of a female nude model is extremely unusual and demands a particular explanation. Could it, as Catherine Kovesi mooted, be derived from first-hand observation of an African woman?⁷¹

There are several documented instances of black African female slaves in northern Italy in the early fifteenth century. In 1405–06, for example, there are accounts of two Paduan doctors buying slave women of twenty and twenty-five years old; in 1406 in Venice, a prostitute named Catherina da Bononia bought a baptized black woman of twenty-five years of age for thirty-five ducats, the slave being resold later in the same year to a Venetian nobleman. There are also accounts of black female slaves being sold in Venice in 1414, 1417, 1426, 1427 and 1430.⁷² We also know, from a drawing now in the Louvre, that Pisanello drew an African man on one occasion for a fresco in the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua.⁷³

How would an early fifteenth-century Italian have viewed Africans? As discussed above, nakedness was a common attribute. Pico della Mirandola even claimed in 1489 that the very name ‘Ethiopian’ derived from the word for naked in Latin.⁷⁴ Lack of clothing was often taken as a sign of animality. The idea that sub-Saharan Africans were bestial, more animal than human, was mentioned in classical sources and taken up by Renaissance thinkers. If for Diodorus Siculus Africans were ‘entirely savage and [displayed] the nature of a wild beast’, for Petrarch, the peoples of the Canary islands were ‘so little unlike brute beasts that their action [was] more the outcome of natural instinct than of rational choice’;⁷⁵ for Antoine Malfante (who had been on one of the Venetian explorer, Alvise Cadamosto’s voyages in 1447) the black African slaves he came across in his travels indulged ‘in carnal acts like the beasts’. Azurara’s 1450 chronicles of discovery reported that Africans ‘lived like beasts, without any custom of reasonable beings’;⁷⁶ and Bartolommeo Scala in 1483 reported that the ‘previously unknown peoples’ discovered by the Portuguese in Africa ‘live completely without laws, like beasts obeying nature’.⁷⁷ Kate Lowe discusses a gift that Ethiopian ambassadors brought to Venice in 1402 of ‘four leopards, spices and other goods’ including ‘an ass of diverse colours’ and the ‘skin of a wild man’ – most probably an ape of some kind. This hairy humanlike creature must have confirmed assumptions about the animalistic life of some African natives.⁷⁸ This assumption that naked non-Europeans were akin to animals was also transported to the New World, with Caribbean peoples’ ‘meekness’ allowing them to be compared to sheep. New World inhabitants were affirmed as ‘truly men ... capable of understanding the Catholic faith’ in 1537 by Pope Paul III in his *Sublimus Dei* encyclical – the fact that this was necessary shows that this issue remained controversial.⁷⁹

The lasciviousness of Africans is also mentioned by late-medieval and Renaissance sources, prefiguring the trope of the unbounded sexuality of African women which was to become diffused in scientific discourse of the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ Cadamosto, for example, suggested in the mid-fifteenth century that the black Africans he encountered, ‘both men and women, are exceedingly lascivious’, and received a present of a ‘handsome young black girl, twelve years of age ... for the service of my chamber’ from Budomel, an African lord he encountered.⁸¹ Polydore Vergil equally reports that peoples from Africa ‘lay together in the open like cattle’ and ‘gave free reign to lust’.⁸²

In appearance, according to Diodorus Siculus, African peoples ‘have flat noses and woolly hair’.⁸³ Pisanello’s woman’s extraordinary curled hair stresses her difference from most European onlookers, and her nose is flat. Her animality is stressed, as she seems to meld into the animal skin she is lying on. Hares, as Kovesi has noted, were associated with fecundity, and sexual rapacity, and were believed to be able to conceive a second set of young when already pregnant.⁸⁴

Given the visual and contextual evidence, it seems likely that a contemporary audience would have recognized this image of a naked woman as hailing from sub-



15 Antonio Pisanello, *Luxuria*, c. 1426. Brown ink on reddish prepared paper, 12.9 x 15.2 cm. Vienna: Albertina Museum (Inv. 24018r). Photo: © Albertina Museum, Vienna.

Saharan Africa. She is presented not as an idealized nude, but more like an exotic animal, a cheetah perhaps, laid out for the delectation of a courtly audience, who would perhaps have been intrigued or titillated by this visual exploration of the boundaries of the human.⁸⁵

4. Antonio del Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Naked Africans*?

Antonio del Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Naked Men* (plate 16), an engraving dating from the late 1460s or early 1470s, is widely understood to be a landmark in the depiction of the naked human form; belonging to 'the very inception of the tradition of the brazenly exposed adult male nude'.⁸⁶ It shows a group of men, completely naked except for ribbons in their hair, fighting in pairs. Some have curved swords, some pointed daggers, one has an axe and to the rear of the painting one man has a bow and arrow. Circular shields lie, discarded on the floor as the bloodlust of these men seems to overcome any thoughts of personal protection. The background is full of lush vegetation, vines clinging to trees, and sorghum rising above the combatants' heads.

This was an immensely popular composition, not only surviving in over forty impressions, but also spawning several copies and alternative versions during the last thirty years of the fifteenth century. This included several printed battles of



16 Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *Battle of Naked Men*, c. 1470s. Engraving, 42.4 × 60.9 cm. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art. Photo: © Cleveland Museum of Art.

17 Detail from Unknown Cartographer, *Natives of Guinea*, c. 1492–1500, showing 'Christopher Columbus' chart. Ink on parchment, 70 × 110 cm. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France (GE AA 562 RES). Photo: © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

18 Detail from Sandro Botticelli, *Marriage Feast of Nastagio degli Onesti*, 1483, showing Pucci coat of arms. Tempera on panel, 83 × 142 cm. Madrid: Museo del Prado. Photo: © 2012, Scala, Florence.

19 Detail from Unknown Antwerp Craftsman, *Vase with Americans and Africans*, c. 1530, showing base. Silver, 49 × 21 cm. Munich: Schatzkammer, Residenz München (Inv. ResMüSch. 37). Photo: © Jill Burke.

nudes, and also sculpted and painted versions more or less influenced by Pollaiuolo's prototype, including work by Bertoldo di Giovanni, Michelangelo and Piero di Cosimo.⁸⁷ At the root of this composition, however, lies a puzzle. There is no convincing literary or pictorial source that can explain why these men are battling. Although many of the forms of the figures reflect heroic classicizing prototypes, none of the antique visual precedents or classical sources entirely fit the image. As several commentators have pointed out, these men's grimaces and complete nakedness suggest viciousness rather than heroism.⁸⁸ There might be, as Alison Wright suggests, a deliberate lack of fixity to the meaning of this print, which was designed equally to provide Antonio del Pollaiuolo with the artistic freedom to show his skills at depicting the male nude in action, and also to allow the educated viewer to consider his or her own relation to these animalistic actions.

However, a text that has never been considered in the literature may help us to understand the assumptions that a contemporary audience would have brought to a representation of naked fighting men. Alvise Cadamosto's account of his journey to 'the land of the Blacks in lower Ethiopia' of 1455–56 was not published until 1507, as part of Montalboddo's anthology, but was available in the Italian peninsula from the 1460s, as suggested by portolan charts of that period, which reflect Cadamosto's discovery of the Cape Verde islands.⁸⁹ It is likely that this account (and, potentially, similar news from other travellers) would have been available at this time, due to the Florentines' keen financial interest in the Portuguese voyages. Florentines had a key role as investors in Portuguese expeditions to the Atlantic coast of Africa. There had long been a Florentine presence in Lisbon – the Bardi family were given a licence to trade there as early as 1338 – and by 1500, Florentines were the most important

and numerous group of foreign merchants in the Portuguese capital, dealing in goods such as sugar, leather, dyes and silks as well as Guinean slaves. This included representatives of major Florentine families such as the Corbinelli, Morelli, Nardi, Strozzi, Sernigi, Guidetti and Cambini.⁹⁰ Moreover, after Florence instituted the new state galleys from the ports of Porto Pisano and Livorno in 1421, the commune had a financial stake in the successful transport of goods from Africa via Portugal to other ports.⁹¹ The Florentines in Lisbon, as Joan-Pau Rubiés has argued, were instrumental in transmitting new knowledge of the far east and Africa to Europe; there are more



accounts of these early voyages by Florentine sailors than there are by Portuguese, perhaps because of the strong *ricordanze* tradition in that city, but also because of the trade ships acting as a source for news.⁹²

It is not surprising, perhaps, that a combination of intellectual and mercantile interests saw Florentines commissioning new world maps, which included the discoveries of sub-Saharan Africa unknown to Ptolemy. The skills of Florentine mapmakers and the knowledge Florentine humanists had of geography attracted the Portuguese to such an extent that Florence has been described as 'a kind of theoretical storehouse for the Portuguese expeditions'.⁹³ For example, the Portuguese ambassadors came to see a *mappamundi* by Paolo del Pozzo Toscanelli in July 1459, and two years later Piero del Massaio painted a series of maps based on Ptolemy for Álvaro Alfonso, the bishop of Algarve.⁹⁴



It is intriguing, then, that Álvaro Alfonso has a direct link to Antonio del Pollaiuolo. He supervised the construction and decoration of the Cardinal of Portugal's chapel in San Miniato, for which Antonio and his brother, Piero, completed an altarpiece in 1466. Eric Apfelstadt has argued convincingly that the lavish attention and cash spent by the Florentine authorities on the cardinal's funeral were designed to facilitate Florentine merchants profiting from Portugal's lucrative African trade.⁹⁵ Moreover, the Pollaiuolo brothers received their payments for this altarpiece from the Cambini bank, which had a branch in Lisbon and was by that time the chief Florentine source for Guinean slaves and other goods.⁹⁶ In other words, Antonio del Pollaiuolo was working in circles – and with patrons – who would have been in a good position to hear the latest news from Africa, and had significant financial and cultural reasons to be interested in this new land and its peoples.



When Alvise Cadamosto travelled to the south of the Senegal river, he was amazed at the change in the peoples that he saw. As opposed to the 'brownish, small, lean, ill-nourished' men in the 'sterile and arid' country to the north, these people were 'very black, tall and big, their bodies well formed; and the whole

country green, full of trees and fertile'.⁹⁷ All the peoples he encountered to the south of the river – the Zilofi people, the peoples of the land of King Budomel and the Brabazini and Serreri – mainly went around naked, and were typically warlike. There are a couple of passages where these peoples slay each other 'like beasts',⁹⁸ but his description of how the 'black chiefs often go to war' is, I think, germane to how a contemporary audience may have interpreted Pollaiuolo's image:

These black lords often go to war with one another, and also very frequently with their neighbours. Their wars are waged on foot, because they have very few horses ... They do not have armour, but only have broad round shields, and for attack they carry many *Azanage*, which are their spears, and they throw them quickly ... They also carry some Moorish swords, in the shape of a half scimitar, that is curved; and they are made of iron, not of steel ... Also they carry into battle another weapon, an *assegai*, almost like a spear, but they do not have any other weapons. Their wars are deadly – because they have no armour many of them are killed. They are very daring and bestial: at every danger they would more quickly stay and kill each other than attempt to flee. They are not afraid of seeing their companions killed, as these men are so accustomed to death it seems that they do not care about it, and they do not fear death at all.⁹⁹

There are several correspondences between this text and Pollaiuolo's engraving: the juxtaposition of primitive nakedness and metal weaponry; the half-length curved swords; the round shields; and what Alison Wright has called the 'viciousness' of the men's faces. Nearby in his text, Cadamosto also describes how the Barbazini people (who are 'black, and well built') use 'bows and poisoned arrows', perhaps like the man to the centre right of Pollaiuolo's engraving.¹⁰⁰ The contrast between the animality and violence of the foreground with the verdant fertility of the plants growing in the background could be related to Cadamosto's discussion of the fertility

20 Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *A Prisoner Taken before a Judge*, 1460s. Pen and brown ink, 36.8 × 69 cm. London: British Museum. Photo: © Trustees of the British Museum.





21 Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *Dancing Nudes*, after 1464. Fresco. Arcetri: Villa Gallina (formerly Lanfredini). Photo: © Antonio Quattrone, studio fotografico, Florence.

of the land below the Senegal river. The plants in the background are sorghum, a type of millet, which Cadamosto reports grows in various kinds in Africa, and which would have been a familiar crop to Pollaiuolo, as it was used as fodder for animals and food for the poor in Italy during that time.¹⁰¹ The ribbons in Pollaiuolo's men's hair, their nakedness and their weapons also correspond with another illustration of Guinean natives on the so-called Christopher Columbus chart, drawn in the early 1490s (plate 17).¹⁰² The ribbons also recur in the 'moor's head' on the coat of arms of the Florentine Pucci family, as displayed for example in Botticelli's *Marriage Feast of Nastagio degli Onesti* (plate 18).¹⁰³

I am not suggesting that Pollaiuolo illustrated Cadamosto's passage. The axes on Pollaiuolo's image are not mentioned in Cadamosto, for example (though it could well be a mistaken interpretation of the unfamiliar 'azanaga', which I have not found in any other contemporary source, for 'azza' – axe). These axes serve – as Joseph Manca has noted – to heighten the brutality of the combat through the use of implements associated with peasant farmers rather than knights; rather than using them for agricultural labour, the foundation of civilized society, these barbaric peoples used them to slay each other.¹⁰⁴ The chain held by the two central figures is also missing in Cadamosto's text. Grapevines, another detail in the background, did not grow south of the Senegal river, as Cadamosto explained, because of the great heat. Patricia Emison's argument that these vines are symbolic of the sacrament seems convincing; perhaps even more so in the context of the Portuguese voyages which sought to educate these wild humans in Christianity, driving home the choice that these peoples could make between civilization and barbarity.¹⁰⁵ Equally, the assegai, or spears, that were to become important parts of the iconography of Africans by around 1500 do not appear on this print, and the faces of the combatants are not stereotypically African – though neither are they on the Waldseemüller map discussed above (see plate 14). That these figures were seen as 'exotic', though, and even African, is suggested by the appropriation of some of the fighting men on a large gilded silver standing cup of the mid-1520s in the Treasure Room of the Royal Palace in Munich. The fighters to the left of Pollaiuolo's print are copied on the base of the cup (plate 19) which is also decorated with scenes of African animals and people with feathered headdresses and stereotypical African physiognomies.¹⁰⁶



22 Anonymous Florentine Engraver, Round Dance, from the Fatih Album, c. 1470. Hand-coloured engraving, 24.5 × 19.7 cm. Istanbul: Topkapi Palace Museum. Photo: A. M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, London, 1938, volume 2, plate 97.

a day, 'with much ceremony and abasement', and where 'no man would be bold enough to come before him to parley, unless he had stripped himself naked save for the girdle of leather they wear'.¹¹⁰ A tale of 1491 told of how an African king who, again naked, summarily sacrificed six slaves to honour his European guests and washed his hands and face in their blood.¹¹¹

Similarly, Pollaiuolo's *Dancing Nudes* fresco at what was originally the Lanfredini family country villa at Arcetri near Florence (plate 21) shows shamelessly naked figures against a background of verdant fruits. This composition has long been related to a 1470s print of a *moresca*, or Moorish dance (plate 22) whose participants are also naked.¹¹² The *moresca*, a very popular dance in the fifteenth century, was – as its name suggests – principally linked with 'otherness'. A pantomimic dance, where performers would take on roles, this could include representation of wild men, humans with animal heads or dancers with faces and hands painted black.¹¹³ African love of dancing was a 'constant source of comment' in Renaissance Europe.¹¹⁴ Two of the nude figures in Pollaiuolo's scene have ornate headgear – one, as Wright has pointed out, looking rather like a hat typically used to denote Greek or Jewish people.¹¹⁵ Could the hair ribbons sported by the other man indicate his African origins?

I do not pretend here to be giving the missing ingredient to an iconographical recipe, but wish to make a broader point about the Renaissance understanding of nakedness; there seems to be a blind spot in our understanding of the fifteenth-century 'period eye'.¹¹⁶ The voyages of discovery with their tales of 'naked natives' had an impact on the perception of nakedness in Italy just at the point when the artistic nude was being revived. Phillippa Levine's observation about Victorian colonial attitudes to nakedness is, perhaps, pertinent here. She suggests that the non-Western body 'with its absence of shame and its apparent normalizing or incomprehension of nudity as

I suggest that image and text should be read in parallel – both reinforcing the notion of a wild and animalistic foreign 'other' to contrast with European civilized norms, a symptom of early colonial ventures. As Peter Mason suggested, 'as a function of Eurocentric discourse ... those who were not Europeans were barbarians, and ... one barbarian was more or less like another.'¹⁰⁷ Far from being heroic, the nakedness in Antonio del Pollaiuolo's print makes his subjects lose their individuality as humans. Any distinct role they may play within a complex social world is eliminated. They are generically 'foreign', just as terminology for non-Europeans such as 'Indian', 'Ethiopian' or simply 'blacks' only referred in the vaguest possible terms to a geographical location.¹⁰⁸

Other works from the Pollaiuolo workshop also use the naked body to convey exoticism. The drawing of *A Prisoner Taken before a Judge* (plate 20), for example, in the British Museum, shows a frieze of naked men, some carrying curved swords, leading a bound naked man to an enthroned figure of authority.¹⁰⁹ This is reminiscent of Cadamosto's stories of King Budomel, and his train of 'two-hundred blacks', who gave an audience twice

nudity ... [created] a safe space for observing naked bodies belonging to nameless, over-sexualized people to whom shame could not, allegedly, attach'.¹¹⁷ The notion of a 'safe space' for beholding nakedness is an important one. The exploration of Africa, India and the New World may have facilitated the artistic exploration of the naked form by creating new meanings for nakedness. Exoticizing the nude perhaps allowed the burden of decorum to be lifted from the artist and audience.

Moreover, as in images of Adam and Eve, the body without clothes could be seen as a blank tablet, waiting to be inscribed with meaning. The naked body had no fixed significance, but was a sign of something yet-to-come; it suggested potential for humanity to reach 'upwards' towards civilization or an angelic non-bodily form, or 'downwards' towards barbarity and a beastlike existence. These fifteenth-century naked bodies could be seen as the visual parallel of humanistic texts on the dignity of mankind that – some would argue – justified European colonial expansion and slavery. These naked savages could be saved from themselves and 'clothed' actually and metaphorically through their contact with Christian civilization.¹¹⁸

The European voyages of exploration focused attention on the meanings of nakedness and its role in defining humanity. They should be seen in an intimate relationship with the progress of intellectual enquiry into the boundaries of the human in the later fifteenth century. I suggest that this ongoing debate was both in dialogue with travellers' accounts of new peoples in their native context and with the reactions to the rising populations of sub-Saharan African slaves in Italian cities. The economic interests of Italian (and particularly Florentine) merchants in the African slave trade gave these intellectual fascinations a highly pragmatic basis. The intellectual and visual culture of this time is closely linked, and the beginnings of the artistic interest in the naked body should be seen as both reacting and contributing to these cultural currents. In sum, we should accord contact with naked non-Europeans a more central position in the history of the Western nude

Notes

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- 1 'Discoprovo infinita terra e vedemo infinitissima gente e varie lingue, e tutti disnudi', Amerigo Vespucci, letter to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici of 28 July 1500, from *Il Mondo Novo di Amerigo Vespucci: Vespucci autentico e apocrifo*, ed. Mario Pozzi, Milan, 1984, 70. Also cited in Carlo Ginzburg, 'Memory and distance: Learning from a gilded silver vase (Antwerp, c. 1530)', *Diogenes* 201, 51: 1. 2004, 99–100.
- 2 Although much criticized, the only synthetic account of the nude form that focused to a great extent on Renaissance images remains Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, Washington, DC, 1956. Most general studies on the nude take the Renaissance as a chronological anchoring point without focusing on the specific cultural milieu of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See, for

example, Richard Leppert, *The Nude: The Cultural Rhetoric of the Body in the Art of Western Modernity*, Boulder, CO, 2007; Margaret Walters, *The Nude Male: A New Perspective*, New York, 1978; Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, London, 1992. The most extensive considerations of nudity in Renaissance art focus on images of Christ – Leo Steinberg, 'The sexuality of Christ in Renaissance art and in modern oblivion', *October*, 25, 1983, 1–222; and on the classical inheritance – Nikolaus Himmelmann, 'Nudità ideale', in Salvatore Settis, ed., *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, 2 vols, vol. II: *I generi e i temi ritrovati*, Turin, 1985, 199–278, and his *Ideale Nacktheit*, Opladen, 1985. For a discussion based on a definition of nudity in the later fourteenth-century text by Pierre Bersuire, the *Dictionarii seu reportarii moralis*, only printed in Italy in 1589, see Erwin Panofsky, 'The Neoplatonic movement in Florence and Northern Italy', in his *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, New York and London, 1972, 155–60. I have not come across any references to Bersuire's definitions of nakedness in fifteenth-century Italian sources.

- 3 For this phrase, see Charles Trinkaus, 'Themes for a Renaissance anthropology', reprinted in André Chastel, *The Renaissance: Essays in Interpretation*, London, 1982, 83–126.
- 4 The version illustrated here is a later one – British Museum 1918,0317.1. Burgkmair was reacting to Balthasar Springer's account of his voyage along the east coast of Africa, then around the cape to the major Indian trading port of Kozhikode (Calicut). See Jean Devisse and Michel Mollat, 'The African transposed', David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr, eds, *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the Early Christian Era to the 'Age of Discovery': Africans in the Christian Ordinance of the World*, trans. William Granger Ryan. Cambridge, MA, 2010, 272, who assert the 'eyewitness' quality of this print, as does Jean

- Michel Massing, 'Hans Burgkmair's depiction of Native Africans', *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 27, 1995, 39. For a detailed discussion of the multi block woodcut frieze, see Mark P. McDonald, 'Burgkmair's woodcut frieze of the Natives of Africa and India', *Print Quarterly*, 20, 2003, 227–44.
- 5 A parallel near-contemporary borrowing from Italian prints to depict 'exotic' scenes in northern Europe can be seen in the iconography of a gilded silver beaker in Antwerp, discussed also below: see Ginzburg, 'Memory and distance', 99–112.
- 6 See Genesis 3: 7–11. See Penny Howell Jolly, *Made in God's Image? Eve and Adam in the Genesis Mosaics at San Marco, Venice*, Berkeley, CA, 1997, for a discussion of medieval representations of Adam and Eve.
- 7 See for fully clothed expulsions, the mosaics at the cathedral at Monreale of the late twelfth century; the Palatine chapel in Palermo of the mid-twelfth century; the mosaics in San Marco, Venice (plate 3); Giusto de' Menabuoi's fresco of 1376–78 in the Baptistry in Padua; the late fourteenth-century Visconti hours; Fra Angelico's Cortona Annunciation of around 1433, and his Prado Annunciation of around 1430; Paolo Uccello's frescos on the Chiostro Verde, 1432–36. More scanty genital coverings of fig leaves are used in the Expulsion scene by Niccolò di Tommaso, after 1372, in the former convent of San Antonio Abate in Pistoia; and Ghiberti's scene on the East Baptistry doors.
- 8 For a discussion of the iconography of Masaccio's Adam and Eve see Rona Goffen, 'Adam and Eve in the Brancacci Chapel, or sex and gender in the beginning', in Nicholas Eckstein, ed., *The Brancacci Chapel: Form, Function and Setting*, Florence, 2007: 115–38; and James Clifton, 'Gender and shame in Masaccio's Expulsion from the Garden of Eden', *Art History*, 22: 5, December 1999, 637–55; for Jacopo della Quercia at San Petronio, James Beck, *Jacopo della Quercia e il portale di San Petronio a Bologna. Ricerche storiche, documentarie e iconografiche*, Bologna, 1970. Other early expulsions without clothing or fig leaves include Domenico di Michelino's panel now in the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht, c. 1450; Giovanni di Paolo's panel in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, c. 1445 (plate 11) and the background to his Annunciation of c. 1435 in the National Gallery of Art, Washington; also Benvenuto di Giovanni's panel now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston dated to the 1470s.
- 9 Francis Ames-Lewis, *Tuscan Marble Carving 1250–1350: Sculpture and Civic Pride*, Aldershot, 1997, 221–5. For more on this iconography, see Maureen Pelta, 'Expelled from Paradise and put to work: Recontextualizing Castagno's Adam and Eve', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 25, 1995, 73–87; and F. Biscoglio, "'Unspun' heroes: Iconography of the spinning woman in the middle ages', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 25, 1995, 163–76.
- 10 This is normally translated as 'Famous Men' cycles, after Schubring came up with the term (see C. L. Joost-Gaugier, 'A rediscovered series of Uomini Famosi from Quattrocento Venice', *Art Bulletin*, 58: 2, 1976, 184) but as they often also contain women, 'Famous People' is a more accurate term.
- 11 For the Orsini cycle, which was renowned in its day, R. L. Mode, 'Masolino, Uccello and the Orsini "Uomini Famosi"', *Burlington Magazine*, 114: 831, 1972, 369–78; and 'The Orsini Sala Theatri at Monte Giordano in Rome', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 26: 2, 1973, 167–72. For Adam and Eve in the Florentine Picture Chronicle, Aby Warburg, 'The picture chronicle of a Florentine goldsmith', in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. David Britt, Los Angeles, CA, 1999, 166.
- 12 See Alison Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers: The Arts of Florence and Rome*, New Haven and London, 2005, 184–8.
- 13 Michael Baxandall, 'A dialogue on art from the Court of Leonello d'Este: Angelo Decembrio's De Politia Litteraria Pars LXVIII', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26: 3, 1963, 314.
- 14 Debra Pincus, *The Arco Foscari: The Building of a Triumphal Gateway in Fifteenth-century Venice*, New York, 1976, 210–40.
- 15 Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, trans. Aloysius Robert Caponigri, Regnery, 1996. For a recent discussion of critical interpretations of this much contested text in the context of contemporary writings, see M. V. Dougherty, 'Three precursors to Pico della Mirandola's Roman Disputation and the question of human nature in the Oratio', in M. V. Dougherty, ed., *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays*, New York and Cambridge, 2008, 114–51. For a similar – if rather differently expressed – contemporary idea, see Cesare Cesariano's exasperated rejoinder to the 'imbecile human vanity' that 'we all have origin from one crib and human form': Cesariano, Vitruvius, 11.
- 16 For the twelfth-century Hugh of St Victor's discussion of nakedness necessitating invention, see David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, Cambridge, 1990, 35. For other humanists, Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, London, 1970, passim.
- 17 Polydore Vergil, *On Discovery*, trans. and ed. Brian P. Copenhaver, Cambridge, MA, 2002, 408. The influence of this book is discussed in Copenhaver's Introduction, quotation from viii.
- 18 Cennino Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook: The Italian 'Il libro dell'arte'*, trans. Daniel Varney Thompson, Mineola, NY, 1954, 1.
- 19 Brian P. Copenhaver, 'The historiography of discovery in the Renaissance: The sources and composition of Polydore Vergil's De Inventoribus Rerum, I–III', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 4, 1978, esp. 193–4. See also Copenhaver's introduction to Vergil, *On Discovery*, xvi; and Catherine Atkinson, *Inventing Inventors in Renaissance Europe: Polydore Vergil's De inventoribus rerum*, Tübingen, 2007.
- 20 For Vitruvius, Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory: From Vitruvius to the Present*, Princeton, NJ, 1994, 39; for Diodorus Siculus, James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, Rome, 2003, 262, n. 41. Alison Brown has written extensively on the importance of Lucretius in Florentine culture. See her 'Lucretius and the Epicureans in the social and political context of Renaissance Florence', *I Tatti Studies*, 9, 2001, 37–45; 'The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence', Cambridge, MA, esp. 30–1; and 'Reinterpreting Renaissance humanism: Marcello Adriani and the recovery of Lucretius', in Angelo Mazzocco, ed., *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, 2006, 267–91. See also Marco Beretta, 'Leonardo and Lucretius', *Rinascimento*, 49, 2009, 369–72; and for Lucretius' influence in Venetian circles, Stephen J. Campbell, 'Giorgione's "Tempest", "Studiolo" culture, and the Renaissance Lucretius', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 56: 2, Summer 2003, 299–332.
- 21 Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, at http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/home.html, book 1, chapter 8; Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, book 2, ch. 1, trans. Richard Schofield, London, 2009, 37; Titus Carus Lucretius, *The Way Things Are*, trans. Rolfe Humphries, Bloomington, IN, 1969, 185–90.
- 22 Plato, *Protagoras*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Cambridge, MA, and London, 1967, Vol. 3, ch. 321 (accessed at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>). First translated by Ficino in the 1460s, in circulation from the 1480s – see Charles Trinkaus, 'Protagoras in the Renaissance: An exploration', in Edward Mahoney, ed., *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, Leiden, 1976, 190–213.
- 23 Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, Banco Rari 228, 5r – discussed in Giustina Scaglia, 'A translation of Vitruvius and copies of late antique drawings in Buonaccorso Ghiberti's Zibaldone', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 69, 1979, 3–30.
- 24 For a discussion of the Cesariano illustration in reference to Piero di Cosimo's Early History of Mankind panels, see Erwin Panofsky, 'The early history of man in a cycle of paintings by Piero di Cosimo', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1, 1937, 12–30; and Dennis Geronimus, *Piero di Cosimo: Visions Beautiful and Strange*, New Haven and London, 2006, 123–62.
- 25 Filarete, *Trattato di Architettura*, 11: <http://www.dibaio.com/cultura/storia-dell-architettura/redazionale/trattato-di-architettura/trattato-di-architettura---pagina-11.aspx>
- 26 BNCF, Fondo Principale, II.I.140, f. 2; http://www.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/oldWeb/Bib_digitale/Manoscritti/II.140/main.htm
- 27 Bartolomeo Scala, *Essays and Dialogues*, trans. Renée Neu Watkins, Cambridge, MA, 2008, 73. This passage is from his *Dialogue of Consolation*, discussed in Brown, *The Return of Lucretius*, 24–6.
- 28 Gianozzo Manetti, *De dignitate et excellentia hominis*, ed. Elizabeth Leonard, Padua, 1975, 58; discussed in Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 232; Trinkaus, 'Themes for a Renaissance anthropology', 98–102.
- 29 This passage is translated and contextualized in Amos Edelheit, *Ficino, Pico and Savonarola: The Evolution of Humanist Theology 1461/2–1498*, Leiden, 2008, 156–7.

- 30 Morandi, *De Felicitate Humana*, quoted in Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 280.
- 31 Cesare Cesariano, *Vitruvio De Architectura: Libri II–IV: I Materiali, I Templi, Gli Ordini*, ed. Alessandro Rovetta, Milan, 2002, 20: 'Quisti usarno al modo che etiam usano le caverne li trogloditi ... e in molti loci ancora assai ultramontani vel como sono li novi populi trovati in le insule de la Tabrobana seu di Calicut da li naviganti de l'hispanico rege, similiter da quilli del rege di Portogallo.' Also discussed in Ginzburg, 'Memory and distance', 100.
- 32 See W. A. Koelsch, 'Squinting back at Strabo', *Geographical Review*, 94: 4, 2004, 504; for circulating copies amongst Florentines, see Goldstein, 'Geography in 15th century Florence', in John Parker, ed., *Merchants and Scholars: Essays in the History of Exploration and Trade. Collected in Memory of James Ford Bell*, Minneapolis, MN, 1965, 18–19; and entries in Sebastiano Gentile, *Firenze e la scoperta dell'America: umanesimo e geografia nel '400 fiorentino*, Florence, 1992. For the records of this Council in English, see *Papal Encyclicals Online*: <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum17.htm>.
- 33 For Poggio, Brown, 'Lucretius and the Epicureans', 38; Poggio Bracciolini, *Travelers in Disguise: Narratives of Eastern Travel*, Cambridge, MA, 1963; and Thomas Suárez, *Early Mapping of Southeast Asia*, Singapore, 1999, 79.
- 34 Benjamin Braude, 'The sons of Noah and the construction of ethnic and geographical identities in the medieval and early modern periods', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 54: 1, 1997, 126; Jean Devisse and Michel Mollat, 'The appeal to the Ethiopian', in David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr, eds, *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the Early Christian Era to the 'Age of Discovery': Africans in the Christian Ordinance of the World*, trans. William Granger Ryan, Cambridge, MA, 2010, 142–4; Goldstein, 'Geography', 18–21.
- 35 See Alessandro Scafi, *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth*, London, 2006, 218–30; and his 'The African Paradise of Cardinal Carvajal: New light on the "Kunstmann II Map", 1502–1506', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 31: 2, 2008, 7–28.
- 36 For Eden on this map, see Scafi, *Mapping Paradise*, 221–3; and, most recently, on the Giovanni di Paolo panel, with further bibliography, Ingeborg Bähr, 'Zum ursprünglichen Standort und zur Ikonographie des Dominikaner-Retabels von Giovanni di Paolo in den Uffizien', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 46: 1, January, 2002, 74–120, 94–5, for the predella.
- 37 Bähr, 'Zum ursprünglichen Standort'. For the predella panel in particular, Kristen Lippencott, 'Giovanni di Paolo's "Creation of the World" and the tradition of the "Thema Mundi" in late medieval and Renaissance art', *Burlington Magazine*, 132: 1048, 1990, 460–8, for further bibliography and, more recently, Scafi, *Mapping Paradise*, 221–3.
- 38 Cesariano, *Vitruvio De Architectura*, 20: '...de le qual cose asai in publica scripta sono stampate'.
- 39 'Tractato bellissimo delle più maravegliose cose'. See C. W. R. D Moseley, 'The availability of Mandeville's Travels in England 1356–1750', *The Library*, 1975, 129–32, who notes an 'astonishing interest' for Mandeville in Italy. As well as a lively manuscript culture, there are extant Italian printed editions of Mandeville from 1480 (Milan), 1491 (Venice), 1492 (Florence), 1497 (Milan and Bologna), 1502 (Milan), 1504 (Florence), 1504 (Venice), 1505 (Venice), 1515 (Venice) 1517 (Milan) and 1521 (Venice). Information about editions of travellers' tales is taken from the Incunabola database (<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/>); the Edit 16 database (<http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/>); and the British Library catalogue. There has been a great deal of work on Mandeville's book, its disputed authorship, and its medieval and early modern reception. See, for Mandeville's representation of non-Europeans, Andrew Fleck, 'Here, there and in between: Representing difference in the "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville', *Studies in Philology*, 97: 4, 2000, 379–400; and for further bibliography, Rosemary Tzanaki, *Mandeville's Medieval Audiences*, Aldershot, 2003.
- 40 'a redurli alla vita humana e non bestiale'. This letter was first published by Verde, *Lo studio fiorentino 1473–1503: Ricerche e documenti*, Florence, 1985, vol. 3.1, 576, and was discussed in Brown, 'Lucretius and the Epicureans', 39. It was republished and discussed recently in 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: 3, 2010, 326. For the circulation of Cadamosto's journey to sub-Saharan Africa in the mid-fifteenth century (first printed by Montalboddo in 1507), see below.
- 41 He was baptized in 1491 as João I. See Devisse and Mollat, 'The African transposed', 254.
- 42 I discuss the first of these pamphlets in more detail below. Accounts of Columbus' voyages were printed in three Latin editions and the Italian edition translated by Giuliano Dati in Rome, Florence and Brescia in 1493, then reprinted in 1495 and 1500. Amerigo Vespucci's voyages were printed in 1502 (Rome), 1504 (Rome), 1504 (unknown), 1505 (Venice), 1507 (Vicenza), 1508 (Vicenza and Milan), 1512 (Milan), 1517 (Venice), 1519 (Milan), 1521 (Venice).
- 43 Fracanzano da Montalboddo, *Paesi novamente ritrovati et novo mondo da Alberico Vesputio fiorentino intitulato*, Vicenza, 1507. As far as I am aware there is no modern edition of this which keeps the texts together. However, this was a popular anthology during the Renaissance, which was quickly reprinted and translated. See Jean Devisse and Michel Mollat, 'The African transposed', in David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr, eds, *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the Early Christian Era to the 'Age of Discovery': Africans in the Christian Ordinance of the World*, trans. William Granger Ryan, Cambridge, MA, 2010, 275 and n. 221.
- 44 For example, fifteenth-century Portuguese explorations are hardly considered in Anthony Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*, Cambridge, MA, 1995, esp. 1–10; or Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization*, Ann Arbor, MI, 2nd edn, 2003.
- 45 Rewritten by Boccaccio as *De Canaria et insulis reliquis ultra Hispaniam noviter repertis*, quoted in Peter Hulme, 'Tales of distinction: European ethnography and the Caribbean', in Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, Cambridge, 1994, 180–1.
- 46 Mandeville, *The Travels*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext97/tosjm10h.htm>.
- 47 Poggio Bracciolini, *Travelers in Disguise*, 42.
- 48 Montalboddo, *Paesi novamente ritrovati*, unpaginated: 'El vistir de questa zente quasi tutti vanno nudi continuamente salvo che iportano un coro di capra ... cum che li se copreno le lor vergogne'; 'i nigri de Senega ... vanno quasi tutti nudi'.
- 49 Luigi Firpo, *Primi relazioni di navigatori italiani sulla scoperta dell'America*, Turin, 1966, 36: 'Gli abitanti di quest'isola e di tutte le altre che ho scoperto o di cui ho avuto notizia vanno tutti nudi, uomini e donne, così come le loro madri li mettono al mondo.' For Columbus's stressing nakedness in his accounts of native peoples, see Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representation of the Other*, London, 1990, 170.
- 50 Montalboddo, *Paesi novamente ritrovati*, unpaginated: 'vanno nudi come nascerono senza vergogna alcuna'.
- 51 Firpo, *Prime relazioni*, 63: 'Vanno tutti nudi, ma è vero che le femine, quando hanno conosciuto lo omo, se coprono davanti o di foglia d'arbore o d'uno pecio de panno di cotone o di brache del dicto panno.'
- 52 Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Giovanni di Buonagrazia's letter to his father concerning his participation in the Second Expedition of Vasco da Gama (1502–3)', *Mare liberum: Revista de história dos mares*, 16, 1998, 100 and 107: 'vanno nudi sempre, salvo una pelle di capra che tengono al culo e alla natura.'
- 53 Firpo, *Prime relazioni*, 79–80: 'tucto vanno disnudi, si li huomini come le donne, senza coprire vergogna nessuna, non altrimenti che come saliron del ventre di lor madri.'
- 54 K. O. Kupperman, 'Presentment of civility: English reading of American self-presentation in the early years of colonization', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54: 1, 1997, esp. 198–202.
- 55 There is a large literature now on costume and sumptuary laws which formalized social distinction through clothing. See particularly Diane Owen Hughes, 'Sumptuary laws and social relations in Renaissance Italy', in John Bossy, ed., *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, Cambridge, 1983, 69–99. Recent studies with further bibliography include Catherine Kovesi Killaby, *Sumptuary Law in Italy 1200–1400*, Oxford, 2002; Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore, MD, 2002.
- 56 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, Princeton, NJ, 1988, III, 13.
- 57 Discussed in Lauro Martines, *Strong Words: Writing and Social Strain in the*

- Italian Renaissance, Baltimore, MD, 2003, 175.
- 58 For these attitudes as underlying later justifications for slavery and a precursor to racial ideologies, see A. Loomba and J. Burton, *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*, London, 2007, 8–15; David Brion Davis, 'Constructing race: A reflection', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54: 1, January 1997, esp. 7–15. More generally for nakedness and colonialism, Ruth Barcan, *Nudity: A Cultural Anatomy*, London, 2004, 150–65.
- 59 There are nine editions of Columbus' letter before 1500 (British Museum Incunabola database). For the early publishing history, see Firpo, *Prime relazioni*, 11–12.
- 60 Christopher Columbus, *La lettera dell'isole che ha trouato nuouamente il re dispana...*, verse translation by Giuliano Dati, Florence, 1493, 2v: 'senza panni vestite o arme o scudi/ma tucti e membri loro si erano nudi'. For Dati's texts furnishing a market for cantastorie see Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, Princeton, NJ, 1990, 12–19; and Leo Olschki, 'I cantari dell'India di Giuliano Dati', *La Bibliofilia*, 40, 1938, 289–316.
- 61 The classic account of slavery in Italy, on which all subsequent studies are based, is Charles Verlinden's *L'esclavage dans l'Europe Médiévale*, vol. 2. *Italie, colonies italiennes du Levant, Levant Latin, Empire byzantin*, Ghent, 1977. For more recent work, see footnotes below.
- 62 Sally McKee, 'Domestic slavery in Renaissance Italy', *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 29: 3, 2008, 305–26.
- 63 Tognetti, 'The trade in black African slaves', and Paul Kaplan, 'Isabella d'Este and black African women', in Tom Earle and Kate Lowe, eds, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge, 2005, 128.
- 64 Cited in Lowe's introduction to *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, 10.
- 65 Tognetti, 'The trade in black African slaves', 217.
- 66 For the age and sex of slaves, see Verlinden, *L'esclavage*, 362–83, who also talks about illegitimate children born to slaves; for Florence, Tognetti, 'The trade in black African slaves', 220; Kate Lowe recaps and further analyses Verlinden's findings in 'Black Africans' religious and cultural assimilation to, or appropriation of, Catholicism in Italy, 1470–1520', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 31, 2008, 67–86.
- 67 Verlinden, *L'esclavage*, 2, 376–83. Also discussed in Lowe, 'Black Africans'.
- 68 Vienna, Albertina, *Grafische Sammlung 24018r*. For discussions of *Luxuria*, see the catalogue entry in Dominique Cordelier, ed., *Pisanello: Le peintre aux sept vertus*, Paris, 1996, 85 and 92; Catherine Kovesi, 'Engendering lust in early-modern Italy: Pisanello's *Luxuria*', in Megan Cassidy-Welch and Peter Sherlock, eds, *Practices of Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Turnhout, 2008, 137–50; and Maria Fossi Todorow, *I disegni del Pisanello e della sua cerchia*, Florence, 1966, 57. For Pisanello's work more generally in the context of Northern Italian courts, Luke Syson and Dillion Gordon, *Pisanello Painter to the Renaissance Court*, London, 2001.
- 69 There are, of course, drawings after the nude before this date, but they become extremely numerous in the 1470s – see Carlo Ragghianti and Gigetta Dalli Regoli, *Firenze, 1470–1480: Disegni dal modello*, Pisa, 1975.
- 70 For a discussion of drawing after the female nude, which sees a turning point around 1500, see Joanne Bernstein, 'The female model and the Renaissance nude: Durer, Giorgione, and Raphael', *Artibus et Historiae*, 13: 26, 1992, 49–63.
- 71 Kovesi, 'Engendering lust', 146, tentatively suggests that the model for this image could be an African slave girl, but does not pursue this line of investigation. Her suggestive interpretation of this figure as Venus may be correct; my reading of the image sits beside her argument rather than denying or confirming it.
- 72 See Verlinden, *L'esclavage*, 415–23.
- 73 Paris, Louvre, Département des arts graphiques, inv 2324, metalpoint on parchment. See the online inventory at <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/fo/visite?srv=mfc¶mAction=actionGetOeuvre&idFicheOeuvre=3103> – for more information; also Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello*, fig 2.9 and Devisse and Mollat, 'The appeal to the Ethiopian', 139–40.
- 74 In his *Heptaplus*, translated by Douglas Carmichael in Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge, 1965, 68. My thanks to Stephen Bowd for this reference.
- 75 Petrarch, *The Life of Solitude*, trans. Jacob Zeitlin, Urbana, IL, 1924, 267. Discussed in Hulme, 'Tales of distinction', 182, and 188–9 for Amerindians being compared to animals.
- 76 For all these quotations, see Katherine George, 'The civilized West looks at primitive Africa 1400–1800: A study in ethnocentrism', *Isis*, 49: 1, 1958, 63–5. For an overview of how black Africans were viewed in Renaissance Europe, Lowe, 'The stereotyping of black Africans', and Lowe's introduction to the same volume, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, 1–14. For images of black Africans, and how they changed over the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, see the essays by Devisse and Mollat, and Kaplan in *Images of the Black*, vols 2 and 3.
- 77 From Scala's *Dialogue on Laws*, in Scala, *Essays and Dialogues*, 175. Cited and discussed in Brown, 'Lucretius and the Epicureans', 39.
- 78 Lowe, "'Representing" Africa: Ambassadors and messengers from Christian Africa to Renaissance Italy and Portugal, 1402–1608', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 17, 2007, 101–28, 102. See also the 1491 letter that describes Ghinea natives as having cleft feet like 'oxen' and faces like 'baboons': Lowe, 'Africa in the news', 327.
- 79 An English translation of *Sublimus Dei* can be consulted on *Papal Encyclicals Online*: <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm>. For both the supposed sheep-like qualities of natives and the papal bull, see Hulme, 'Tales of distinction', 188–9. For a discussion of nakedness as a sign of animality in descriptions of native peoples (though generally using later sixteenth-century accounts), see Brian Cummings, 'Animal passions and human sciences: Shame, blushing and nakedness in early modern Europe and the New World', in Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert and Susan Wiseman, eds, *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and National Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, London, 2006, 26–51. The importance of pre-1550 discussions of the humanity of indigenous peoples as prefiguring modern theories of 'race' is pointed out in Claire Farago, 'The concept of the Renaissance today: What is at stake?', in James Elkins and Robert Williams, eds, *Renaissance Theory*, Manchester, 2008, 75.
- 80 For the pervasiveness of this stereotype in Western scientific and artistic culture by the nineteenth century, particularly in relationship to the exhibition of Sarah Bartmann, the 'Hottentot Venus', see Sander L. Gilman, 'Black bodies, white bodies: Towards an iconography of female sexuality in late nineteenth-century art, medicine and literature', *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 1985, 204–42.
- 81 Alvise Cadamosto, *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*, trans. and ed. G. R. Crone, London, 1937, 36 and 38.
- 82 Vergil, *On Discovery*, 59–61.
- 83 Quoted and discussed in George, 'The civilized West', 63.
- 84 Kovesi, 'Engendering lust', 146.
- 85 A potential comparison could be with the young African girls 'collected' by Isabella d'Este later in the century. See Kaplan, 'Isabella d'Este and black African women'.
- 86 The quotation is from Patricia Emison, 'The word made naked in Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes*', *Art History*, 13, 1990, 262, but echoes the opinion of other commentators. See, for a discussion and varying interpretations of this image, plus further bibliography, Patricia Rubin and Alison Wright, *Renaissance Florence: The Art of the 1470s*, London and New Haven, 1999, 257–9; Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 176–82; Joseph Manca, 'Passion and primitivism in Antonio Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Naked Men*', *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, 20: 3, 2001, 28–36; Lilian Armstrong, 'Copies of Pollaiuolo's "Battling Nudes"', in her *Studies of Renaissance Miniaturists in Venice*, London, 2003: 22–36; Shelley Langdale, *Battle of the Nudes: Pollaiuolo's Renaissance Masterpiece*, Cleveland, OH, 2002.
- 87 For copies and related compositions see Armstrong, 'Copies of Pollaiuolo's "Battling Nudes"'; and Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 179 and 181–3. Bertoldo's *Battle Scene* now in the Bargello but made for the Medici palace, is discussed in James Draper, *Bertoldo di Giovanni, Sculptor of the Medici Household: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné*, Columbia, MO, 1992, 16–17; Rubin and Wright, *Renaissance Florence*, 41. For Piero di Cosimo's panels and their context, see Geronimus, *Piero di Cosimo*, 123–63.
- 88 See Emison, 'The word made naked', who describes their 'visible snarls'; Manca, 'Passion and primitivism', passim; Wright in Rubin and Wright, *Renaissance Florence*, 259, describes their 'undignified grimaces' and reprises this theme in *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 179. Alison Brown has connected this image to an interest in Lucretian primitivism – see

- Brown, 'Lucretius and the Epicureans', 44–5.
- 89 For a discussion of the texts and information about Cadamosto and his voyages, see Crone's introduction to Cadamosto, *The Voyages*, xviii–xliii, and Da Mosto 'Il navigatore Alvise da Mosto e la sua famiglia', *Archivio veneto*, 5th ser, 2., 1927, 168–260. The way that mapmakers reacted to news about discoveries is far from straightforward: see Tony Campbell, 'The style and content of Grazioso Benincasa's charts: Imitation, innovation and repetition', *Map History/History of Cartography: THE Gateway to the Subject*. <http://www.maphistory.info/benincasa.html>.
- 90 See for Florentine mercantile involvement in the African trade via Lisbon: Kate Lowe, 'Understanding cultural exchange between Portugal and Italy in the Renaissance', in Kate Lowe, ed., *Cultural Links between Portugal and Italy in the Renaissance*, Oxford, 2000, 1–16 (with extensive further bibliography about individual and families); Marco Spallanzani, *Mercanti fiorentini nell'Asia portoghese (1500–1525)*, Florence, 1997, esp. 10–21; Rubiés, 'Giovanni di Buonagrazia's Letter', 87–9; Richard Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore, MD, 2009, 157–9. For the slave trade specifically, Sergio Tognetti, 'The trade in black African Slaves', 213–24; and further bibliography below. For Florentine's sea exploration in the fifteenth century more generally, Michael Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys in the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford, 1967.
- 91 See Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys*, 4–19, for establishment of the state galleys, and 84–95, for the west route round the Iberian peninsula to England.
- 92 See Rubiés, 'Giovanni di Buonagrazia's letter', esp. 87–9. Also Spallanzani, *Mercanti fiorentini*, where he researches the writers of some of these accounts. For ships as a source of news, see the 1491 letter from Zanobi Acciaiuoli to Antonio Arquato with the 'fabulous news' from Guinea that came with a ship from Portugal that had docked in Pisa. Lowe, 'Africa in the news', 328.
- 93 Goldstein, 'Geography', 18.
- 94 Gentile, *Firenze e la scoperta*, 200–2, for facsimiles; discussed in greater detail in Attilia De La Mare, 'Notes on Portuguese patrons of the Florentine book trade in the fifteenth century', in Lowe ed., *Cultural Links between Portugal and Italy*, 173–4 and, in the same volume, Eric Apfelstadt, 'Bishop and pawn: New documents for the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal at S. Miniato al Monte, Florence', 196.
- 95 See Apfelstadt, 'Bishop and pawn', esp. 202–3, and for more about the altarpiece generally, Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 192–208. The 1460s saw several voyages of the state galleys to Lisbon – see Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys*, 92–5.
- 96 For the Cambini bank and the slave trade, Tognetti, 'The trade in black African slaves', 217.
- 97 Cadamosto, *The Voyages*, 28.
- 98 Cadamosto, *The Voyages*, 13.
- 99 My translation of Cadamosto from Montalboddo, *Paesi novamente ritrovati*, unpaginated. 'Questi Signori nigri gureza spesse volte luno cum laltro e anch molte fiade cum li soi vicini e le sue guerre sono a pie: perche hanno pochissimi cavalli ... Arme per suo vestir non portano per non haverne solo hanno targhe rotonde e large, e per ostendere porta copia d'Azanage che sono alcuni loro dardi, e butali velocissimi perche li sono gran maestri de trazerli e hanno questi dardi un palmo de ferro lavorato cum barbole messe adiversi modi: che quando li feirsteno altirare isquazano le carne: Anchora portano alcune gomie moresche a modo de una meza simitara cioe storte e sonno facte de ferro senza azal ... Item portano in bataglia una altra arma in astada come quasi una ghiauarina altre arme non hanno: le guerre sue sonno mortale per esser disarmati sene amaza assai e sono molti arditi e bistiale: ad ogni periculo piu presto se lassano amazar che podando vogliano fugir, non se spaventano per veder el compagno morto anzi par che non curanno quasi come homini a costumati a quello e non temeno la morte niente.' For this passage with a slightly different English translation, see Cadamosto, *The Voyages*, 33.
- 100 Cadamosto, *The Voyages*, 54.
- 101 Cadamosto, *The Voyages*, 42, discusses millet as a crop grown in 'lower Ethiopia'. For the identification of these plants as sorghum see Manca, 'Passion and primitivism', 28–9, though he curiously suggests that these plants were not known to Pollaiuolo; that they were is suggested by a story of Sabadino degli Arienti's about a peasant, Zuco Padella, who was caught stealing succulent peaches from his master's garden. After punishing him harshly, his master tells him to 'stay away from the fruit of my peers and stick with yours: turnips, garlic, leeks, onions, and shallots along with sorghum bread!' Discussed in Laura Gianetti Ruggiero, 'The forbidden fruit fruit or the taste for sodomy in Renaissance Italy', *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 27: 1, 2006, 36.
- 102 For this chart's attribution, plus further bibliography, see M. Pelletier, 'Peut-on encore affirmer que la BN possède la carte de Christophe Colomb?', *Revue de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 45, 1992, 26–34.
- 103 The fourth and last episode of a series of four, now in a private collection. For these panels, see Patricia Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-century Florence*, New Haven and London, 2007, 358–65.
- 104 Manca, 'Passion and primitivism', 32.
- 105 For a consideration of the possibility of conversion of the peoples he saw, Cadamosto, *The Voyages*, 31; for the sacramental significance of the vines and plants she loosely interprets as 'grains', see Emison, 'The word made naked', 265.
- 106 See Ginzburg, 'Memory and distance', 103 and 106; Carlo Ginzburg, 'Hybrids: Learning from a Gilded Silver Beaker (Antwerp, c. 1530)', in Andreas Höfele and Werner von Koppenfels, eds, *Renaissance Go-Betweens: Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, Berlin and New York, 2005, 120ff. Carl Hernmarck, *The Art of the European Silversmith, 1430–1830*, 2 vols, London and New York, 1977, vol. 1, 103–4 and vol. 2, plate 140.
- 107 Mason, *Infelicities: Representations of the Exotic*, Baltimore, MD, 1998, 31.
- 108 See Lowe, 'Stereotyping', xvi.
- 109 For more on this image see Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 174–5.
- 110 Cadamosto, *The Voyages*, 36, 39–40.
- 111 Lowe, 'Africa in the news', 328.
- 112 Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 102–13. For the print, Mark J. Zucker, *The Illustrated Bartsch 24. Commentary Part 2: Early Italian Masters*, New York, 1995.
- 113 See Jennifer Nevile, *The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth-century Italy*, Bloomington, IN, 2004, 33–4 and 47; also Anthony Cummings, 'Dance and the "other": The Moresca', in Barbara Grammeniat, ed., *Seventeenth-Century Ballet: A Multi-Art Spectacle*, London, 2011, 39–60.
- 114 Lowe, 'Stereotyping', 40–1.
- 115 Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers*, 110.
- 116 This important concept was first explored by Michael Baxandall in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-century Italy*, Oxford, 1972, 29–108, and it has been hugely influential on subsequent generations of Renaissance art historians – discussed, with bibliography, in Rubin, *Images and Identity*, 331.
- 117 Levine, 'States of undress: Nakedness and the colonial imagination', *Victorian Studies*, 50: 2, 2008, 209.
- 118 See particularly Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, esp. 427–37.