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Frazer, Wittgenstein and Harry Potter: An Approach to the Ritual Manipulation of Images

Robert Maniura, Birkbeck, University of London

I begin with a story of a miracle of the Prato shrine of Santa Maria delle Carceri, a wall painting of the Virgin and Child enthroned flanked by Sts Stephen and Leonard on the wall of the disused town prison in Prato, which began to be associated with miracles in the summer of 1484¹. The collection from which it is taken was compiled by a Prato lawyer, Giuliano di Francesco Guizzelmi, in 1505². I quote the conclusion of a lengthy story placed in August 1485. The story relates the fate of a certain Vincenti d'Alexandro da Laia, a former sacristan of the cathedral of Pisa, who was unjustly accused of stealing items from the cathedral treasury³. His name was cleared after he vowed to the Madonna of the Carceri. Guizzelmi acted as a travelling judge for the Florentine territorial administration, and he claims to have heard the story direct from Vincenti himself whilst acting as judge for the *capitano*, the local Florentine official at Pisa. He adds the following postscript:

«When the said priest, Vincenti, told me this miracle he had the quartan fever. And I gave him a paper figure of the Most Glorious Virgin Mary of the Carceri, which had touched Her Majesty, and he took it devoutly and kissed it, and immediately he was liberated from the said fever and it never returned, as he later told me himself, thanking the Most Glorious Virgin Mary of the Carceri of Prato for such graces⁴.»

This additional miracle of healing is said to have been mediated by a material object - a «paper figure» - which the devotee kissed and which had also «touched her Majesty», implicitly the shrine painting, and the narrator, Guizzelmi himself, claims a part in the process through the donation of this figure.

Here the object is not well defined, but such intermediary tokens are prominent in Guizzelmi's book. Altogether twelve of the 94 stories in his collection include elements of first person narration and nine of these involve the handing out of such a material medium⁵. These objects seem to have been important to Guizzelmi. The frequency of their mention and the liberality with which he distributes them imply a low-cost, mass-produced item and, among Guizzelmi's abundant personal memoranda, we find him buying a new supply when passing through

Florence a few years later: «I record that on 18 May [1490] I bought in Florence many Virgin Maries of the Carceri. I spent 16 soldi. That is, more Virgin Maries on paper⁶.» What we are dealing with is presumably prints and a good candidate for one of these objects survives pasted into the endpapers of the single surviving manuscript of Guizzelmi's miracle book (Fig. 1). It is very buckled, abraded and full of worm holes, but it is clear that it follows the main iconographic features of the Carceri painting very closely⁷. This, then, is a good candidate for the kind of object which the priest Vincenti kissed in Guizzelmi's story and which is presented as involved in his healing from quartan fever: a print in key respects resembling the wall painting at the shrine and which had been touched against that picture. This is an example of the ritual manipulation of images which I wish to examine.

What have come to be known as miraculous images were enshrined in elaborate architectural settings and these compelling environments tend to be a major focus of study⁸. In Prato the events of summer 1484 prompted the town council to petition the pope for permission to build a church to enshrine the painting. It was eventually begun in 1485 and the result is a celebrated and much studied example of Renaissance ecclesiastical architecture designed by Giuliano da Sangallo⁹. In the finished church the shrine image, in a firmly delimited and controllable space, was largely inaccessible to any kind of direct physical manipulation by the devotee, but even before the completion of the church access was limited: from very early in the life of the cult the image was surrounded by a gated enclosure and during construction it was enclosed in a wooden portico¹⁰. Presumably few devotees ever got very close to it, as is the case at the Carceri and other image shrines today. Some miracle stories themselves play on a lack of access. Guizzelmi presents the story of one Piero di Domenico Buonami from San Gimignano, who was suffering from a bad leg, and who could not get into the shrine enclosure because of the crowds already assembled there. He sat down «opposite, on the bank» where he made his vow and was healed¹¹. The circulation of material tokens stressed by Guizzelmi reveals an important way in which access to the image and the saint could be negotiated. The interaction with so-called miraculous images is not confined to the direct encounter with the shrine image itself¹². Indeed, on Guizzelmi's evidence, the Virgin of the Carceri as a miracle worker was not primarily experienced in terms of the encounter with the wall painting at the shrine: when the priest Vincenti was released from suspicion of theft and when he was healed of fever he was in Pisa, not Prato, and the vast majority of the stories related by Guizzelmi recount such remote or distance miracles¹³. In what follows I will explore some of the implications of the motifs in Guizzelmi's stories.

The juxtaposition of the motifs of touch and resemblance invoke James George Frazer and his treatment of magic in the *Golden Bough*: «If we analyse the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two: first that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that things which have been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed¹⁴.» These principles gave rise to two branches of what Frazer called «sympathetic» magic: «homeopathic» based on resemblance and «contagious» based on touch¹⁵. Both principles seem to be involved in the story of the priest Vincenti.

The touch and resemblance in the story of the priest Vincenti is the touch and resemblance of one image to another, but the ritual perhaps hints at something more. The medium of the print is particularly allusive. A print is, in a straightforward sense, an image not made by human hands and, as Lisa Pon observes, its image derives from what is, to the viewer, an absent and unseen matrix¹⁶. In reality the matrix is the inked woodblock but in a devotional context this is profoundly suggestive and opens up the possibility of what David Areford has called «a simulation that implies an indexical relationship between the woodcut and the object it depicts» - in this case the Virgin Mary herself¹⁷. The sight and touch of the printed image promised, at least, to reach beyond themselves to an encounter with the saintly intercessor. Did the priest Vincenti understand himself to be put in contact with the Virgin Mary herself?

For Frazer magic was based on fundamental misconceptions. Invoking the philosophy of David Hume, he claimed: «Its two great principles turn out to be merely two misapplications of the association of ideas. ... Homeopathic magic commits the mistake of assuming that things which resemble each other are the same: contagious magic commits the mistake of assuming that things which have once been in contact with each other are always in contact¹⁸.» Importantly, Frazer saw magic as a kind of science, a goal-directed system for getting things done. But it was a mistaken science: «It is for the philosophic student ... to discern the spurious science behind the bastard art¹⁹.»

Frazer has, of course, been sharply criticized for this view of magic as pseudo- or primitive science and misunderstood causation and I will come to a celebrated critique in a moment, but it is worth noting that aspects of it linger and are evident in the literature on miraculous images in the Christian tradition. I think it is traceable, for example, in the foundational work

of Richard Trexler, as when, in his famous study of the Madonna of Impruneta, he comments: «Our Lady's abilities and actions seem to have been almost foolproof. ... By the sixteenth century, the historian Segni could say: "Our city has never, and I'm quite serious, publicly placed itself in the hands of this mother of God in any adverse situation without being answered . . . "20.» The image is presented as a kind of miraculous instrument: employ it properly and it will give you what you want.

This has always seemed to me misleading. One major problem with the idea of ritual as misunderstood science is that it overlooks a major issue of ritual practice. As Malinowski, among others, pointed out, it seems as though all societies display forms of ritual activity alongside systematic, «scientific» behaviour based on observation and trial and error²¹. Magic does not precede science. Ritual is a distinct sphere of activity. This was recognized by Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein read Frazer and famously made a number of observations on his work. As Wittgenstein put it: «The same savage who, apparently in order to kill his enemy, sticks his knife through a picture of him, really does build his hut out of wood and cuts his arrow with skill and not in effigy²².» Ritual or magic is never an exclusive activity.

This brings me to Harry Potter. The magical world of Harry Potter imagined by J. K. Rowling serves as an extended thought experiment on the idea of magic as a practical tool. In the magical world the witches and wizards do everything by magic: they cook by magic, travel by magic, play magical games and sports and interact with various magical creatures. They have no use for mundane technology and, especially in the figure of Mr Weasley, the father of Harry's best friend, Ron, are presented as fascinated and amused by non-magical - muggle - artefacts²³. This is a valuable construction in that it is clear that this is not how magic and ritual have operated in any historical human society. «Primitive» human beings manifestly did not sit around trying to light fires or hunt solely by chanting incantations or making spells. They may have chanted incantations but they did recognisably purposive things as well. Rituals alone have never been relied on to get things done.

However, in stories of miracle, rituals are indeed at least juxtaposed with things happening - with miracles. In the story of Vincenti da Laia, Guizzelmi offered the priest the print, the priest kissed it and he was liberated from the fever. The touch of the print appears to effect the cure. Moreover, the relationship between the print, the shrine and the saint appears to imply that it is understood to do so does so because, in some sense, it puts the devotee in

contact with the saint. But are we entitled to this conclusion? Does the «customary conjunction», to refer back to David Hume's terms, of touch, resemblance and miracle in these stories imply the perception of a causal relationship²⁴?

I want to suggest that Harry Potter can help to focus the issue. I have in mind the episode at the opening of the second book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. As usual, the book opens in the household of the Dursley family, Harry's unwilling guardians. An argument has broken out about the nocturnal disturbances created by Harry's owl, but the thread is broken by his cousin Dudley's demands for more bacon for his breakfast. He tells Harry to pass the frying pan and Harry replies «You've forgotten the magic word». The result is uproar in the household and Harry quickly clarifies «I meant "please"!», but it takes some time for the fuss to die down²⁵. In the context of the book this is simply a joke, playing on Harry's ability to do «real» magic and the conventional English witticism naming «please» a «magic» word. But I want to suggest that it is a productive passage. The rituals of human societies, including the image rituals of Giuliano Guizzelmi, are much more like saying «please» than they are like the magic of Rowling's wizards. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, they can be conceived of precisely as a form of petitioning - an elaborate form of saying please²⁶.

I began thinking along these lines some while ago, but I have been prompted to pursue them by the proposals of the interdisciplinary group, Adam Seligman, Robert Weller, Michael Puett and Bennett Simon and their frankly polemical defence of the value of ritual, *Ritual and its Consequences*²⁷. They have proposed that ritual should be understood as what they call a collective subjunctive - a shared «could be» - which, they argue, generates an arena in which to negotiate the tensions of life in an imperfect world. Critically, one of their central examples is precisely the rituals of civility. «Please» and «thank you» are not spontaneous utterances but conventional formulae. They are not foolproof. It is itself a cliché that children have to learn that they still might not get what they want even if they say please. But convention dictates that we do say please and, as Seligman et al. point out, the lack of instrumental force and conventional nature of the words do not render them meaningless: they are one of the ways in which we actually build a civilized society²⁸. Similarly, the rituals around images are one of the ways that human societies are built.

The «could be» world is related to straightforward make-believe and there are important debates about whether such an approach can account for the intensity of responses recorded and still observable at places held to be holy²⁹. Here, though, I will focus on one specific proposal the team make about the relationship between ritual and explicit or avowed play, namely the fundamental boundedness of these activities: play and ritual are both set apart from «ordinary» life³⁰. This engages with the point appealed to in Wittgenstein's comment on Frazer quoted above. But Seligman's group suggests an important refinement. Engagement in ritual entails a switching between contexts, a change, to pursue the terminology of Seligman's group, of «mood». This insight is productive in the understanding of the image rituals under discussion and offers a way of understanding the focus of the rituals where the devotees behave in key respects «as if» they were interacting with a person rather than an image. Just as in the context of a role-playing game, for example, a stick may be a sword, so in a ritual context an image may be quite properly said to be the Virgin. But this is in the context of an agreed subjunctive arena in which these things assume these roles. It makes as little sense to insist that at any stage of the ritual a devotee thinks that the image «really is» the Virgin as it does to insist that, other than in the context of the game, any participant thinks that the stick really is a sword. Trexler's formulation of the «practical identity» of image and saint can be read in this framework: the identity subsists in the subjunctive of ritual but not in the indicative of everyday life³¹.

What though of the other term in this juxtaposition - miracle? If I question the idea of a perceived causal impact of a somehow directly accessed holy person, what of the ritual's outcome? Something appears to happen as a result of these rituals: the stories move from the «as if» of ritual to the «as is» of everyday life: at the end of the story Vincenti d'Alexandro da Laia no longer had the quartan fever³².

Consider two more of Guizzelmi's stories, including his own most direct claim of the experience of aid by the Virgin of the Carceri:

«On 30 May 1486 we were ready to leave Borgo San Sepolcro, with Messer Antonio Malegonelle, my *capitano*, that is of the said borgo where I had been a judge, the office of six months being finished, and wanting to mount a horse, a mule gave me a great kick on the elbow of my left arm in such a way that the elbow made an explosion and a loud noise as if one had struck a wooden box with an axe, so that all those around thought that it had

crippled me. But no harm had been done to me: only the mark of the whole hoof remained on my shirt. And I immediately looked at my elbow and saw the mark of the hoof of the mule, because they were eating the grass and it was soiled, and touching this elbow I found that there was no wound, at which I marvelled and all those present who had seen this case marvelled too. And I recognised that I had been preserved from this danger unhurt and without any loss of consciousness by the most glorious Virgin Mary of the Carceri of Prato whose lead image, which had touched her glorious figure, I had on. At which grace, or better miracle, I marvelled and marvel still. I thanked, thank and always will thank her most Glorious Majesty to whom I continually commend myself as far as I know and am able³³.»

Again the miracle - here miraculous preservation from hurt - is mediated by a figure of the Virgin - this time a lead badge. Guizzelmi was kicked by a mule but remained unhurt. In our own culture we would, I think, just say that Guizzelmi was lucky. Here the touch of the resemblant token is not presented as the momentary catalyst of miracle. Presumably Guizzelmi habitually wore it. The miracle is found in no verifiable circumstances nor in any traceable process³⁴. The story, rather, records the judgement of the beneficiary himself: «I ... looked at my elbow ... , I found that there was no wound ... , I recognised that I had been preserved ... by the most glorious Virgin Mary of the Carceri.»

The absence of process is also notable in the first of Guizzelmi's stories with a first-person element:

«15 September 1484. Francesco d' Andrea di Francesco Ghuzzelmi of Prato, a boy of two years and eight months, had had a severe fever continuously for two days and in that time had not eaten or drunk anything and had not spoken and slept continuously and lay in his bed as if dead. And fearing this illness, Andrea, his father and my brother, went to the Madonna delle Carceri and there vowed him to Her Majesty. And that boy was as said in bed as if dead and, at the time that his father vowed him to the Madonna, he suddenly came to and sat up in bed without a fever, healthy and liberated, and said to his mother standing there and weeping, "Mamma, the Virgin Mary has healed me." And he began to talk and eat and drink as if he had never had any illness and was perfectly healthy and liberated. And lifted out of bed by his mother, he began to run through the house as children of that age do, healthy and in good spirits. Seeing

this, the said Andrea, his father, and his mother thanked God and the Glorious Virgin for such grace and miracle and afterwards they went to the Madonna and prayed and offered according to their consciences³⁵.»

Here even an intermediary token is absent: Guizzelmi's nephew is healed in the family home when his father makes a vow at the Carceri a few blocks down the street³⁶. In these stories, Guizzelmi does not merely offer his testimony of miracle, he explicitly construes the sequence of events as miracle. Room is made for the miraculous in an ordering of the world³⁷. As Frank Graziano succinctly puts it: «Miracles are not events; they are interpretations³⁸.» Guizzelmi and his fellow devotees were not manipulating images and other objects as mechanistic instruments of healing. That would have led to inevitable disillusionment. Rather, the images acted as foci for constructive performances of devotion which helped to negotiate an accommodation with the world.

One can insist that the devotees believed in miracles or sympathetic magic, but we need to take care about what those beliefs consisted in. Wittgenstein was fascinated by religious belief and he pondered this very question. In the remarks published as *Culture and Value* he wrote that religious belief «could only be something like a passionate commitment to a system of reference. Hence although it's a *belief*, it's really a way of living, or a way of assessing life³⁹». It is not, for Wittgenstein, a matter of assenting to propositions: «It will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for all in life⁴⁰.» Religious belief is not a set of propositions, but an ordering of one's practice. This is a provocative framework for thoughts about miraculous images. It is not clear that we are entitled to foreground issues of the perceived ontological status of images: we need to focus on what people did and how they ordered that doing.

¹ For the history of the site see Claudio CERRETELLI, «Da oscura prigione a tempio di luce. La costruzione di Santa Maria delle Carceri a Prato», in Anna BENVENUTI (ed.), *Santa Maria delle Carceri a Prato. Miracoli e devozione in un santuario toscano del Rinascimento*, Florence, Mandragora, 2005, p. 45-95.

² GUIZZELMI Giuliano di Francesco, *Historia della apparitione et altri miracoli di Madonna Sancta Maria del Carcere di Prato*, Biblioteca Roncioniana, Prato, MS 87. Published in Isabella GAGLIARDI (ed.), «I miracoli della Madonna delle Carceri in due codici della Biblioteca Roncioniana di Prato», in Anna BENVENUTI (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 135-53. For Guizzelmi see Elena Fasano GUARINI, «La croce, la casa, i libri le vesti. Vita di un giudice itinerante tra '400 e '500», in Carlo OSSOLA, Marcello VERGA and Maria Antonietta VISCEGLIA (eds), *Religione, cultura e politica nell'Europa dell'età moderna. Studi offerti a Mario Rosa dagli amici*, Florence, Olschki, 2003, p. 485-508.

³ GUIZZELMI, *op. cit.*, f^o44v^o-49v^o; GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 145-6.

⁴ «Et quando decto prete Vincenti mi narrò tale miracolo, lui haveva la quartana; et io gli donai una figura di charta della Gloriosissima Vergine Maria del Carcere la quale haveva toccato la Sua Maiestà, et lui quella prese divotamente et baciolla, et incontinenti rimase libero di decta quartana, né mai più gli tornò, chome mi narrò dapoì lui medesimo, ringratiando decta Gloriosissima Vergine Maria del Carcere di Prato di tante gratie dalla Sua Maiestà ricevute». GUIZZELMI, *op. cit.*, f^o49r^o-v^o; GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

⁵ The nine involving a material token are GUIZZELMI, *op. cit.*, f^o35v^o-36r^o (44), f^o36r^o-v^o (45), f^o39r^o-40r^o (48), f^o42v^o-44r^o (52), f^o44v^o-49v^o (53), f^o52r^o-v^o (60), f^o57v^o-58v^o (72), f^o65v^o-67r^o (88) and f^o71v^o-72r^o (94); GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 143-8 and 150-2. The other stories with a first person element are GUIZZELMI, *op. cit.*, f^o33v^o-34r^o (41), f^o50r^o-v^o (55) and f^o64v^o-65v^o (87); GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 142, 146 and 150.

⁶ «1490 ... Ricordo chome a dì 18 di maggio io comperai in Firenze tante Vergini Marie delle Carcere, spesi soldi sedici, cioè Vergini Marie di charta di più fatte». Giuliano GUIZZELMI, *Memoriale*, Biblioteca Roncioniana, Prato, MS 759, f^o21r^o-v^o.

⁷ The wall painting is illustrated perhaps most accessibly in Megan HOLMES, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2013, p. 184.

⁸ See, for example, HOLMES, *op. cit.*, p. 211-55. Holmes also discusses the terminology. HOLMES, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁹ The main structure of the church was complete by the end of 1490. Piero MORSELLI and Gino CORTI, *La Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Carceri in Prato. Contributo di Lorenzo de' Medici e Giuliano da Sangallo alla progettazione*, Florence, EDAM, 1982, p. 59. For the inception of the project see especially Paul DAVIES, «The Early History of S. Maria delle Carceri in Prato», *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, n^o 54, 1995, p. 326-35.

¹⁰ An enclosure is first mentioned in a miracle story placed on 30 July 1484 which has a certain Camilla from Pistoia taken «inside the gate of the altar (drento al cancello dell'altare)». GUIZZELMI, *Historia della apparitione*, *op. cit.*, ff17v-18rv (13), GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 139. The story is part of a widely distributed block of material which is also offered in other surviving early collections of the miracles of the shrine including the *Miracoli et gratie della gloriosa madre vergine Maria delle Charcere di Prato, l'anno 1484*, Biblioteca Roncioniana, Prato, MS 86, n^o 14, f^o3v^o. Published in GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 105. For the wooden portico see MORSELLI and CORTI, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹¹ «non potendo per la multitudine entrare dentro, puosesi dirimpetto a sedere, in su la ripa et rachomandossi a decta Madonna di buon cuore. Et poi, quando si volle levare, si trovò sano et libero». Guizzelmi, *Historia della apparitione*, *op. cit.*, f^o21v^o (23), GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 140. *Miracoli et gratie*, n^o 22, f^o4v^o-5r^o, GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹² As stressed by Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser. Jane GARNETT and Gervase ROSSER, *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy, from the Renaissance to the Present*, London, Reaktion, 2013, p. 168-71, 189 and 191-219.

¹³ The miracles taking place at the shrine are concentrated in an initial block of stories which appear in all the surviving Carceri collections. Of the 38 of these stories which Guizzelmi retells, 12 take place away from the shrine. In his (unnumbered) sequence they 1, 2, 4, 8, 12, 17-18, 25-6, 37, 40 and 42. GUIZZELMI, *Historia della apparitione, op. cit.*, f^o12v^o-13v^o, 14r^o-v^o, 16r^o, 17r^o-v^o, 19v^o-20r^o, 22r^o-23r^o, 28r^o-29r^o, 33r^o-v^o, 34r^o-35r^o; GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 137-43. However, of the 56 stories Guizzelmi adds to this corpus of material only in six does the miracle take place at the shrine. In his sequence these are 30, 47, 49, 65, 66 and 87. GUIZZELMI, *Historia della apparitione, op. cit.*, f^o24v^o-25v^o, 37v^o-39r^o, 40r^o-41r^o, 54r^o-55r^o, 55v^o-56v^o, 64v^o-65v^o; GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 140, 143-4, 147-8, 150.

¹⁴ James George FRAZER, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, t.I, 3rd edn, London, Macmillan, 1911, p. 52.

¹⁵ The term sympathetic magic is used in the first edition of Frazer's book of 1894 but the two categories are fully outlined for the first time in the third edition, published from 1911.

FRAZER, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶ PON Lisa, *A Printed Icon in Early Modern Italy: Forlì's Madonna of the Fire*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 65.

¹⁷ AREFORD David, «Multiplying the Sacred: The Fifteenth-Century Woodcut as Reproduction, Surrogate, Simulation», in Peter PARSHALL (ed.), *The Woodcut in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, Washington, National Gallery of Art, 2009, p. 141. See also Christopher S. WOOD, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 40.

¹⁸ FRAZER, *op. cit.*, 53. The association of ideas is discussed in section III of David HUME, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. The text is available online at <http://www.davidhume.org/texts/ehu.html>. Consulted 30 My 2017.

¹⁹ FRAZER, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ TREXLER Richard C., «Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image», *Studies in the Renaissance*, n^o 19, 1972, p. 15, citing the *Storie fiorentine di Messer Bernardo Segni, gentiluomo fiorentino, dall'anno MDXXVII al MDLV*.

²¹ MALINOWSKI Bronisław, «Magic, Science and Religion» in Joseph NEEDHAM (ed), *Science, Religion and Reality*, London, Sheldon Press, 1926, p. 21.

²² WITTGENSTEIN Ludwig, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. A.C. Miles, Denton, Brynmill Press, 1979, p. 4e, para. 4.

²³ For example J. K. ROWLING, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, London, Bloomsbury, 1998, p. 28-9.

²⁴ For «customary conjunction» see HUME, *op. cit.*, section V.

²⁵ ROWLING, *op. cit.*, 7-8.

²⁶ MANIURA Robert, «Persuading the Absent Saint: Image and Performance in Marian Devotion», *Critical Inquiry* n^o 35/3, 2009, p. 629-654.

²⁷ SELIGMAN Adam B., WELLER Robert P., PUETT Michael J., and SIMON Bennett, *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21-3.

²⁹ GRAZIANO Frank, *Miraculous Images and Votive Offerings in Mexico*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 16. I explore this point in Robert MANIURA, «Agency and Miraculous Images» in Grażyna JURKOWLANIEC, Ika MATYJASZKIEWICZ, Zuzanna

SARNECKA (eds), *The Agency of Things in Medieval and Early Modern Art: Materials, Power and Manipulation*, London, Routledge, Due for publication 2017).

³⁰ SELIGMAN et al., *op. cit.*, p. 70-6.

³¹ TREXLER Richard C., «Florentine Religious Experience», art. cit., p. 18.

³² SELIGMAN et al., *op. cit.*, p. 80-1.

³³ «Di decto mese di magio 1486. A dì XXX di magio MCCCCLXXXVI, essendo noi per partire dal Borgo a Sam Sepolchro con messere Antonio Malegonnelle, mio capitano, cioè del quale io ero stato in decto borgo giudice decto uficio, cioè sei mesi, finito el nostro uficio, volendo montare a cavallo, una mula mi dette uno grande calcio nel gombito del braccio mancho, in modo tale che el gombito mi fece uno scoppio et rumore grande chome se uno havesse date d'una scure uno grande colpo in una madia, in modo tale tutti gli astanti stimorono mi havesse storpiato. Et alcuno male non mi fece, solo rimase el segno di tutto el piè nella camicia; et io incontinenti mi guardai decto gombito et vidi el segno di tutto el piè della mula nella camicia, perché mangiavano l'erba et era imbrattato, et toccandomi decto gombito mi trovai sença alcuna lesione: di che mi maravigliai grandemente et similmente si maravigliarono tutti quelli erano qui presenti et che haveno visto tale caso. Et io cognobi havermi conservato illeso da tale pericolo, et sença alcuno mancamento, la Gloriosissima Vergine Maria del Carcere di Prato, la imagine della quale di piombo havevo adosso, et haveva toccato la sua gloriosissima figura; della quale gratia, ançi miracolo, grandemente mi maravigliai et maraviglio. Ringratiai, ringratio et sempre mai ringratierò la sua Gloriosissima Maiestà alla quale quanto so et posso continuo mi racomando». GUIZZELMI, *Historia della apparitione*, *op. cit.*, f^o57v^o-58v^o (72), GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

³⁴ A feature stressed by Graziano: «A miracle cannot be observed, it can only be inferred, because nothing is seen but the results». GRAZIANO, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

³⁵ «Francesco d'Andrea di Francesco Ghuççelmi da Prato, bambino di età d'anni dua et mesi octo, havendo hauto dua dì et havendo continuo grandissima febre, et in decto tempo di dua dì non havendo mangiato né beuto cosa alcuna et non favellando et continuo dormendo, et essendo in sul lecto chome morto, et dubitando fusse amorbato, Andrea suo padre, et mio fratello, andò alla Madonna del Carcere, et quivi lo racomandò alla Sua Maiestà. Et essendo decto bambino chome e decto in sul lecto chome morto, in decto tempo che el padre lo racomandava alla Madonna, in uno tracto tornò in se et riçossi in sul lecto sença febre, sano et libero, et dixè alla madre astante et lachrimante: "Mamma, la Vergine Maria mi ha varito." Et incominciò a favellare, mangiare et here chome se mai non havesse hauto male alcuno, et al tutto fu perfectissimamente sanato et liberato; et levato della madre di su el lecto, incominciò a correre per casa chome fanno e' bambini di simile età, sano et di buona voglia. Il che visto decto Andrea suo padre et la madre Dio ringratarono et la Vergine Gloriosa di tale gratia et miracolo, et dapoi andarono alla Madonna, et ororono et offersono secondo la loro conscientia». GUIZZELMI, *Historia della apparitione*, *op. cit.*, f^o33v^o-34r^o (41); GAGLIARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

³⁶ Guizzelmi, who never married, lived in a house in the via de' Sarti, the present day via Giuseppe Mazzoni, with his married brothers. See, for example, GUIZZELMI, *Memoriale*, *op. cit.*, f^o30v^o. The members of the household are clarified in its tax returns, for example that for 1487, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Catasto 1133, f^o99v^o.

³⁷ MANIURA, «Persuading the Absent Saint», art. cit., p. 654.

³⁸ GRAZIANO, *loc. cit.*

³⁹ WITTGENSTEIN Ludwig, *Culture and Value*, Georg Henrik von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman (eds), trans. Peter Winch, Oxford, Blackwell, 1980, p. 64.

⁴⁰ WITTGENSTEIN Ludwig, *Lectures and Conversations: On Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, Cyril Barrett (ed), Oxford, Blackwell, 1966, p. 54.