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Image, Text, Performance: Articulating the Miraculous in Early Sixteenth-Century Prato

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ABSTRACT

This article uses the writings of a Prato lawyer, Giuliano Guizzelmi (1446-1518), to explore the ways in which the miraculous was made manifest in his community through verbalisation, image-making and ritual performance. His miracle book of the local shrine of Santa Maria delle Carceri includes textual representations of miracles, but it also points beyond itself to a rich network of behaviour involving the mobilisation of artefacts. Devotees travelled to Prato to give thanks for divine aid, and their journeys involved heightened performances and could culminate in elaborate formal processions. Many donated material offerings including images. The article argues that these artefacts and performances should be understood not only as representations of miracles but also as central to the construction of the miraculous.

Keywords: miracle, vow, ex voto, performance, image

My interest in miracles developed around the phenomenon of so-called miraculous images, and, for me, the key issue of representation has been the image of the holy figure as the focus of devotional behaviour. In this paper I respond to the invitation to shift focus and consider the representation of miracle itself in the material relating to the shrine of Santa Maria delle Carceri – or Saint Mary of the Prison – in Prato.

The focus of the Prato cult is a wall painting of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child flanked by Saint Stephen, patron of Prato, and Saint Leonard, patron of prisoners, probably dating from the latter part of the fourteenth century, which once adorned an exterior wall of the old town prison.¹ The image first came to be associated with miraculous activity on July 6, 1484, when a local boy playing near the building, by then abandoned, is said to have seen the figure of the Virgin detach herself from the wall and descend into the prison vaults.² The site rapidly became associated with healing miracles, and a church, designed by Giuliano da Sangallo, was built to house it.³ In the completed church, the image is housed above the main altar, apparently on the undisturbed wall of the former prison (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Giuliano da Sangallo, Santa Maria delle Carceri, Prato, interior. Photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London. CC BY-NC 4.0.

Fig. 2: *Ex-voto of Giovan Battista Figiovanni*, oil on canvas, 93.5 × 41.5 cm, Santa Maria delle Carceri, Prato. Photo: Fototeca Ufficio Beni Culturali Diocesi di Prato.

At the Carceri, there is one notable surviving example of an object which attempts to articulate the miraculous in a visual narrative: the votive painting of Giovan Battista Figiovanni – a substantial painting on canvas related to the votive panels familiar from the study of late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century votive practices in Italy (Fig. 2).⁴ The image shows a man being tortured using the *strappado*, suspended by his hands tied behind his back while his torturer hoists him up on a pulley. An inscription, which seems to have been repainted, outlines the story:

Battista Fiegiovanni, protonotary apostolic, ancient servant of the Most Reverend Cardinal de' Medici, going to Florence on 28 August 1517 [*sic*], I was taken and interrogated on the coming of the Medici and other things done in their favour, judged deserving of death and deprived of human help, I had recourse to divine aid, praying to this Madonna that I might be saved from death, I was heard to the praise of the heavenly Majesty.⁵

Figiovanni, a canon of San Lorenzo, the Medici neighbourhood church in Florence, presents his tenacious Medicean sympathies as approved by the Virgin. The date of the vow was probably in fact 1527, after the Medici had been expelled from Florence for the third time, and the painting itself presumably dates from after 1530, when they regained control.⁶

This object brings together the three media to which I appeal in my title: image, text and performance. The whole is an image with inscriptions, but the substance of the vow implied by the story, and the very existence of this object, is visualised beneath the arch in the background: a figure – to be understood as the released Figiovanni himself – walks, as a further inscription clarifies, barefoot from Florence to Prato, with the destination town, including the dome of the Carceri, visible in the distance. There is also a further image within the image: the focus of the donor's devotion is visualised in the top left-hand corner in the form of a reproduction of the Carceri wall painting.

Where, though, is the miracle? Such images are so familiar that the question may seem redundant, but what we see here is strictly no more than the states before and after the miracle: in the foreground the suffering devotee implicitly makes a vow and, in the background, the released devotee fulfils it. This is a good example of the elusiveness of miracle. How does one represent it?

Crucial to my studies have been stories of miracles recorded in text. These stories are, of course, also representations of miracle. While usually not conventionally literary texts, they nevertheless can be quite detailed, and the surviving rich textual sources are one of the things that drew me to the study of the Prato shrine. The Carceri's miracle collections are comparatively elaborate, and their details invite and permit a nuanced analysis. I begin, however, with one of the simpler stories:

Antonio di Domenico, a Florentine baker, had a son who had long been disabled. He vowed him to the Virgin of the Carceri and his son received grace and health and was completely liberated. He fulfilled his vow on May 1, 1486.⁷

This account offers little detail, but a great many stories, however elaborate, share the same basic form: the devotee vows, and their petition is answered. The story that the votive painting of Figiovanni articulates has the same fundamental structure. The miracle is represented as lying in the space between the vow and its fulfilment.

The source of the story of Antonio di Domenico is a collection of miracles of the Carceri shrine compiled by a local lawyer, one Giuliano Guizzelmi, and completed in 1505.⁸ This is the text which gives the fullest surviving account of the foundation story of the shrine narrated above. The story of Antonio di Domenico was avowedly written down long after it is meant to have taken place. No pretence is made that it is based at all closely on any testimony of the baker. The baker implicitly came to Prato and told someone at the shrine, who recorded it, and Guizzelmi passed it on. We are some distance from the miracle itself.

We can at least get closer to the issue of recording, however, because in some of the more richly articulated stories, the process of capture is an explicit element. Guizzelmi's collection has a significant number of stories in which the devotee is said to publicly announce their miracle.⁹ Some cases stress the large number of people present to hear the testimony. These devotees were implicitly "simple" people who may not have been capable of making a more formal record themselves, but Guizzelmi also includes examples of more articulate devotees.

Arguably the most spectacular miracle of all in Guizzelmi's collection is that of Maestro Dianoro – a master of theology, Guizzelmi emphasises – a Dominican in the friary of Santa Maria in Gradi, outside Viterbo. Maestro Dianoro died on the evening of September 7, 1484. That very evening, a letter arrived telling of the wonders happening at the Prato prison. At Dianoro's burial service the following day, his sister vowed him to the Virgin of the Carceri and he came back to life. The resuscitated friar is said to have gone to Prato the following year at the time of the September fair and to have preached his own miracle and written it down in "a book of the Virgin Mary".¹⁰ Guizzelmi quotes that written testimony in his book. He also claims that Dianoro told him the story many times, as did another Dominican friar, Fra Cosimo di Stagio of Arezzo, who is said to have witnessed Dianoro's death and resuscitation.¹¹

A story like that of Maestro Dianoro is clearly intended to persuade readers of its veracity, but such stories point away from the recording processes of the shrine towards the direct statements of the alleged beneficiary. In that sense, they also claim to take us closer to the "miraculous". We may be reading a mediated text, but it claims a source in the direct testimony of the beneficiary.

Such stories also point away from text to performance. As in the case of Figiovanni, we have the fundamental performance of the journey to Prato, but Dianoro is also recorded as preaching his miracle in Prato. The latter is only a more elaborate form of the public announcements claimed for more humble devotees. Some of those accounts stress not merely public statements but a heightened form of delivery. For example, Mona Catherina di Nicolò del Grasso of Querceto, who was healed from an infirmity of the arms at the site, proclaimed her healing "in a loud voice". Mona Catherina, moreover, is one of a number of devotees among the earliest dated stories, placed in August and September 1484, who are said to have been crowned with olive branches and then walked in procession from the Carceri to the established shrine of the relic of the Virgin's girdle or belt in the nearby Pieve of Santo Stefano, now the cathedral.¹² We do not know the route such processions followed, but a further story has Costanza di Piera from San Miniato al Tedesco, healed of a cancerous mouth in May 1485, process "through all Prato" to the Pieve.¹³ The recorded route of a large-scale procession involving all the town's principal institutions, which took place on August 29, 1484, and which constituted the first communal response to the new devotion, gives a sense of the potential scope and impact (Fig. 3: 16. Carceri and 1. Pieve).¹⁴ This ritual

movement through the urban space was a dynamic representation of miracle, motivated by a perception of the Virgin's grace.

Fig. 3: Plan of Prato with the route of the procession of August 29, 1484. © Matilde Grimaldi. 1. Pieve of Santo Stefano; 2. San Domenico; 3. San Niccolò; 4. San Pier Forelli; 5. San Jacopo; 6. Santa Chiara; 7. San Marco; 8. Ospedale del Dolce; 9. Carmine; 10. Santa Margherita; 11. San Matteo; 12. Sant'Agostino; 13. San Michele; 14. San Giorgio; 15. San Giovanni del Tempio; 16. Santa Maria delle Carceri; 17. San Francesco; 18. Santa Maria in Castello; 19. Palazzo Pretorio in the Piazza del Comune; 20. Site of the Guizzelmi house; 21. Imperial castle; 22. Cassero.

A significant number of the stories in the early surviving collections of Carceri miracles refer to material gifts to the shrine. Take this short example, reportedly experienced on the very first day of claimed miraculous activity:

Ridolfo Melanesi of Prato suffered from sciatica so badly that he could not walk without crutches. Hearing of the wonders of the said Madonna, he vowed humbly, if he recovered, to place there a wax leg. In the morning he discovered that he was healed and satisfied his vow.¹⁵

Here a short journey to the site by a Prato resident culminates in the depositing of a wax leg. This kind of material offering is familiar from many shrines over a long period. The offering is an image, but not a complex narrative one like the offering of Figiovanni. It is a representation of a part of the devotee, "cut and reframed in line with the limits of the symptom", as Georges Didi-Huberman has put it.¹⁶ This wax limb was also a representation of the miracle.

This simple story serves as an introduction to perhaps the now most celebrated form of votive offering from this culture: not wax body parts but life-size wax statues of the devotee.¹⁷ In his analysis of Ghirlandaio's fresco of the confirmation of the Franciscan rule in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita in Florence, Aby Warburg famously proposed to rationalise the many portraits flanking the central sacred scene by reference to the throng of contemporary life-size wax votive statues in the church of Santissima Annunziata in the city.¹⁸ The accumulation

that Warburg highlights was not confined to that single Florentine church. The miracle collections of the Carceri in Prato are full of mentions of the gifting of such images.¹⁹ We must imagine the lucid Brunelleschian architecture of the Carceri (Fig. 1) as comprehensively modified by such a gathering of wax images, evoking Warburg's observation that the "interior of the church must have looked like a waxwork museum".²⁰

At Prato, as in Florence, the wax figures are long gone, but the material associated with Guizzelmi, the compiler of the miracle collection frequently quoted here, provides a very valuable nexus of evidence which can help us think about them. In 1506, Guizzelmi established a burial chapel in the crypt of the Pieve in Prato and had the walls decorated with paintings between 1508 and 1510.²¹ The scheme's focal point is the figure of the crucified Christ flanked by the Virgin Mary and Saint John, with Mary Magdalene embracing the foot of the cross, which acts as a mural altarpiece on the chapel's south wall (Fig. 4). Around the corner, on the east wall, Guizzelmi is depicted kneeling in prayer (Fig. 5); he is clearly identified by the inscription on the fictive triangular plaque above the painted figure's head, which reads, in Latin: "Giuliano Guizzelmi, doctor of both kinds of law [i.e., civil and canon] made this".

Fig. 4: Guizzelmi chapel, Cathedral of Santo Stefano, Prato, from the north. Photo: Robert Maniura.

Fig. 5: *Portrait of Giuliano Guizzelmi*, 1508, fresco, Guizzelmi chapel, Cathedral of Santo Stefano, Prato. Photo: Robert Maniura.

A descendant of Guizzelmi's, one Agostino Guizzelmi, writing at the end of the sixteenth century in a short life of his distinguished and notably pious ancestor, tells of Giuliano's devotion to another miraculous image – a miracle-working crucifix once housed in the chapel of the main church directly above Giuliano's burial chapel.²² Agostino relates the story of a miracle that Giuliano claimed to have experienced. Giuliano worked as an itinerant lawyer for the Florentine territorial administration, and on his very first posting, in the summer of 1481, he suffered such bad sunstroke that he thought he would die. Agostino says that Giuliano vowed to the crucifix to "place himself there in wax" and goes on to explain what that meant in practice. His ancestor had a life-size wax statue of himself made in Florence

and installed it in the chapel of the crucifix.²³ When Agostino describes the resulting image, he says:

The artist made it according to his invention with a rose-coloured gown with broad crimson sleeves and his stole around his neck, kneeling, precisely as he can be seen today painted under the vaults at our altar on the Gospel side.²⁴

Agostino makes clear that, at the time of writing, this votive figure no longer existed – the chapel of the crucifix was cleared out in the mid-sixteenth century, and his account is avowedly based on a childhood memory. But here we have a writer in the sixteenth century, a member of the depicted person's own family, drawing a visual parallel between a lost votive statue and an extant painted portrait in his family's burial chapel. Agostino's comment, I propose, establishes the image of Giuliano in the Guizzelmi chapel (Fig. 5) as the best surviving visual source we have for this whole vanished category of imagery: the life-size wax statues of late medieval and early Renaissance Tuscany.

Such a portrait is most straightforwardly understood as a representation of the depicted person, but the ritually mobilised wax statue which it is said to resemble, and to which, I suggest, it gives us some visual access, can also be understood as a representation of miracle. As a gift of the devotee, it technically takes us no closer to the miracle than the offering of Figiovanni with which I began. But some texts of the period prompt us to see a much more direct relationship between the artefacts and the perceived miracles which prompted their donation.

One of these texts is a passage in another of Guizzelmi's *Carceri* miracle stories, which evokes the assemblage of offerings at the *Carceri*. It tells of Sandro di Domenico di Sandro of Signa, who suffered a neck injury in an accident and was unable to lift his head:

Wanting to satisfy the vow he had made to the Madonna of Prato in 1485, he came to Prato and went to visit the Madonna and hearing mass in her oratory he began to lift his head and saw the Madonna. And he heard mass looking at and seeing the said Madonna. He vowed to Her Majesty as well as he knew how. And afterwards going around the oratory of the said Madonna looking at the Madonna and the images which were in that oratory and the miracles, little by little his head came up.²⁵

The use of the word "miracles" here in the context of an account of the visual experience of the shrine is intriguing, and its significance is explained by a passage in the canonical art

literature. Giorgio Vasari famously mentions the wax votive offerings of Tuscany in a passage in the life of Verrocchio in part two of the *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. In Vasari's account, the famous Florentine sculptor was a key innovator in the medium:

To him [Verrocchio] is also due a greater perfection in images [implicitly votive images], not just in Florence, but in all places where there are devotions, and where people assemble to offer *voti* and, as they say, miracles, for some favour received.²⁶

The “miracles” are the votive offerings, including the full-size wax figures for which I propose Guizzelmi's portrait (Fig. 5) as a visual echo.

Another passage in Guizzelmi's book gives some insight into the significance of calling these images “miracles”. It offers a reflection on the vast assemblage of votive gifts at the shrine and the inadequacy of the records relating to them. Guizzelmi writes:

Many wax and silver images were offered demonstrating great miracles but because they had not manifested them and had not been written down I do not record them even though they may have been stupendous, like that monster born with two faces one above the other with a beard and with the arms and legs joined and united together, as the image existing in the presence of the Madonna shows, of which, although I know roughly where it was born, because I do not have the name of the father or mother or who brought it, I remain silent, although the person who brought it told the miracle and how it was restored, natural and beautiful, by the Virgin Mary.²⁷

The image of the two-faced “monster” evidently was not labelled but, though Guizzelmi admits not knowing the details, the image's very presence is taken to imply the miraculous outcome which Guizzelmi readily supplies: the monstrous birth, as visualised in the votive offering, was restored to natural beauty, and the person who brought the image must have told the story. Guizzelmi confirms the understanding of the votive offerings as representations of miracles, but his reasoning reveals that, for him, no gap exists between the material offering and the miracle to which it is taken to refer. In confronting the votive image, Guizzelmi invites us to confront miracle itself.

What understanding of miracle is involved here? One of the values of Guizzelmi's material is that the writer claims very close involvement in the miraculous and his remarks can help to negotiate this crucial point. We do not have his own account of his vow which gave rise to

the now lost votive figure echoed in the surviving portrait, but we do have a number of stories in Guizzelmi's hand relating to members of his family and, in one precious instance, relating a miracle he claims to have experienced himself.

In May 1486, preparing to leave Sansepolcro after a term serving as a judge, Guizzelmi was kicked in the arm by a mule as he went to mount his horse. But he was unhurt. He writes:

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.²⁸

The "lead image" to which Guizzelmi links his protection was presumably analogous to the large numbers of surviving lead souvenirs or badges from shrines all over Europe familiar from the study of medieval pilgrimage.²⁹

We are some distance here from the spectacular resurrection of the Dominican Friar Maestro Dianoro. Guizzelmi's miracle is a non-event: he is not hurt when kicked by a mule. Though unspectacular, this narrative is, however, notable as the direct testimony of the beneficiary of a miracle, and the very mundanity of the circumstances helps to bring out a key point. People are sometimes unhurt in situations in which one might expect them to be injured. If we ask where the miracle is in this representation, we have a clear answer: it lies firmly in the judgment of the beneficiary – "*I recognised* that I had been preserved from this danger unhurt [...] by the most glorious Virgin Mary of the Carceri of Prato" (my emphasis).

This reading is consistent with the disarmingly straightforward characterisation of miracles proposed by Frank Graziano, who has studied miracle cults in present-day Latin America and has interviewed the beneficiaries of many claimed miracles: "Miracles", he writes, "are not events; they are interpretations."³⁰ I myself have tried to express this decisive interpretative element of the phenomenon as an "accommodation to circumstances in an extension of the ritual field" or the making of "room [...] for the miraculous in an ordering of the world", and I value Graziano's trenchant brevity.³¹ However, the conference that gave rise to the present volume has prompted me to think that Graziano's formulation arguably lacks a vital component. The interpretation must be mediated and manifested in the world in some way for

the miracle to crystallise as such. Guizzelmi's story of his experience with the mule in Sansepolcro has its place in a discussion of miracles because of its verbalization in the text of his miracle collection. By this I mean more than that we simply know about the alleged miracle because of the written account, which is the only surviving record of it. Rather, the experience described coalesces as a miracle precisely in its telling: it is the claim that makes the claimed miracle a miracle. Miracles are not just interpretations; they are communicated or articulated interpretations.

To draw this point out more fully, it is worth considering when this particular miracle coalesced. The Sansepolcro story makes no mention of any discussion of Guizzelmi's interpretation of events at the time. We are told that "all those present who had seen this case marvelled too", but there is no explicit verbalised consensus about the miracle or its claimed source. Other stories in the collection imply immediate discussion. When Guizzelmi vowed one of his nephews, suffering from epilepsy, to the Great Crucifix of Prato and the Virgin of the Carceri and the boy recovered, he writes that "I and all mine judged this to be a great miracle".³² In this case, the judgement is described as a shared one which involved an exchange of ideas. The miracle is said to have already crystallised in the family environment: it is presented to the reader as an "agreed" miracle. By contrast, if, in Sansepolcro in 1486, Guizzelmi kept his thoughts to himself and everyone else present came to their own conclusions about the marvellous sequence of events, the incident would not count as a miracle. What makes it a miracle story is Guizzelmi's declaration in the 1505 text.

An explicit verbalised claim of miracle by those involved is an integral element of a number of the stories considered above: Maestro Dianoro preached his own miracle as well as writing it down; Mona Catherina from Querceto proclaimed her healing in a loud voice. The claim does not, however, need to be verbalised. Mona Catherina also processed to the Pieve crowned with olive. Above I noted that the procession constituted a representation of miracle, but it, too, can be understood as a declaration of miracle: in such processions people acted out in the streets of the town their conviction that they had received the Virgin's aid.

Depositing a votive offering is also a declarative gesture. Understood as a component of a complex of votive behaviour, material *ex votos*, including the wax leg delivered by the healed Ridolfo Melanesi and the wax statue of Guizzelmi evoked by the painting in his burial chapel (Fig. 5), also read as assertions of the miraculous.³³ This clarifies why, in the use of the term "miracle" for wax figures and Guizzelmi's response to the assemblage of offerings at the

Carceri, there is no apparent space between the material offerings and the outpouring of grace they are taken to signify. No gap is in principle possible. Miracle coalesces in its declaration and a material votive offering is one form that this declaration can take. The miracle emerges in its representation.

All of the materials presented here – the votive offerings, the miracle stories and the celebratory performances they sometimes refer to – are manifestations of claims of miracles on the part of those who understood themselves to have benefitted from them. The tantalising juxtapositions of before and after, of challenging circumstances and deliverance, articulated in a story, a votive gift, a procession or all three, are how the miraculous coalesces. Miracle is fundamentally a social phenomenon.

As noted at the outset of this text, one of the things that drew me to the study of the Prato shrine was the comparative abundance of the textual material associated with it and the rich ritual and material culture, now largely vanished, to which those textual sources give access. This textual richness – exceptional by the standards of the shrine I studied previously – has allowed me to pose questions with much greater precision.³⁴ But I conclude by observing that the discussions at the conference that gave rise to this collection have prompted me to consider that this richness, in my experience uncommon, may be rare not as an accident of survival but rather because it embodies a tension.

In his contribution to this volume, Fabien Vitali draws attention to Lucien Febvre's remarks on the miracles of Christ in challenging the idea that the episode of the resurrection of Epistemon in François Rabelais's *Pantagruel* is a deliberate parody of them:

Christ restores Lazarus and Jairus's daughter by extremely simple means. In the case of Lazarus, after having prayed to his Father he cries in a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth!" and Lazarus gets up. As for Jairus's daughter, he takes her hand and cries, "Maid, arise!" and the girl gets up.³⁵

The juxtaposition of brief utterance and miraculous result is strikingly paralleled in the shortest of Guizzelmi's stories quoted here: Antonio di Domenico, the baker, vowed his son to the Virgin of the Carceri and the son was healed. The vow, once formulated, is presented as directly entailing the miraculous result. In other collections of miracles I have studied, such brief formulae dominate.³⁶ Might the concise articulation of such stories consciously appeal to the brevity of Christ's miracles in the Gospels as a paradigm? Once the appeal to

the sacred has been clarified and the response claimed, enough has been said: a miracle is established. The humble body part *ex votos* or other objects associated with vows, such as the collections of crutches familiar from many healing shrines, can be understood to employ a similarly simple non-verbal rhetoric.³⁷ The mere presence of the object, visually nuanced or not, is sufficient to declare the miracle.

Guizzelmi's miracle stories are invaluable to historians because the details they offer give insight into otherwise inaccessible practices, but their expansiveness is, in a strict sense, superfluous. Does the elaboration of Guizzelmi's stories, and the rituals to which they sometimes refer, threaten to compromise the very perception of divine power in a way Febvre suggests Rabelais deliberately does in his parody miracle?³⁸ Guizzelmi's unguarded pious volubility perhaps confirms that the miraculous had a social utility beyond issues of personal spiritual or bodily salvation.

¹ Carlotta Lenzi, "La chiesa di Santa Maria delle Carceri: dipinti e arredi", in: *Prato. Storia e arte* 82 (1993), pp. 26-42, here p. 30. Illustrated in Robert Maniura, *Art and Miracle in Renaissance Tuscany*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 2.

² Maniura, *Art and Miracle* (as note 1), pp. 1-3. For the fullest account of the origin story, see Giuliano Guizzelmi, *Historia della Apparitione et Miracoli di Madonna Sancta Maria del Carcere di Prato*, Biblioteca Roncioniana, Prato, Cod. 87, here fols. 8^v-10^r. Published in Isabella Gagliardi (ed.), "I miracoli della Madonna delle Carceri in due codici della Biblioteca Roncioniana di Prato", in Anna Benvenuti (ed.), *Santa Maria delle Carceri a Prato. Miracoli e devozione in un santuario toscano del Rinascimento*, Florence: Mandragora, 2005, pp. 135-153, here pp. 136-137.

³ Paul Davies, "The Early History of S. Maria delle Carceri in Prato", in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 54 (1995), pp. 326-335.

⁴ Maria Pia Mannini in Claudio Pescio (ed.), catalogue entry in *Filippino Lippi, un bellissimo ingegno: origini ed eredità nel territorio di Prato*, Florence: Giunti Editore, 2004, p. 67. For

comparable material see Fredrika Jacobs, *Votive Panels and Popular Piety in Early Modern Italy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

⁵ “Batista Fiegiovanni prothonotario apostolico, antico servitore del Rev.mo cardinale de’ Medici, sendo io in Firenze a dì 28 d’agosto 1517 fui preso et sopra la venuta de’ Medici examinato in che et altre cose in favore loro operate, degno della morte e privo de l’humano aiuto, ricorsi al divino auxilio pregando questa Madonna mi liberase da morte, fui exaudito allode della divina Maiestà.” Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from Italian are mine.

⁶ Vanna Arrighi, “Figiovanni, Giovan Battista”, in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 47, Rome: Treccani, 1997, [[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-battista-figiovanni_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-battista-figiovanni_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)] (last accessed 21.01.2024); John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200-1575*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp. 446-468.

⁷ Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 57^r; Gagliardi, “I miracoli” (as note 2), p. 148: “Antonio di Domenico, fornaio da Firenze, havendo uno suo figliuolo el quale più tempo era stato impedito delle gambe, Io votò a Madonna Sancta Maria del Carcere di Prato, et ricevè gratia et sanità et al tutto rimase libero, et sodisfé al suo voto a dì primo di magio MCCCCLXXXVI.”

⁸ It is dated in the colophon. Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 78^r; Gagliardi, “I miracoli” (as note 2), p. 153.

⁹ For example, the sequences of stories dated September to December 1485 and June to December 1486: Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fols. 50^v-52^r and fols. 58^v-62^r; Gagliardi, “I miracoli” (as note 2), pp. 146-149.

¹⁰ Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fols. 31^r-32^r; Gagliardi, “I miracoli” (as note 2), p. 142: “et in presentia di tutto el popolo predicò in decto luogo; [...] et nel fine della sua predica, presente infinitissimo popolo, manifestò et narrò colla propria bocca decto miracolo, et chome lui era quello proprio el quale chome disopra era l’uno di morto et l’altro risuscitato, ringratiando la Gloriosissima Vergine Maria del Carcere el meglio che poteva [...] Et a ciò che nessuna persona mai potesse contradire a tale miracolo, scripse di propria mano decto miracolo in uno libro di decta Vergine Maria, confermando, affermando et promettendo in tutto et per tutto chome disopra.”

¹¹ Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 32^{r-v}; Gagliardi, “I miracoli” (as note 2), p. 142.

¹² Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 27^{r-v}; Gagliardi, “I miracoli” (as note 2), p. 141: “A dì ventidue di agosto 1484. Mona Catherina di Nicolò del Grasso da Querceto, havendo in tutte e dua le braccia doglie crudelissime portate cinque anni, ne stava chome ratracta; et venendo a Prato, udì dire pel camino che Sancta Maria del Carcere non concedeva più gratie, sì che lei veniva in vano. Ma lei, spirata dal buono proposito, al tutto venire dispuose; et arrivata, non potendo per la moltitudine della gente entrare drento al procinto et al luogo della Madonna, se le puose dirimpetto, in su la ripe; et subito veduta la sua sanctissima figura, fu guarita; et con alta voce manifestando tale miracolo, fu coronata d’ulivo, et così coronata visitò l’altare della Cinctola Sancta.” The other two in the early

group including the procession are Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fols. 17^v-18^r and fol. 23^{r-v};

Gagliardi, "I miracoli" (as note 2), pp. 139-140.

¹³ Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 38^v; Gagliardi, "I miracoli" (as note 2), p. 144: "et di ulivo coronata, per tutto Prato andò, et così coronata visitò l'altare della Cinctola Sancta".

¹⁴ *Miracoli et gratie della gloriosa Madre Vergine Maria delle Charcere di Prato, l'anno MCCCCLXXXIII*, Biblioteca Roncioniana, Prato, Cod. 86, fols. 50^v-52^v. Published in Gagliardi, "I miracoli" (as note 2), pp. 104-34, here pp. 127-129.

¹⁵ Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 13^{r-v}; Gagliardi, "I miracoli" (as note 2), p. 138: "Ridolfo Melanesi da Prato, essendo di doglia asiatica gravemente infermo, in modo tale non poteva andare sença gruccie, sentendo la sera gli stupendissimi miracoli di decta Madonna, si raccomandò humilmente et votossi, se guariva, porvi una coscia di cera. Et la mattina si trovò guarito et satisfecce al voto."

¹⁶ Georges Didi-Huberman, "Ex Voto: Image, Organ, Time", in: *L'Esprit Créateur* 47, no. 3 (2007), p. 13.

¹⁷ See Jean-Marc Rivière's article in this volume, where he discusses this topic in detail.

¹⁸ Aby Warburg, "The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie", in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. David Britt, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999, pp. 185-221, here pp. 189-190, 204-208.

¹⁹ Maniura, *Art and Miracle* (as note 1), p. 141.

²⁰ Warburg, "The Art of Portraiture" (as note 18), p. 206. "Das Innere der Kirche muss demnach wie ein Wachsfigurenkabinett ausgesehen haben." Aby Warburg, *Bildniskunst und florentinisches Bürgertum (I): Domenico Ghirlandajo in Santa Trinita: Bildnisse des Lorenzo de' Medici und seiner Angehörigen*, Leipzig: Verlag von Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1902, p. 31.

²¹ Maniura, *Art and Miracle* (as note 1), pp. 28-35.

²² Maniura, *Art and Miracle* (as note 1), pp. 37-46.

²³ *Vita di M. Giuliano di Francescho Guizzelmi fabricata da M. Agostino di Bindaccio Guizzelmi*, Archivio di Stato, Florence, Ubaldini-Vai-Geppi 470, fol. 8^r.

²⁴ *Vita di M. Giuliano* (as note 23), fol. 8^r: "Dipoi havendola fatta a suo capriccio il pittore medesimo: cioè con una vesta rosata con le maniche larghe di chermisi con la sua becca al collo et aginochioni come appunto si scorgge hoggi dipinto sotto le volte nel nostro altare dalla parte dell'evangelo".

²⁵ Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fols. 55^v-56^r; Gagliardi, "I miracoli" (as note 2), p. 148: "Et volendo soddisfare al voto che haveva facto alla Madonna di Prato dell'anno 1485, venne a Prato, et andò a visitare la Madonna; et udendo messa nel suo oratorio incominciò a alçare el capo, tanto vide la Madonna; et udito la messa, guardando et vedendo decta Madonna, si raccomandò el meglio che seppe alla Sua Maestà. Et dipoi andando per lo oratorio di decta Madonna del Carcere, guardando

decta Madonna et guardando le imagini le quali erano in decto oratorio et e' miracoli, a poco a poco gli venne alçate el capo."

²⁶ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, vol. 3, Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1878, p. 373: "Da questo si venne a fare imagini di più perfezione, non pure in Fiorenza, ma in tutti i luoghi dove sono divozioni e dove concorrono persone a porre voti e, come si dice, miracoli, per avere alcuna grazia ricevuto."

²⁷ Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 72^v; Gagliardi, "I miracoli" (as note 2), p. 152: "Sono state offerte molti imagini d'ariento et di cera dimonstranti grandi miracoli, ma perché loro altrimenti non gli hanno manifestati, et non sono per scripture stati notati, io non ne fo memoria, anchora che sieno stati stupendissimi, chome quello monstro nato con dua visi l'uno sopra all'altro, colla barba et colle gambe et coscie apiccate et unite insieme chome dimostra la imagine dinançi alla Madonna existente, della quale, anchora che io sappi apresso dove naque, perché non ho e' nomi del padre, della madre et di chi lo portò, ne tacio, benché chi lo portò narrò l'ordine del miracolo, et chome dalla Vergine Maria fu restituito naturale et bello."

²⁸ Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 58^{r-v}; Gagliardi, "I miracoli" (as note 2), p. 148: "et io incontinenti mi guardai decto gombito et vidi el segnio 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."

²⁹ For pilgrim tokens, see Brian Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, London: Stationery Office, 1998; Denis Bruna, *Enseignes de pèlerinage et enseignes profanes*, Paris: Réunion de musées nationaux, 1996; Andreas Haasis-Berner, *Pilgerzeichen des Hochmittelalters*, Würzburg: Institut für Deutsche Philologie und Volkskunde, 2003. For the significance of the rituals of touch, see Maniura, *Art and Miracle* (as note 1), pp. 129-132, 175-176.

³⁰ Frank Graziano, *Miraculous Images and Votive Offerings in Mexico*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 128.

³¹ Robert Maniura, "Persuading the Absent Saint: Image and Performance in Marian Devotion", in: *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 3 (2009), pp. 629-654, here p. 654; Maniura, *Art and Miracle* (as note 1), p. 173.

³² Guizzelmi, *Historia* (as note 2), fol. 66^v; Gagliardi, "I miracoli" (as note 2), p. 151: "Et io et tutti e' miei giudicamo questo essere grande miracolo".

³³ Maniura, *Art and Miracle* (as note 1), pp. 158-162.

³⁴ Robert Maniura, *Pilgrimage to Images in the Fifteenth Century: The Origins of the Cult of Our Lady of Częstochowa*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004, pp. 95-115.

³⁵ Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, trans. Beatrice Gottlieb, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 215.

³⁶ See, for example, many of the stories associated with the shrine of the Virgin at Częstochowa in Poland published in the roughly contemporary collection *Historia pulchra, et stupendis miraculis referta, imaginis Mariae quomodo et unde in Clarum montem Czastochovvie et Olsztyn advenerit*, Cracow, 1524. Maniura, *Pilgrimage to Images* (as note 34), pp. 215-217.

³⁷ Maniura, *Pilgrimage to Images* (as note 34), p. 110.

³⁸ Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief* (as note 35), pp. 215-225.