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Escaping justice? The politics of liberation miracles in late medieval Portugal

Iona McCleery

Introduction

In 1406 a man with a noose around his neck came to the shrine of Our Lady of Virtues near Azambuja, north-east of Lisbon in central Portugal. Afonso de Viseu explained to the shrine scribe that he had been imprisoned for three years and was condemned to hang because he was accused of murder. As he was being taken to the place of execution with the noose around his neck, he commended himself to Holy Mary of Virtues. He was immediately returned to the tribunal to give more evidence and the next day he was released. He had come to the shrine to give thanks, bearing the noose as a sign of his escape from execution.[1] Healing miracles are by far the majority of the miraculous events associated with the late medieval cult of the saints and have received the lion's share of scholarship.[2] Nevertheless, non-healing miracles like Afonso's escape are quite prominent within some cults; this particular Marian cult includes eleven cases (20 per cent of the total number). These consist of five escapes from prison or from execution, two escapes from shipwreck or drowning, a protection from injury in warfare, the protection of a woman who had lost her way in the dark, and a punishment miracle without cure.[3]

These miracles have not previously been studied for what they can tell us about politics. As is also demonstrated by Nicole Archambeau's chapter in this volume, many non-healing miracles were political because they involved trade and travel; warfare; poverty and food shortages; work and industry; the construction and interaction of ecclesiastical, royal and noble power; and related to this, the exercise of justice. They are therefore crucial sources for medieval social history that have perhaps been neglected for some regions in the late Middle Ages due to a wealth of other texts.[4] For countries such as Portugal where alternative

[1] M.Â. Beirante (ed.), *O Livro dos Milagres de Nossa Senhora das Virtudes: Estudo Histórico*, Azambuja, 2004, p. 37. See appendix for the full passage.
[2] For an overview of approaches, see I. McCleery, "Christ more powerful than Galen? The relationship between medicine and miracles", in M. Mesley & L. Wilson (eds.), *Contextualizing Miracles in the Christian West, 1100-1500: New Historical Approaches*, Oxford, 2014, 127-54
[3] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, pp. 38-39, 43, 47-48, 51, 55-56, 57, 60.
[4] For miracles as sources for social history, see S. Farmer, "Down and Out and Female in Thirteenth-Century Paris", *American Historical Review* 103 (1998), 344-72; M. Goodich, "Mirabilis deus in sanctis suis: social

evidence is lacking, miracles should not be overlooked as sources. Miracles, however, are not transparent windows onto actual experiences, but carefully constructed texts used for preaching, to encourage pilgrimage and to enhance the prestige of shrines.[5] Arguably they were also "scripts" for coping with disaster, although the variety of scenarios suggests there was no single model. We can interpret some non-healing miracles as guides to ideal behavior that represent medieval people as more resilient and proactive than traditionally thought.[6] It is also possible to argue that miracle narratives highlight shifting power relations; acting therefore less as scripts and more as manifestations of social change. This chapter complements Nicole Archambeau's study of protection miracles in Provence by exploring the general nature of non-healing miracles in the first section, and then in the second section focusing on them in the Portuguese cult of the saints. The final section explores further the five apparent escapes from justice recorded at the shrine of Our Lady of Virtues.

Looking for non-healing miracles: methodological issues

What is a non-healing miracle? As Archambeau points out in her illuminating chapter in this volume (p. ##): "scholars' goals shape how they define and present protection miracles". For the present author, whose research is primarily medical, the category of "non-healing miracle" only makes sense if placed in contrast to "healing miracle"; this therefore explains some differences in approach to Archambeau's broader definition, which includes recovery from illness. Yet for some scholars, non-healing categorizations are vague. Ronald Finucane commented that "over nine-tenths of the wonders [at shrines] were cures", but he made no attempt to define the other 10 per cent.[7] Pierre-Andre Sigal and Robert Bartlett are among the

history and medieval miracles", in K. Cooper & J. Gregory (eds.), *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church* (Studies in Church History 41), Woodbridge, 2005, 135-56. For political approaches, see S. Walker, "Political saints in later medieval England", in Idem, *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, ed. M.J. Braddick, Manchester, 2006, 198-222; Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, *Demonic Possession and Lived Religion in Later Medieval Europe*, Oxford, 2020, pp. 129-49.

[5] For the compilation, construction and purpose of miracles, see much of the work of Michael Goodich, and also G. Signori, "The miracle kitchen and its ingredients: a methodical and critical approach to Marian shrine wonders (10th to 13th century)", *Hagiographica* 3 (1996), 277-303; G. Klaniczay, "Healing with certain conditions: the pedagogy of medieval miracles", *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 19 (2010), 235-48; A. Rűth, "Representing wonder in medieval miracle narratives", *MLN* 126 (2011), 89-114; R. Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England*, Philadelphia, 2011.

[6] C.M Gerrard and D. Petley, "A risk society? Environmental hazards, risk and resilience in the later Middle Ages in Europe", *Natural Hazards* 69 (2013), 1051-79; E.R. Standley, 'Fear, matter and miracles: personal protection and coping with disaster through material culture", in C.M Gerrard, P. Forlin & P.J. Brown (eds.), *Waiting for the End of the World? New Perspectives on Natural Disasters in Medieval Europe*, Abingdon, 2021.

[7] R.C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, New York, 1977, p. 59.

few to have tried to analyze non-healing miracles. For Sigal, they constitute childbirth and infertility; protection from danger (e.g. water, falls, collapsing structures, attacks); deliverance from prison; favorable interventions (e.g. recovery of property, food provision, religious conversion); glorification of the saint (e.g. strange lights, reigniting candles, bodily signs such as saintly odor); punishments; and visions, clairvoyance and prophecies.[8] Sigal argues that non-healings can be more prominent as acts of living saints, which does seem to be borne out by the research done for this chapter.[9] For Bartlett, non-healings involve the provision of food and drink and good weather; visions and prophecies; physical signs of sanctity such as levitation or stigmata; saintly involvement in or protection during warfare; saints battling demons, including exorcising the possessed; saintly interaction with animals, including healing them and protecting humans from them; liberation from prison and enslavement; and finally punishment miracles.[10]

Quite a number of these miracles share an underlying theme: protection from harm. However, protection from illness and injury should really mean not being harmed in *any* way including not getting ill and avoiding wounds. Those healed of their conditions were protected from death and eventually freed from pain, but it would seem sensible to distinguish these healings from narratives that focus on lack of harm if falling from a height or into water. The language of liberation can also be found in illness narratives, but these should be analyzed separately from prison escapes or cases where there was no suffering.[11] It is also useful to separate both the previous groups (healing and protection granted to individuals) from visions, prophecies, physical signs of the presence of holiness, such as stigmata, levitation or dry branches bursting into leaf, and liturgical miracles involving wine, oil, lights or consecrated wafers. These are easier to construe as signs of the protection of the faith, church, territory or cult, rather than of individual people. Non-healing miracles could be used to promote the work of

[8] P.-A. Sigal, *L'Homme et le miracle dans la France medieval, XI^e^-XII^e^ siècles*, Paris, 1985, pp. 265-88.
[9] Sigal, *L'Homme*, pp. 289-90; P.-A. Sigal, "La typologie des miracles dans la literature hagiographique occidentale (XII-XV siècles)", in D. Aigle (ed.), *Miracle et karāma: hagiographies médiévales comparées*, Turnhout, 2000, 543-56 (pp. 546-47). For non-healing *in vita* miracles, see S. Andrić, *The Miracles of St John Capistran*, Budapest, 2000, pp. 193-223; J.A. Skórzewska, *Constructing a Cult: the Life and Veneration of Guðmundr Arason (1161-1237) in the Icelandic Written Sources*, Leiden, 2011, pp. 83-110.
[10] Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation*, Princeton, 2013, pp. 365-408.
[11] For illness as a form of imprisonment, see C.L. Scarborough, *Viewing Disability in Medieval Spanish Texts*, Amsterdam, 2018, p. 192. This is a topic that would be worthy of further study.

the Church in a very active way: making peace, encouraging conversion or renewed devotion, and turning people away from heresy or other error.[12]

Other types of miracles identified as non-healing by Sigal and Bartlett – especially childbirth and fertility problems, and exorcisms – focus on the recovery of appropriate bodily or rational behaviors, or the healthy performance of social norms such as having children, which are all subjects easily accommodated within the broader scope of medieval healthcare as it is now studied.[13] Similarly, it makes sense to include the miraculous healings of animals within the history of medical practice, as it is now understood that there were very close links between human and animal healthcare in the Middle Ages.[14] A large number of punishment miracles involves healing, as long as the individual punished with an illness later repented; these can be studied by medical historians from the perspective of injuries and illnesses. However, punishment miracles also exist, albeit fewer in number, in which the saints protected their lands, property or people from harm and wrongdoing by cutting down perpetrators without cure or resuscitation.[15]

Resuscitation from what was perceived as death is another type of miracle that some scholars might consider belongs to the non-healing category. This type of miracle has received considerable attention, especially in the cases of drowned children or the hanging of William Cragh in Swansea in 1290,[16] but there is actually a lot of medical detail to some of these

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[12] For example, in 1399 a man decided to join the Bianchi spiritual movement that was gaining popularity in northern Italy because his macaroni filled with blood when he tried to eat it: S. Bongi (ed.), *Le Croniche di Giovanni Sercambi, Lucchese*, 3 vols, Lucca, 1892, vol 2, pp. 313-14. Thanks to Alexandra Lee for sending me this example.

[13] For some reflections on medieval medicine, see my forthcoming introduction to I. McCleery (ed.), *The Cultural History of Medicine in the Middle Ages*. For childbirth miracles and possession within medical contexts, see H. Powell, "The 'miracle of childbirth': the portrayal of parturient women in medieval miracle narratives", *Social History of Medicine* 25 (2012), 795-811; C. Trenery, "Demons, saints, and the mad in the twelfth-century miracles of Thomas Becket", in S. Bhayro & C. Rider (eds.), *Demons and Illness from Antiquity to the Early-modern Period*, Leiden, 2017, 339-56.

[14] B. Aitchison, "Holy cow! The miraculous cures of animals in late medieval England", *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire* 16 (2009), 875-92; S. Harrison, "Jordanus Ruffus and the Late-medieval Hippiatric Tradition: Animal-care Practitioners and the Horse", unpublished PhD diss, University of Leeds, 2018.

[15] Andrić, *Miracles of St John Capistran*, pp. 202-03, 236, argues that *in vita* punishment narratives were less likely to lead to healing compared to posthumous narratives set at the shrine, since going on pilgrimage to the shrine was already a sign of penitence. For more on this miracle type, see G. Klaniczay 'Miracoli di punizione e malefizia', in S. Boesch Gajano & M. Modica (eds,), *Miracoli: dai Segni alla Storia*, Rome, 1999, 109-37; D. Lett, "Des miracles incroyables: doutes ou intérêt social et politique dans les procès de canonisation des XIII^{e}-XIV^{e} siècles", in C. Krőtzl & S. Katajala-Peltomaa (eds.), *Miracles in Medieval Canonization Processes: Structures, Functions, and Methodologies*, Turnhout, 2018, 177-93.

[16] J. Hanska, "The hanging of William Cragh: anatomy of a miracle", *Journal of Medieval History* 27 (2001), 121-38; R. Bartlett, *The Hanged Man: A Story of Miracle, Memory, and Colonialism in the Late Middle Ages*,

cases: clinical signs of death, sometimes medical testimony and aftercare.[17] They should be distinguished from cases where an individual was prevented from dying in circumstances in which they would normally have been expected to do so, but remained unharmed: these include falls, potentially crushing or suffocating accidents, submergence in water, and what could be called "thwarted execution". This last type is very different from those in which a hanged person is resuscitated. Sometimes there was a last-minute pardon or a last-minute rescue by friends or family. If the execution was underway, there could be a failure of equipment, e.g. the rope or scaffold breaking.[18] In some cases there was simply a failure to die.[19]

A second major methodological issue to overcome is the problem of the proportion and disparate nature of non-healing miracles within the collections in which they are found, making them therefore rather difficult to study coherently. Non-healing miracles are very ancient: 23 per cent of Jesus' miracles involve non-healing acts, especially food provision and "sea stories".[20] The miracles of Jewish scripture (especially the deeds of Moses) and the Acts of the Apostles (especially the deeds of Peter and Paul) were also very influential in the Middle Ages.[21] However, despite the influence of biblical topoi, non-healing miracles can be few in number in medieval miracle collections, especially after the twelfth century. In earlier periods they do seem more dominant: in the tenth-century longer *vita* of Gerald of Aurillac (d. 909), a saintly nobleman of southern France, fish and deer frequently landed on Gerald's dinner plate whenever he was hungry. There was also a cluster of marvels signifying the

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Princeton, 2004; C.A.M. Clarke (ed.), "Power, identity and miracles on a medieval frontier", special issue of *Journal of Medieval* History 41 (2015), 249-361; R.C. Finucane, *The Rescue of the Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles*, Basingstoke, 1997.

[17] See the chapter in this volume by Jyrki Nissi, and also L.A. Craig, "Describing death and resurrection: medicine and the humors in two late medieval miracles", in B. Bowers & L.M. Keyser (eds.), *The Sacred and the Secular in Medieval Healing: Sites, Objects, and Texts*, London, 2016, pp. 103-15.

[18] The rope broke in the single non-healing miracle (out of 227) recorded by the papal commissions investigating the sanctity of Elizabeth of Hungary (d. 1231): K.B. Wolf (ed.), *The Life and Afterlife of St Elizabeth of Hungary: Testimony from her Canonization Hearings*, Oxford, 2011, pp. 180-82.

[19] In a miracle of Our Lady of Montserrat dated to 1323, a young man of Girona captured by the Genoese was first hanged for hours from the ship's mast and then thrown in the sea. Shocked to find him still alive, and hearing that he had made a vow to the Virgin, his captors let him go. See I. Drumond Braga, "Milagres de Nossa Senhora de Montserrat num códice da Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa", *Arquivo do Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian* 33 (1994), 663-721 (p. 695).

[20] B.L. Blackburn, "The miracles of Jesus", in G.H. Twelftree (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 113-30, counts thirty-five separate miracles across the four Gospels: seventeen healings, seven exorcisms, three resuscitations, five "gift" miracles providing food or money in times of need, a punishment, and two sea stories (calming a storm and walking on water). For "sea stories", see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 149, 332.

[21] R.W.L. Moberly, "Miracles in the Hebrew Bible", in Twelftree (ed.), *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 57-74; J.C. Paget, "Miracles in early Christianity", in ibid., pp. 131-48.

holiness of his dead body and his tomb.[22] In the eleventh-century cult of St Foy, a little girl saint from Conques, also in southern France, nearly half of the ninety-one miracle narratives are non-healing events, especially long, complicated escapes from prison.[23]

Some later cults do appear to conform roughly to Finucane's claim that non-healings made up 10 per cent of all English miracles. Two British royal cults fit this pattern well: six out of forty-five miracles (13 per cent) attributed to Queen Margaret of Scotland (d. 1093), probably in the first half of the thirteenth century,[24] and twenty out of 174 miracles (11 per cent) attributed to King Henry VI of England (d. 1471), in the late fifteenth century, are non-healings.[25] For some the proportion is less. Only four of the 225 miracles of Godric of Finchale (d. 1170), compiled by Reginald of Durham (d. *c.*1190), are non-healing (less than 2 percent).[26] One of the forty-three twelfth-century miracles of Æbbe of Coldingham (*fl.* mid-seventh century) was non-healing.[27] Yet other twelfth-century English cults present very different patterns. 42 per cent of the nineteen miracles of Erkenwald, the saint of London, were long and elaborate non-healings.[28] 78 per cent of the miraculous events associated with Modwenna, a possibly sixth-century saint whose deeds were compiled in the twelfth century, were non-healing, including a large number of *in vita* miracles.[29] The most famous English miracles, those of Thomas Becket (d. 1170), are nearly 25 per cent non-healings.[30]

It could be argued that a perceived dwindling of non-healing miracles in some cults from the twelfth century onwards was a response to the development of canonization processes. These processes gradually placed more emphasis on healings and the virtues of the saintly individual, reduced the value of *in vita* interventions, and tended to include fewer dramatic

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[22] G. Sitwell (ed.), "The Life of Saint Gerald of Aurillac", in T.F.X. Noble & T. Head (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, London, 1995, 293-362.
[23] P. Sheingorn (ed.), *The Book of Sainte Foy*, Philadelphia, 1995.
[24] R. Bartlett (ed.), *The Miracles of Saint Æbbe of Coldingham and Saint Margaret of Scotland*, Oxford, 2003, pp. 52-53, 86-89, 116-17, 118-19, 122-25, 132-35, 134-35, 138-39.
[25] P. Grosjean (ed.), *Henrici VI Angliae Regis miracula postuma*, Brussels, 1935. The miracles include a large number of thwarted executions and liberations.
[26] Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de Vita et Miraculis S. Godrici, Heremitae de Finchale; Appendix Miraculorum*, ed. J. Stevenson (Surtees Society, 20), London, 1845, pp. 435-36, 462-63, 464-65, 466-69.
[27] Bartlett (ed.), *Miracles of Saint Æbbe*, pp. 52-53.
[28] E.G. Whatley (ed.), *The Saint of London: the Life and Miracles of St Erkenwald,* Binghamton, 1989, pp. 102-29, 142-45, 148-51, 158-61. The non-healings include a liberation.
[29] Geoffrey of Burton, *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, ed. R. Bartlett, Oxford, 2002.
[30] J.C. Robertson (ed.), *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket* (Rolls Series, 67), London, 1875-85, vols 1-2. I identified eighty-six non-healing miracles in the larger collection written by William of Canterbury, and sixty miracles in Benedict of Peterborough's collection, out of a total of over six hundred.

rescues.[31] According to the miracle collection compiled by Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, which is as close as we can get to the lost canonization process of King Louis IX of France (d. 1270), there were only two non-healings out of sixty-five.[32] Amongst the seventy-four miracles collected for the process of Louis of Anjou, bishop of Toulouse (d. 1297), the only non-healings were four sea stories, one of which is analyzed by Archambeau in this volume.[33] Non-healings are less likely to have had recourse to relics and are more likely to have been difficult to evidence according to inquisitorial procedure. They usually occurred away from the shrine, as did many late medieval healings, but perhaps more often without witnesses, and there was less physical proof compared to healings.[34] Indeed, with most protection miracles the whole point is that there was no trace of harm done to the body. This problem may explain why those miraculously liberated sometimes brought the proof of their fetters or noose to the shrine, as Afonso de Viseu did in this chapter's opening example.

Yet despite these issues – and the lessening chances during the thirteenth century that such miracles would be used to secure the canonization – non-healing miracles continued to be reported at inquiries in the late Middle Ages.[35] Liberation miracles are prominent in the processes of Nicholas of Tolentino (d. 1305) and John of Capistran (d. 1456).[36] According to André Vauchez, protection miracles quadrupled after 1301, although he does not discuss them.[37] Nearly 20 per cent of the miracles of Delphine of Puimichel (d. 1360) and 34 per cent of those of Yves de Tréguier (d. 1303) are non-healings.[38] It seems to be the case that non-healing miracles continued to be worthy of remembrance in miracle collections in the late Middle Ages, and remained an aspect of canonization processes right through to the modern

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[31] See the other chapters in this volume for the impact of canonization. Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 38-39, comments on the dramatic value of sea stories at shrines. According to J. Kuuliala, *Childhood Disability and Social Integration in the Middle Ages: Constructions of Impairments in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Canonization Processes*, Turnhout, 2016, p. 92, miracles in canonization processes are usually less didactic due to their more limited dissemination. See also Klaniczay, "Healing with certain conditions".
[32] G. de Saint-Pathus, *Les miracles de Saint Louis*, ed. P. Fay, Paris, 1931, pp. 140-2, 189-90.
[33] Brothers of the Franciscan Order (eds), "Processus canonizationis et legendae variae Sancti Ludovici O.F.M.", *Analecta Franciscana 7* (1951), whole volume, pp. 123, 228-29, 231-33.
[34] C. Krötzl, "Miracles au tombeau, miracles à distance: approches typologiques", in Aigle (ed.), *Miracle et karāma*, pp. 557-75.
[35] M. Goodich, "The miraculous military escape in canonization documents", first published in German in 2000 and translated into English as article XIX in Idem, *Lives and Miracles of the Saints: Studies in Medieval Latin Hagiography*, Aldershot, 2004, 16 pages (p. 12).
[36] D. Lett, *Un procès de canonisation au Moyen Âge: essai d'histoire sociale*, Paris, 2008, p. 431; Andrić, *Miracles of St John Capistran*, pp. 304-06.
[37] A. Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux dernier siècles du Moyen Âge d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, Rome, 1981, pp. 547-8.
[38] J. Cambell (ed.), *Enquête pour le procès de canonisation de Dauphine de Puimichel, comtesse d'Ariano*, Turin, 1978; A. de la Borderie, J. Daniel, R.P. Perquis and D. Tempier (eds.), *Monuments originaux de l'histoire de Saint Yves*, Saint-Brieuc, 1887.

period.[39] They continued to be prominent in Marian cults throughout the Middle Ages. 40 per cent overall of the miracles recorded at Our Lady of Rocamadour in the south of France in the twelfth century involve non-healing, rising to 54 per cent in the third book of the collection.[40] 68 per cent of the narratives in the *Cantigas of Santa Maria* of King Alfonso X of Castile (d. 1284), a compilation of over three hundred poems, are non-healings.[41] Non-healings continue to make up 54 per cent of a collection compiled at the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Castile between *c.*1440 and *c.*1510.[42] 40 per cent of a sixteenth-century Portuguese translation of miracles recorded at Our Lady of Montserrat in Catalonia between 1323 and 1542 are non-healings. In several cases these last miracles demonstrate human resilience. For example, a group of clergymen whose ship had broken up managed to swim three and a half leagues to shore, and eighteen men trapped in a collapsed well were dug out by "friends and neighbors" who thought them to be dead.[43] These percentages might say something about the universality of Marian intercession both in terms of what can be petitioned for, and the number of lower-status pilgrims who invoked the Virgin Mary and had their experiences recorded.[44] It may also say something about the continued prominence of non-healing miracles and differing relationships between God, saints and communities in some regions.[45] There is still a great deal of work to do on this topic.

Non-healing miracles in late medieval Portugal

The second part of this chapter will focus on a southern European region, and especially its Marian miracles, as a case study. It is not possible fully to characterize the Portuguese cult of the saints here, but it is important to note that there are no surviving canonization processes.

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[39] P. Parigi, *The Rationalization of Miracles,* Cambridge, 2009, p. 62, still reports an 11 per cent proportion of non-healings in the seventeenth century.
[40] M. Bull (ed.), *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*, Woodbridge, 1999. These include many liberations and protections from attack.
[41] K. Kulp-Hill (ed.), *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X the Wise: a Translation of the Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Tempe AZ, 2000.
[42] M.E. Díaz Tena (ed.), *Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Siglo XV y Primordios del XVI): Edición y Breve Estudio del Manuscrito C-1 del Archivo del Monasterio de Guadalupe*, Mérida, 2017. I have used the tally of the manuscript itself which indexes its miracles, distinguishing between capture and imprisonment and separating protection at sea from protection on land.
[43] Braga, "Milagres de Nossa Senhora de Montserrat", pp. 688, 719, both undated. The rescue of these men reminds me of the Chilean men dug out of a collapsed mine in 2010, and the rescue of Thai children from a cave in 2018. Both events were narrativized as modern miracles.
[44] B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215*, Philadelphia, 1987, pp. 132-65.
[45] These Iberian examples could be compared with northern shrines such as Our Lady of Amersfoort in the Low Countries. There are no surviving Marian collections from England.

Most Portuguese medieval saints were canonized after the Counter-Reformation; the most recent in 2009 (Nuno de Santa Maria, d. 1431).[46] In some cases the miracle accounts only survive in post-medieval compilations. It is not always clear how Portuguese shrine collections were affected by broader hagiographical developments. There have been relatively few studies of them.[47]

Portuguese miracles follow the same patterns already noted for England as far as non-healings are concerned: for the most part they are few and disparate. The twenty-one miracles of Queen Isabel (d. 1336) include three cases: the preservation of her own corpse, a liberation, and a woman who saw her son again before she died.[48] The only non-healing miracle out of forty-five attributed to Nossa Senhora da Oliveira (Our Lady of the Olive Tree) at Guimarães in northern Portugal in 1342-3 was the bursting into leaf of a dry olive branch that was the reason for the cult in the first place.[49] The twenty-six miracles attributed to the Franciscan "Martyrs of Morocco" in Coimbra during the fifteenth century include one liberation and the protection of a family from plague.[50] Out of two hundred and one fifteenth-century miracles attributed to Nuno de Santa Maria, only nine (4 per cent) are non-healings.[51] The collection of miracles compiled by André Dias attributed to the Holy Name of Jesus (Bom Jesús) in Lisbon in 1432 has only one (a sea story) out of thirty-five miracles, although the prologue explains that the achievements of King João I (1385-1433) were themselves miracles.[52]

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[46] G.C. Moiteiro, "Sobre Nun'Álvares Pereira: notas historiográficas", *Lusitânia Sacra* 22 (2010), 203-21. Before entering religious life, Nuno had been the right-hand man of King João I (d. 1433).

[47] I follow Vauchez, *Sainteté*, p. 320, note 25, in identifying the cult of Anthony of Padua (d. 1231) as Italian, although he was Portuguese. For the Portuguese cult of the saints, see M. de L. Rosa, *Santos e Demónios no Portugal Medieval*, Oporto, 2010; M.C. de Almeida Lucas, *Hagiografia Medieval Portuguesa*, Lisbon, 1984; M. Martins, "Peregrinações e Livros de Milagres na nossa Idade Média", *Revista Portuguesa de História* 5 (1951), 87-236.

[48] J.J. Nunes, "Vida e milagres de Dona Isabel, rainha de Portugal", *Boletim da segunda classe da Academia das Sciências de Lisboa* 13 (1918-19), 1293-1384 (pp. 1369-70, 1380-81, 1382-83). For more on this royal cult based in Coimbra, see I. McCleery, "Isabel of Aragon (d.1336): model queen or model saint?", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57 (2006), 668-92.

[49] C. Fernandes (ed.), *O Livro dos Milagres de Nossa Senhora da Oliveira*, Guimarães, 2006, p. 107.

[50] M.A. Fernandes, "Livro dos Milagres dos Santos Mártires (edição e estudo)", unpublished MA diss., University of Lisbon, 1988, pp. 124-28, 134-36. These friars died on a preaching campaign in Morocco in 1220. Their cult, unusually centred on the Augustinian house of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, was papally recognized in 1478, the first Portuguese cult to be so.

[51] J.P. de Santana, *Chronicas dos Carmelitas,* Lisbon, 1745, vol. 1, pp. 486-559 (pp. 493, 556-59). These involve two liberations.

[52] M. Martins (ed.), *Laudes e Cantigas Espirituais de Mestre André Dias (d.* c.*1437)*, Negrelos, 1951, pp. 283-98 (p. 297). I counted thirty-three healing miracles in McCleery, "Christ more powerful than Galen", p. 139, ignoring the sea story and an animal healing. There is a rubric for a thirty-sixth miracle in the damaged manuscript (Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, MS Iluminados 61).

The sea story in this last collection is striking. João Rodrigues Çaquoto explained in 1432 that a storm arose off Cape St Vincent in the Algarve forcing his ship to land on a beach.

> And when he jumped off the boat to get to land like the others did, such a great wave came that he was swept out to sea. He commended himself very devotedly to the good lord Jesus, and called his name three times, which was a very certain and proven thing, and immediately at that moment another greater wave came that threw him [on the beach] at the feet of the Countess of Ceuta and Rui Nogueira.[53]

The "Countess of Ceuta" is a reference to a wife of Pedro de Meneses, governor of Ceuta from 1415 until his death in 1437. He was Count of Vila Real, not of Ceuta; a detail that may not have meant much to a sailor. Pedro married four times; this may have been his second wife, Beatriz de Coutinho, who went to Ceuta in 1426. Rui Nogeira was presumably the *alcaide-mor* or mayor of Lisbon of this name who married Pedro's natural daughter Aldonça.[54]

Non-healings are more prominent in a very small number of cults. A collection of twenty-four miracles of St Vincent, the patron saint of Lisbon, compiled by Master Estêvão, cantor of Lisbon Cathedral in the late-twelfth century, includes seven non-healings, mainly recoveries of property. One of these is particularly interesting in relation to the theme of justice. A poor man was entrusted to look after somebody else's four gold coins, but they were stolen. He was taken before a *pretor* and judged to forfeit all his goods. After trying magic in vain, he and his wife prayed to Vincent, and the man had a vision telling him where to find the thief who returned the coins on condition that he was not denounced.[55] Another collection of seven miracles attributed to the same saint in the first half of the thirteenth century includes two non-healings, one of which is the long and complex escape of a Cistercian monk from Islamic captivity. On reaching safety, the beneficiary of the miracle

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[53] Martins (ed.), *Laudes e Cantigas*, p. 297.
[54] M. Lopes de Almeida, I.F. da Costa Brochado & A.J. Dias Dinis (eds.), *Monumenta Henricina*, Lisboa, 1960, vol 1, pp. 152-4, notes 1-4.
[55] A.A. Nascimento & S.A. Gomes (eds.), "S. Vicente de Lisbon e seus milagres medievais", *Didaskalia* 15 (1985), 73-160 (pp. 125-27). The Latin is unclear; the translators indicate that the couple consulted a witch, but it is more likely that they saw a soothsayer. See T. Johnson, "Soothsayers, legal culture and the politics of truth in late-medieval England", *Cultural and Social History*, advance publication: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2020.1812906>>.

stood in his irons during a sermon describing what had happened: "so that they saw and knew that he was indeed tied up by Saracens and released from these chains by St Vincent".[56]

The cult of Gil de Santarém (d. 1265) has a proportion of non-healings that is close to Finucane's estimated 10 per cent. Gil was a Portuguese Dominican friar who practiced medicine, compiled and translated medical texts, and gained a reputation for holiness within his lifetime.[57] The main *vita* by André de Resende (d. 1573) attributes to Gil ten non-healings out of one hundred and sixteen miracles. They include the return of a fugitive novice; protection of a woman who fell from a height; the restoration of a dry well in a drought; and the recapture of two enslaved Muslim men who had run away from the Cistercian nunnery of Celas de Guimarães near Coimbra. The nuns sent four wax feet to the shrine in thanks.[58] In some ways this last example is a kind of "anti-liberation" miracle since it was clearly a personal tragedy for the two people most directly involved. The votive offering in this case destabilizes the idea that models of body parts were left at shrines because of illness. In this case it is unfortunately necessary to think of people as ecclesiastical property, reduced to the same level as animals (or reluctant novices) that are prevented from escaping in other cults.

Despite the fact that Gil was best known for his healing miracles, in the prologue to a manuscript of one of his medical compilations – a large collection of herbal remedies translated from Latin to Catalan to Tuscan Italian, dated 24 May 1463, nearly two hundred years after his death – there is mention of a non-healing miracle. The translator/scribe of this manuscript seems personally very well-informed about Gil's life and works, but out of all the miracles that the writer could have mentioned in the prologue of a text meant for *physical* healing, the one that he recalled highlights non-healing intervention, a reminder of its importance:

> I the scribe have been to that place and convent [in Santarém, eighty miles up the river Tagus from Lisbon] and heard of many of his miracles and notable

[56] Nascimento & Gomes (eds.), "S. Vicente", pp. 141-9.
[57] I. McCleery, "Saintly physician, diabolical doctor, medieval saint: exploring the reputation of Gil de Santarém in medieval and renaissance Portugal", *Portuguese Studies* 21 (2005), 112-25.
[58] This text was published in Paris in 1586. I use the modern bilingual critical edition: V.S. Pereira (ed.), *Aegidius Scallabitanus: um diálogo sobre Fr. Gil de Santarém*, Lisbon, 2000, pp. 374, 401-07, 427-29, 486-87, 586-89, 595-97.

> deeds in life and in death, amongst others of a well built in the convent, held to be an impossible thing in that place where there is a great lack of water.[59]

The really unusual example from Portugal is the miracle collection of Our Lady of Virtues from the fifteenth century. The shrine was the consequence of the miraculous discovery of an ivory statue of the Virgin Mary in 1403, leading eventually to the founding of a Franciscan priory, well-endowed by King Duarte of Portugal (1433-38), with an annual fair and a good position near the main road between Lisbon and the Castilian border.[60] The only manuscript copy of a collection of fifty-six miracles dated between 1403 and 1498 was made in 1497 on the orders of royal confessor João da Póvoa who complained that the friars had been negligent in recording the miracles properly.[61] Almost 20 per cent of the miracles of this cult are non-healing, that is eleven out of fifty-six. All but one of the recipients of these miracles are male adults who display considerable agency. The exception is a sleeping child who falls into the sea from a boat but is rescued by his father.[62] One sailor in 1408 on a troubled voyage to Flanders represents an enterprising group of mariners who drew lots to see which of them would go on pilgrimage to the shrine. As soon as he was chosen, their storm-damaged ship ceased to cause them further problems, although they also had the presence of mind to cut down the mast and throw things overboard to aid buoyancy.[63] The miracles also include five liberations from captivity or execution, all dating from the early-fifteenth century. Translations of them are provided in an appendix and they will be the focus of the last section of this chapter.

Liberation and political justice: interpreting the miracles of Our Lady of Virtues

The five liberation miracles from this Portuguese Marian cult cover a wide range of ways in which men could escape death and/or imprisonment. Two of them are divinely-enabled liberations replete with biblical topoi in which the individual finds himself suddenly released

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[59] Bethesda MD, National Library of Medicine, MS 22 (*Rimedii de diverse malatie*), fol. 17. This is probably not the well mentioned in Resende's *vita*, since that one was reported by the same Cistercian nuns who saw the return of their slaves.
[60] M.G. Ventura, C. Oliveira & R. Pereira, "A igreja de Santa Maria das Virtudes: diversas temporalidades de um local de devoção", *Via Spiritus* 7 (2000), 77-97.
[61] The manuscript is Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, Cod. 7286. For its compiler, see V.G. Teixeira, "Fr. João da Póvoa e o movimento da *observância* Franciscana portuguesa entre 1447 e 1517", *Lusitânia Sacra*, 2nd series, 17 (2005), 227-54.
[62] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, p. 38.
[63] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, p. 43.

with fetters loosened and the doors open, and even transported mysteriously outside (miracles 2 and 4). Yet one of these cases also involves a legal stay of execution. The other three are even more interesting: Afonso de Viseu (miracle 1) is allowed to go to the court of appeal at the last minute; Pero Velho (miracle 3) receives a stay of execution, a pardon and/or a commutation of the sentence; and in the last (miracle 5) the judge receives a vision in which the Virgin Mary insists that the accused is innocent. Innocence is usually not as relevant as contrition in these cases.

All of the miracles in this collection, both healing and non-healing, provide an unusual level of insight into some well-known political contexts of the period. For example, in 1425 Gil Fernandes attributed to Our Lady of Virtues his nine years without injury in North Africa.[64] He was part of the Portuguese forces at the conquest of Ceuta in 1415, traditionally seen as the starting point of the Portuguese imperial expansion in Africa. Fernão Vaz arrived at the shrine in 1420 to explain how he was healed of wounds received the second time he went to Ceuta, which might mean that he also participated in the original invasion.[65] Pero Velho, the man who miraculously escaped execution for his involvement in an incident at sea (miracle 3 in the appendix), was on an expedition to take "the rich lady" to England. She was Beatriz, the natural daughter of King João I, who married the Earl of Arundel in London in 1405.[66] The Gonçalo Lourenço who condemned Pero to death was probably Gonçalo Lourenço de Gomide, the king's "private secretary" (*escrivão da puridade*) and royal counsellor, who was responsible for taking Beatriz to England.[67] It is not stated whether Pero was on-board ship because he was already sentenced to the galleys for some other crime, but he is not described as a sailor or servant. In this naval context, the incident (*arruído*) was plausibly a mutiny, which, considering the high-status passengers, might explain the initial severity of the sentence.

These kinds of political name- and place-dropping are not uncommon features of non-healing protection miracles, especially sea stories and liberations. The only non-healing miracle in the cult of Bom Jesús, the previously recounted sea story, also fits this pattern. Nicole

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[64] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, p. 57. He was also cured of Stone.
[65] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, p. 55.
[66] M. Santos Silva, "O casamento de D. Beatriz de Portugal (filha natural de D. João I) com Thomas Fitzalan (Conde de Arundel): paradigma documental da negociaçião de uma aliança", in A. Leal de Faria and I. Drumond Braga (eds.), *Problematizar a História*, Casal de Cambra, 2007, 77-91.
[67] R. Costa Gomes, *The Making of a Court Society: Kings and Nobles in Late Medieval Portugal*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 182.

Archambeau discusses several examples of politically-sensitive protection miracles in her chapter in this volume. Protection miracles are sometimes interpreted by modern observers as ways of explaining good luck, chance or coincidence through a religious lens. Although the compiler of one late twelfth-century miracle attributed to St Thomas Becket goes out of his way to explain that the recovery of a lost horse was not due to chance, the fact that William of Canterbury feels he has to say this means that chance was understood at the time to be a possible explanation.[68] Robert Bartlett argues, using a very ordinary miracle of St Foy's recovery of a lost book, that the key to a miraculous event was a prior invocation of a particular saint, not whether it could reasonably have happened anyway.[69] Chance, however, is not allowed to appear in these ingenious Portuguese liberations. There are political reasons for these narratives and their high-profile witnesses.

Michael Goodich suggested that the preponderance of liberation miracles in France during the eleventh and twelfth centuries is related to "unsettled conditions and military conflict such as internecine feudal warfare and the Crusades in Spain".[70] In a later book, Goodich firmly links the need for liberation and protection in the fourteenth century to what historians call the "late medieval crisis".[71] Similarly, Steven Sargent emphasizes social disorder in his study of miracles in eleventh-century Aquitaine, and Pierre-André Sigal refers to '"l'anarchie féodale" to explain the higher proportion of liberations in eleventh-century France.[72]

Liberation miracles have also been studied in scholarship on prisons. Guy Geltner posits a "hagiography of jail-breaking saints" in his study, although he sees it as a "marginal strand" found mostly in regions of conflict on the edge of Europe.[73] Megan Cassidy-Welch and Julia Hillner argue that liberation miracles had symbolic value, revealing more about theological beliefs in the soul's captivity and relationships between confinement, exile, asceticism and

[68] Robertson (ed.), *Materials,* vol. 1, pp. 282-83. See also C. Watkins, "Providence, experience and doubt in medieval England," in Y. Batsaki, S. Mukherji & J.-M. Schramm (eds.), *Fictions of Knowledge: Fact, Evidence, Doubt*, Basingstoke, 2012, pp. 40-60 (pp. 45-46).
[69] Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* pp. 333, 587-609. See also S. Justice, "Did the Middle Ages believe in their miracles?", *Representations* 103 (2008), 1-29; K. Brewer, *Wonder and Skepticism in the Middle Ages*, Abingdon, 2016.
[70] Goodich, "Miraculous military escape", p. 6.
[71] M. Goodich, *Violence and Miracle in the Fourteenth Century: Private Grief and Public Salvation*, Chicago, 1995.
[72] S. Sargent, "Religious responses to social violence in eleventh-century Aquitaine", *Historical Reflections* 12 (1985), 219-40; Sigal, *l'Homme*, p. 269.
[73] G. Geltner, *The Medieval Prison: A Social History*, Princeton, 2008, pp. 86-88.

martyrdom than about the realities of medieval imprisonment.[74] Cassidy-Welch suggests that descriptions of individual ingenuity in liberation miracles represent the contrition "sparked from within" needed for a successful escape rather than opportunism.[75] Both Hillner and Sargent suggest that the legal right to free captives was acquired by saintly abbots and bishops who used it to practice charity and to enlarge their jurisdiction within late-Roman towns. After death, this right became part of their intercessory powers, and then because their miracles were so influential, the theme of liberation passed into European hagiography more broadly.[76]

On the surface, Iberian liberation miracles might seem to relate to Geltner's idea of inter-faith conflict at the edge of Europe; there are numerous examples of escapes from Islamic captivity and conversions to Christianity. These kinds of liberations are particularly common in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the cult of Dominic of Silos (d. 1073).[77] However, the period of Christian "reconquest" – the taking of land from Muslim rulers within the Iberian Peninsula – had ended by 1250 in Portugal and there were long periods of stability thereafter. The miracles of protection in the collection of Our Lady of Virtues, written in the aftermath of the royal-led conquest of Ceuta, have a different flavor to those of decentralized eleventh-century France.

The local or national and chronological contexts of any shrine are certainly of paramount importance to understanding the content of its miracle collection but, as Archambeau says in her chapter in this volume, we ought to be careful about placing too much emphasis on conflict or crisis as a reason for miracles. Any century might have periods of crisis and all crises are relative. It is unclear whether violence and upheaval became worse at certain times rather than becoming more meaningful to a larger number of literate people. Research that focuses too much on hardship can inadvertently perpetuate negative ideas about the Middle Ages in modern popular perception. Approaches to the late Middle Ages are less pessimistic

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[74] M. Cassidy-Welch, *Imprisonment in the Medieval Religious Imagination,* c.*1150-1400*, Basingstoke, 2011, pp. 36-57; J. Hillner, *Prison*, *Punishment and Penance in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 242-74. See also K. Frances, "Memory and identity in the late medieval prison", unpublished PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2013.
[75] Cassidy-Welch, *Imprisonment*, p. 53.
[76] Sargent, "Religious responses"; Hillner, *Prison*, pp. 260-61. The pioneering study of this process was F. Graus, "Die Gewalt bei den Anfängen des Feudalismus und die 'Gefangenenbefreiungen' der merowingischen Hagiographie", *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 1 (1961), 61-157.
[77] A. Lappin, *The Medieval Cult of Saint Dominic of Silos*, Leeds, 2002, pp. 171-95. Escapes from Islamic captivity were this saint's dominant miracle. Lappin explores them as theological metaphors and ecclesiastical viewpoints on Islam and Christian jurisdiction.

than they were in the 1980s-1990s, when scholars were still influenced by the many economic and humanitarian crises of the twentieth century, and by Malthusian and Marxist debates.[78] Medieval people saw liberation miracles as the result of divine intervention, but often describe them as brought about by prisoners seizing opportunities either legally or illegally. The fact that miracles could involve legal release from captivity via the granting of a pardon, payment of a ransom or a prisoner exchange is worth exploring further. It is also necessary to consider the opposite process to that observed by Sargent and Hillner; they observed the influence of early-medieval political power-broking on hagiographical topoi, but it may be the case that in the late Middle Ages hagiographical, penitential and other didactic religious writings had, in their turn, an influence on politics.[79]

It is necessary to seek alternative reasons within their contemporary political context for why a fifteenth-century Portuguese cult might have several prominent liberation miracles. The miracles prove insightful for a country that lacks the kinds of criminal justice records that Geltner, for example, is able to enjoy for Italy. However, rather than viewing miracles as transparent windows onto daily life they should be read both with and against the grain; that is, miracles can be seen as guides to behavior but also as transgressive in their own right, showing commentary on moments of social change. Often it is the saintly intervention that circumvents norms, not human activity. It is necessary to pay more attention to the social detail in these miracles and compare them to other types of text, especially legal narratives.

Very little is known about criminal justice in late medieval Portugal. Unlike in France, England or Italy, prescriptive legislation and the royal pardon letter is what survives; lower and local levels of everyday justice and much of the evidence of seigneurial, ecclesiastical and magistrates' courts has disappeared, as have prison records.[80] Miracles are therefore extremely valuable sources for criminal justice, although they have not been studied to this end for Portugal. A comparison of royal pardon letters and miraculous liberations shows a close relationship between the two types of narrative. Both contain the convoluted rhetoric of

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[78] See Archambeau's chapter in this volume, and also B. Bove, "Une interminable agonie?", in N. Weill-Parot and V. Sales (eds.), *Le vrai visage du Moyen Âge au-delà des idées reçues*, Paris, 2017, pp. 373-88.
[79] I am influenced here by L.L. Zanetti Domingues, "Religion, Conflict and Criminal Justice in Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Siena", unpublished PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2019.
[80] L.M. Duarte, *Justiça e Criminalidade no Portugal medieval (1459-1481),* Lisbon, 1999; Idem, "A justiça medieval portuguesa (inventário de dúvidas)", *Cuadernos de Historia del Derecho* 11 (2004), 87-97; M. Garcez Ventura, "A justiça no quotidiano: os corregedores do reino", *História* 34 (2015), 60-74; A. Vitória, "Bad Cases and Worse Lawyers: Patterns of Legal Expertise in Medieval Portuguese Court Records, *c*.1200-1400", *Open Library of Humanities* 5 (2019), <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ olh.380>> (accessed 12 September 2020).

innocence, guilt and penance, escape from prison, commutation of sentences, payment of fines, pilgrimage, and the theme of divine protection.[81] The fifteenth century was a period during which a country with a small population expanded commercially and politically into North Africa and beyond. Normally, it is argued that kings preferred not to execute militarily-trained individuals (which constituted most adult men) if they could help it. Therefore, enforced exile to penal colonies both in Portugal and in North Africa and the Atlantic islands was common, even in cases of adultery, robbery and murder. It is not clear though if such exile was seen as equivalent to a death sentence.[82] It would be useful to compare Portugal to other late-medieval regions in which systems of criminal justice can also be observed undergoing profound change, and where hagiography and sermons were used to promote these changes and articulate anxieties about them.[83]

Portuguese pardon letters frequently mention escape from prison since the individual was often on the run when they petitioned the king. Duarte points out that jails—intended for temporary custody—often had limited security measures and poor vigilance; iron restraints were probably old and rusty, locks could be picked. A frequent motif is avoidance of harm to prison property—doors, fetters—while escaping, in order to avoid further accusations of criminal damage or theft. Jailers not infrequently allowed their inmates to escape, either through bribery or sympathy, often because they were themselves reluctant, untrained and poorly-paid.[84] For example, in 1482 the pardon of Maria Fernandes reported that she and other prisoners were freed by a jailer who took pity on them because an outbreak of pestilence had caused everyone else to flee.[85] A northern European merchant Eustache de la

[81] Duarte, *Justiça*, pp. 35-58, 453-90, explores Portuguese pardons in detail, comparing his findings with those of N.Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France*, Stanford, 1987. For both scholars, pardon letters are versions of events that were "true" for the teller. See also Peter Arnade and Walter Prevenier, *Honor, Vengeance and Social Trouble: Pardon Letters in the Burgundian Low Countries*, Ithaca, 2015, 13-18, which begins (p. 1) with a pardon that was narrated as a miracle of a thwarted execution, although Arnade and Prevenier do not otherwise discuss miracle narratives as influences.
[82] Duarte, *Justiça*, p. 442; Idem, "Um luxo para um pais pobre? A pena de morte no Portugal medievo", *Clio & Crimen* 4 (2007), 63-94. Pardon letters were first issued in the mid-fourteenth century, but their use greatly increased in 1415 and they became routine in the mid-fifteenth century (Afonso V issued *c.*15,000). Women were also pardoned and exiled: see I.M.M. Ribeira de Queirós, "Theudas e manteudas: a criminalidade feminina no reinado de D. João II através das cartas de perdão (1481-1485)", unpublished MA diss., University of Oporto, 1999. For numerous examples of pardon letters, see P. de Azevedo (ed.), *Documentos das Chancelarias Reais Anteriores a 1531 Relativos a Marrocos*, 2 vols, Lisbon, 1915-34.
[83] For comparisons, see Zanetti Dominguez, "Religion, conflict and criminal justice", pp. 279-85.
[84] Duarte, *Justiça*, pp. 413-20.
[85] Queirós, "Theudas", vol. 2, pp. 6-7.

Fosse, imprisoned near Lisbon in 1480 for illegally trading in West Africa, was also able to bribe a jailer during an outbreak of plague to free him and other prisoners.[86]

If we return to the miracles of Our Lady of Virtues, several motifs might now seem clearer. For example, in miracles 2 and 4 doors open and fetters fall off undamaged much as in the pardons. To some extent it is the taking of the fetters to the shrine that is transgressive in these miracles, since legally that is theft. The detailed account of his restraints provided by an ironworker (*ferrador*) in miracle 4 makes one wonder whether he made such things and whether he was skilled enough to remove them. The *chouriços* or "sausages" that he mentions evoke a thick, curved piece of metalwork that prevented movement. We also hear about the ceremonial aspects of execution: the scaffold, the procession to it, the presence of criers (*pregoeiros*) whose job it was to preach the infamy of the condemned individual as part of their punishment. There is one reference to the *Relação* in miracle 1; that is, the Casa da Suplicação, which was the royal tribunal that considered appeals in the case of serious crimes.[87] The last-minute reprieve in this case may mean that a petition had just been granted or the individual had just been given an opportunity to present a petition, which was ultimately successful.[88] Miracles 3 and 5 provide some commentary on the kinds of otherwise opaque negotiations that might have led to successive commutations of sentence or their replacement by the payment of fines or compensation. Finally, the judge in miracle 5 is presented as conscientious, pious and zealous in his work. It could be argued that the Virgin's intervention is disruptive here. The judge represents an ideal of divinely-guided official service that can be compared to a later fresco of the good and the bad judge discovered in the former court house in Monsaraz on the Portuguese-Spanish border. This unique survival of civic art from the Portuguese Middle Ages shows a concern with the proper process of justice – for example, avoiding bribery – presided over by an image of Christ in Majesty.[89]

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[86] R. Foulché-Delbosc, (ed.), *Voyage à la côte occidentale d'Afrique en Portugal et en Espagne (1479-80)*, Paris, 1897, pp. 23-24. Eustache did not describe his escape as a miracle but he vowed his journey home to Our Lady of Guadalupe and visited that shrine on his way back to Bruges. The account survives solely in Bibliothèque de Valenciennes MS 489, which otherwise contains pilgrimage narratives.

[87] Duarte, *Justiça*, p. 213.

[88] We similarly find this court mentioned in a miracle of Nuno de Santa Maria: Santana, *Chronicas*, vol 1, p. 558.

[89] C. Mourão, "O bom e o mau juíz: fresco dos antigos paços de audiência de Monsaraz", *Cidade de Évora*, 2nd series, 2 (1996-97), 297-306; M. Gil & ten others, "Microanalytical study of the fresco 'The Good and the Bad Judge' in the medieval village of Monsaraz (southern Portugal)", *X-Ray Spectrometry* 42 (2013), 242-50.

There are of course chronological problems in that some of the primary and secondary evidence used to contextualize and inform my interpretation of these miracles post-dates them considerably. Unfortunately, very little is known about criminal justice in the fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries, partly because the royal chancery records for that period survive mainly in slimmed-down redactions. It is possible that these miracles might represent attempts to accustom the population to judicial procedures such as fines, compensation, and petitioning. They may parallel processes that Lidia Zanetti Dominguez sees in action in Siena in Italy in an earlier period: the change from accusatorial to inquisitorial systems of criminal justice, and the influence of religious ideals on execution and imprisonment.[90] The aforementioned arrest of a man for theft described in the miracles of St Vincent of Lisbon show that miracles could already have such a social function during the accusatorial system of the twelfth century. A miracle of Queen Isabel may show petitioning in action as early as the 1330s.[91] More work would need to be done on how miracles were used in Portuguese preaching and chronicles in order to prove this point. However, it is striking how supportive these miracles are in relation to royal justice. It would be simplistic to dismiss any of these cases as indicative of lawlessness. They are very different to many earlier miracles in which lords and bandits apparently seized their captives arbitrarily. It would, however, equally be a mistake to take these cases at face value for the smooth running of the judicial systems; they are representations of and guides to an ideal situation with the whole point being that saintly intervention could circumvent the law but that humans should not. They could however comment on it through accounts of holy intervention.

Most of the Portuguese miracle collections discussed here also have close relationships with the royal family from its establishment in the twelfth century and throughout its late medieval process of centralization. The cult of St Vincent in Lisbon was closely connected to the political ambitions of the first king Afonso Henriques (d. 1185) as he moved his center of power further south from Coimbra. Our Lady of Virtues was promoted by King Duarte and its miracles compiled by a royal confessor; one of the witnesses to miracle 2 was a page of the king's chamber. The miracles of Bom Jésus refer to anxieties around the anticipated death of an aged king, João, who had overcome great adversity to seize the throne and expand his

[90] Zanetti Dominguez, "Religion, Conflict and Criminal Justice", 21, 26, 87.
[91] A man imprisoned by the Cistercian Abbot of Alcobaça claimed to have been freed by the queen in 1335. Since he referred to her tomb in Coimbra, it is possible that the date is confused as Isabel died in 1336. However, it is feasible that he successfully petitioned the queen before her death, and then visited her tomb the following year. See Nunes, "Vida e milagres", pp. 1382-83.

kingdom. Many of the miracles involve minor royal officials. Miracles could be signs of the maintenance of order and calls for continuity; they were not necessarily signs of disorder.

Conclusions

Late-medieval miracle collections compiled at shrines were didactic in nature. They could be used to guide, comment upon, and reinforce the principles of law and order. Often it is non-healing miracles – particularly liberations and sea stories – that most easily allow the transmission of this kind of political or judicial message since they allow leading political actors to associate themselves with a cult while avoiding the stigma of imprisonment, illness or injury.[92] The political factor might also help to explain why so many recipients of non-healing miracles seem to have been adult men, although more research needs to be done on gender in this respect. Liberations from captivity are particularly important political narratives that reflect ideals and perceptions of the exercise of power, as has been pointed out by numerous scholars. However, saying that a period of history is violent is not a sufficient reason for these miracles. There are of course numerous questions still to be answered. How were miracles disseminated by shrines? How did non-healing and healing miracles relate to one another? Some individuals experienced both illness and other forms of adversity, reporting them together in a combined visit of thanks to the shrine. Close scrutiny of the language of miracles suggests comparisons between illness, imprisonment, or other mishap, at both physical and spiritual levels. There is much future work to be done on the topic of non-healing miracles. However, shrine miracles should be seen both as policy tools as well as performances of power; they belong to carefully curated collections that reflect compilers' views and interests, including political affiliations and social anxieties. Miracles reported during canonization processes appear to differ from miracles recorded at shrines, but non-healings do continue to feature in the cults of some late-medieval canonized saints. The differences between *in vita* and post-mortem events could be compared further for what they say about personal interventions or ingenuity on the part of the saint or miracle beneficiary. Finally, regional and national differences should be compared and discussed much more. The Portuguese cases presented here indicate that the specific criminal justice system of a

[92] This is not to say that kings and other powerful people did not go on pilgrimage; there is plenty of evidence that they did so and were often greatly devoted to specific shrines. However, in most hagiographical texts such people appear most often as witnesses and donors rather than as beneficiaries of miracles in need of divine aid. King Alfonso X of Castile was highly unusual in depicting himself and his family as recipients of cures: see J.F. O'Callaghan, *Alfonso X and the Cantigas de Santa Maria: a Spiritual Biography*, Leiden, 1998.

particular time and place shaped the narratives well beyond the standard Biblical *topoi*. In this kingdom, where no saints were canonized during the Middle Ages, liberation miracles were less an escape from justice and more a sign of a justice system at work.

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Appendix

1. Concerning a man condemned to death, freed by Holy Mary.

In the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1406, there also arrived at this house a man called Afonso de Viseu. He said that he had been a prisoner for three years because he was accused of killing a man, and on Friday 23 March, he was condemned to hang.[93] As they took him to be hanged, with a noose around his neck and his hands tied behind him, he commended himself to Holy Mary of Virtues with all his heart and will. Immediately, they ordered him to turn to the tribunal (*Relação*) to provide evidence before it, and the next day they ordered him to be released. He came here with the noose around his neck, as he had thus promised. Witnesses: Estêvão Gonçalves Pimentel, Gonçalo Fernandes and Álvaro Afonso, who wrote this.[94]

2. Concerning a man whom they ordered to be beheaded, freed by the Virgin Mary.

In the aforesaid year and month [October 1413], a squire arrived at [the shrine of] Holy Mary of Virtues who was called João Cide from Castelo de Vide. He said that he was a prisoner in the jail (*correição*) of Entre-Tejo-e-Odiana [south central Portugal] for five months and was condemned by the judge (*corregedor*) to be hanged. He argued that he was a nobleman (*fidalgo*) so the king ordered them to cut off his head. As he was taken from the prison (*cadeia*) to be beheaded, he commended himself very much from the heart to Holy Mary of

[93] This date in that year was a Tuesday.
[94] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, p. 37.

Virtues, and the judge ordered him back to the prison (*prisão*). That following night, he found himself released from fetters of four links, and from a chain that was around his neck, and the doors open. He went out and went to Holy Mary of Virtues and told all that had happened to him. Witnesses: Álvaro Gil, page of the king's chamber; João de Óbidos; João Vicente, cleric; and Vicente Lourenço, proctor of Holy Mary of Virtues.[95]

3. Concerning a man condemned to death and freed from death by Holy Mary the Virtuous

A man arrived here, in the year of the Lord 1407 on 13 July, who had the name Pero Velho. He lived in Samouco de Ribatejo and came from Lisbon in chains. He said that when they ordered the rich lady [to be taken] to England, he went in a galley and a fight/mutiny (*arruído*) broke out in the said galley for which he was taken prisoner, saying that he caused that fight. Gonçalo Lourenço ordered him to be hanged. With his hands tied and the men of the king and the proclaimers ready to take him, he commended himself to Holy Mary of Virtues and through the grace and virtue of the said Lady, they ordered him to be taken to the castle. Afterwards he was twice condemned to be hanged and by virtue of the Lady was freed and hanging was commuted to being cut and whipped throughout the city and exiled from the kingdom. He again asked for help from the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Virtues and immediately that night he was released and they ordered him to serve a year in the castle. Witnesses: Lopo Pires, and I, Rodrigo Anes, servant of Holy Mary, who wrote this.[96]

4. Concerning a prisoner, released by the Virgin Mary

In the year 1411, a man arrived at Holy Mary of Virtues called Rui Pires, a farrier/smith (*ferrador*) who lived in Beja. He had been a prisoner in Portel and had some manacles (? *chouriços*) and over them fetters of four links and even more, and his feet held against the trunk of his body (?), and was in a very strong and well-sealed tower. This is because they said that he killed a man and he was condemned to be hanged. He promised himself with great devotion to Holy Mary of Virtues and immediately that night he saw the Virgin Mary in a vision. He found himself outside the tower and outside two circuits of walls with the shackles and manacles. He came to Santa Maria das Virtudes to tell everything about how he was freed by the virtue of the Blessed Virgin. Witnesses: Fernão Pires, abbot of Sendim;

[95] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, p. 38-9.
[96] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, pp. 48-49.

Lourenço Pires, administrator (*mordomo*) of the house of the said Lady; and João Bartolomeu.[97]

5. Concerning a man who was ordered to be hanged for homicide, freed by Holy Mary

In the year of the Lord 1425, a man arrived at Holy Mary of Virtues called João Anes de Valedo who lived in Albufeira. He said he was accused of stealing 2000 reais from a merchant who was lodging in his house, for which he was imprisoned and condemned to be hanged. Since his son had made an agreement [*avença* – probably an arrangement to pay compensation or a fine], the judge said that it was not necessary to have more witnesses, because the agreement proved that he had done it, and he was condemned to be hanged the next day. Seeing himself thus condemned to death, he commended himself to Holy Mary of Virtues that she would want to free him because of his piety as she knew that he was guiltless. That night as the judge was studying the case, the Virgin Mary appeared before him bringing the prisoner with her and told him that in no way was he to do anything bad to that man who was not guilty of the deed of which he was accused. The next day in the court, the judge reported the vision that he had seen and got the worthy men to release the prisoner, but because the son had made an agreement, they judged that he should pay it [the fine or compensation] and then they freed the prisoner. He came to Holy Mary of Virtues and reported this miracle. Witnesses: Brother Afonso Saco and Brother Gonçalo de Penela.[98]

[97] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, p. 51.
[98] Beirante (ed.), *Livro*, pp. 55-56. The rubric mentions *homicida* but the narrative refers to theft.