



A Generative Entanglement

Word and Image in Roman Catholic Devotional Practice

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ABSTRACT Devotional piety broadly depends on events that are not accessible for direct observation and commonly offer very little, if anything, in the way of historical documentation. Sometimes the experiences to which devotion is directed in the veneration of saints is based on visionary experience for which reports are contradictory. This essay explores ways in which word and image are brought together to anchor evanescent or ephemeral, or entirely uncertain, origins and provide devotion with stable objects. I develop the view that word and image are generatively entangled, meaning that their ambiguous connections with one another are able to produce a medium in which devotion finds a footing. The discussion focuses on two case studies: Our Lady of Fátima and Saint Jude. Fátima is based on a series of apparitions to young children in 1917 and Jude is a historically shadowy figure whose cult underwent a modern revival, in part assisted by new iconographic developments that allowed devotees to link their saint to very old traditions. Lore and imagery work together as forms of saying and seeing that bring elusive origins into focus.

KEYWORDS Fátima, Saint Jude, image, entanglement, materiality

Introduction

The complex relations that entangle words and images have received a great deal of attention from scholars over the last several decades, and for good reason (Brusati, Enenkel, and Melion 2012; Hunt 2010; Mitchell 1994). They are two large categories of representation that perform critically important cultural work. Their connections to one another range from alliance to interchangeability to infamous rivalry to sheer indifference toward the other. The focus in this essay will fall on the capacity of word and image to work together in Roman Catholic devotional practice. Although the entanglement of word and image is hardly limited to this tradition, in the interest of cogency I will focus on the Catholic devotion to two figures—Our Lady of Fátima and Saint Jude.¹ [1]

Word and image often cooperate, as I will show, but that is not because they are versions of [2]

1 For a discussion of word and image in Protestant piety, see Morgan (2015, 42–67).

one another. As forms of representation and as cultural artifacts, they exhibit a host of differences and idiomatic qualities that resist reduction. So the idea that images might be treated as visual texts, as signs of meaning that are properly textual in nature, is a presumption. In fact, not only are word and image incommensurate in basic ways; they designate broad categories in which variations distinguish one kind of image from another and one experience of a text from another. Images come in a great variety of forms—mental, pictorial, diagrammatic, moving, and three-dimensional. They also appear as shadows, fossils, reflections, and genetic reproductions.² Words, for that matter, are verbal, mental, and textual phenomena, which may correspond to one another but should not be reduced to one another. Indeed, when words are written, inscribed, or performed, shouted, whispered, or slurred, they take on valences that are quite discrete. The medium in each case impresses itself on the viewer or hearer and affects the impact of the word. This fact urges the cultural analyst not to sever the performance or material work of the word or image from its ‘meaning,’ as if the medium could be extricated from either the significance or the speakers and viewers that it mediates. Indeed, the study of material religion understands meaning to consist of the configuration of all these factors. Entanglement means inextricability such that to change the configuration is to change the meaning.

Mediation, as scholarship in recent years has argued, is not incidental to religion but operates as forms of religious practice (Stolow 2005; Morgan 2008; Engelke 2010; Meyer 2012). Rather than stress content or information conveyed by neutral media channels, this approach regards mediation, in Engelke’s words (2010, 371) as “a set of practices and ideas that cannot be understood without the middle grounds that substantiate them.” In other words, media practices exert a direct effect on the human body and its intellectual, emotional, and imaginative faculties. Consisting of everything from reading to image veneration to posture in worship, media practices do much more than deliver information. They shape the individual and corporate bodies of practitioners such that ‘believing’ means participating in a community by virtue of shared media practices and their somatic and social effects. In this way of thinking, media are technologies that work on the soft tissue of human muscles and neurology, shaping human beings over time. Belief is the sedimentary result, an embodied disposition emerging from the routines of practice (Morgan 2010, 1–12). [3]

Taking the material characteristics of media seriously affects the study of religion in a significant way. It means that images, objects, and other artifacts shape religious experience in fundamental ways and it recognizes in embodiment a key aspect of any religion. In taking this approach, scholars do well to avoid false oppositions between material objects, on the one hand, and word, thought, doctrine, or belief, on the other. This essay will consider how word and image operate together in two broad ways to facilitate the practice of belief. I understand ‘belief’ as more than a mental state reducible to verbal or textual formulae. Belief is produced and maintained by words and images as well as other practices as various as song, dance, food, and dress. It is not confined to an utterance or a mental state, but springs powerfully from the dynamics of practice. Belief, in other words, is what people produce by doing what they do. Speaking and seeing, singing and dancing, eating and working, feeling and listening, dress and posture are all forms of practice that make human beings into certain kinds of religious people. Belief, as a robustly embodied disposition, is crafted over time by practice, and practice is commonly structured by tenets or injunctions. In fact, belief and [4]

2 For an important consideration of the range of images and their study, see Belting (2011).

practice exhibit an entanglement that resembles the complex interrelatedness of word and image.

The scrutiny of word and image as entangled elements at work in practices of belief features two major operations: the manner in which word and image work together to stabilize an ephemeral referent or to figure an ineffable referent; and how word and image cooperate as lore to enable devotees to interact with saints. Entanglement refers to the interdependency of modes of representation and the indeterminacy of what they presume to represent. Anything that enters into the relations that comprise the material matrix which human beings know and experience as their world is entangled in it. Persons, societies, animals, objects, gods are not purely transcendent or ontologically distinct realities, but belong to ecologies in which they act on one another.³ Humans encounter them all as part of complex assemblages of which they themselves are part. Religious beliefs, practices, and material culture are the means by which humans apprehend their deities.

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Apparition and Image in the Visual Culture of Fátima

I begin with a consideration of the visual aspects of the devotion to Our Lady of Fátima, ranging from the original series of events to the place of images in the promotion of the devotion from the 1920s to the 1940s. The question driving my investigation is: What do visionaries see and what relation does that bear to material representations? A familiar feature of pious accounts of saints' lives and Marian apparitions is the merging of events and reports into a narrative that is purged of ambivalence, contradiction, inconsistency, and irresolution in order to serve the operation of the cult by satisfying the skeptical authority of the Church, which seeks to protect the faith from embarrassment or criticism. In 1920, three years after the apparitions, a statue of Our Lady, carved by a Portuguese sculptor, was installed at a small chapel at Fátima. The figure, pictured in a later pamphlet reproduced here as Figure 1, was based on many details of what the children reported they saw, and quickly established itself as the authentic depiction of Mary's appearance. The image was widely reproduced over the next decades and was both publically acclaimed by faithful pilgrims and officially sanctioned by bishops and papal representatives as the image of Our Lady of Fátima. In Figure 1, the sculpture of 1920 appears on the cover of a small tract promoting the use of the rosary in the family, published in 1937, posed in the tree as the children reported. By placing the sculpture in the tree, hovering on a small cloud, the image presumes that the figure portrays just what the three children beheld over the course of six months of appearances in the summer and early fall of 1917 in the hill country of Portugal.⁴ Writing years later, Father John DeMarchi, a devout historian of the apparition, described the original unveiling of the statue to the faithful on the third anniversary of the first apparition, May 13, 1920, in a way that confirms Figure 1's apparent claim: when the figure was removed from its crate at Fátima, the people on hand "rushed forward to kiss the statue which seemed so perfectly to reproduce the serious and beautiful vision described by the children. A girl of thirteen leaned over it with tears running down her cheeks. It was Lucia" (DeMarchi 1950, 168). Yet the historical record is more complicated than that. Lúcia, for instance, would later take exception to the statue and call for the creation of a more accurate version (Morgan [forthcoming](#)).

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3 For much more on entanglement, particularly as it relates to material culture, see Hodder (2012, 94–112); for a study of how images participate in the entangled matrix of networks, see Morgan (2018).

4 On images of Fátima and response to them, see Morgan (2009).



Figure 1 José Ferreira Thedim, sculptor, *Our Lady of Fátima*, 1920, on the cover of a tract promoting the daily rosary in the family, published July 3, 1937, in Braga, Portugal. Collection of the author.

In a series of interviews with the three children, Lúcia, Jacinta, and Francisco, published in November of 1917, Father José Ferreira de Lacerda concluded his account with the following confession: “The doubt that had accompanied me on my arrival was the same that was with me when I took my leave of the three children. Did they really see an Image?” The priest prudently opted to “await the decision of Rome” (Martins 1992, 187). Father Lacerda’s capitalized term, *Image*, is noteworthy because it draws our attention to the inherent ambivalence of the term, that is, the degree to which it is entangled with experience, history, lore, and visual traditions. Image might denote a picture, a mental figure, or a misty, luminous formation in the air, or even only in the eyes of the children. ‘What did they see?’ is no less apt a question since ‘image’ could denote everything from a hallucination to a mirage, a specter or an imaginatively gestalted form or motif. Likewise, a visionary apparition is difficult to pin down—in what sense is it ‘there’? Yet Father Lacerda was not bothered by the ontology of the image. He accepted the possibility of Our Lady appearing to the children. She had a history of doing so. What concerned him was the veracity of the children’s claim, and no doubt the anxiety of taking a position on the matter without the authoritative support of the Church hierarchy. Stability, after all, was the most important concern, especially in contemporary Portugal and Spain, where secular forces violently challenged the Church and its alliance with royal regimes. Seeing an image of Our Lady would be acceptable only if the Church ruled it was so. [7]

Father Lacerda’s question is apt for another reason. The children themselves, in their interviews, repeatedly referred to Our Lady in imagistic terms, that is, as an image in the sense of a picture. They compared her appearance to pictures, holy card images, and statues. That Father Lacerda was looking for the image that the children might have seen is suggested by his observation that Jacinta knew only her own church and a chapel nearby. Pilgrims to the site had brought with them a host of small devotional images in 1917 before the 1920 image was in place, but according to Lacerda, Jacinta told him that “none of the statues there are like the lady that she saw in the Cova da Iria” (Martins 1992, 187). [8]

The apparitions of Our Lady of Fátima provide a rich case study of Sister Lúcia’s adult reminiscences of the successive apparitions of an angel in 1916 and then Our Lady in 1917. Accounts of the two events present the dispassionate reader with a stark contrast. The effulgent figure of the visions gripped the children in speechless amazement. Their astonishment was such that the first utterance from both the angel and the Lady were: “Do not be afraid” (Martins 1992, 396, 399). Having arrived in a flash of light from the beyond, the figure echoed much of what the angel had told Lúcia the year before: pray, pray the rosary, offer reparations for offenses against God; the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary expect them to suffer, but this would lead to the conversion of sinners. This was the primary message of what the children quickly made public. Rather little about it was new. Margaret Mary Alacoque (the visionary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) had delivered the same message one hundred fifty years before. And the Marian apparitions at Lourdes and La Salette during the mid-nineteenth century had provided more particular information.⁵ On six occasions at Fátima, the small female figure appeared in a flash of light, perched on the same scrub oak, and said virtually the same thing: offer yourselves to God, prepare to suffer, pray the rosary often in order to end the war, my Immaculate Heart is your refuge, build me a chapel here, make sacrifices for sinners, and [9]

5 Bennet (2012, 10–13) has nicely summarized the literature on the situation of Fátima within the context of modern Marian apparitions in Europe.

come back here on the thirteenth of the next month for another apparition. There is an almost liturgical regularity to the terse diction of revelation.

But the apparitions also delivered news about the war ending soon and secrets that Lúcia and eventually John Paul II disclosed. These formed a sensational and political part of the “message of Fátima,” as pious discourse calls it (Carreira das Neves 2007). Indeed, fascination with the secrets dominated the production of media propagating devotion to Fátima, in part because the secrets fed the political valence of the devotion as part of the West’s Cold War confrontation with Soviet communism. But it is helpful to recover as much as we can of the *visual sense* of what the children experienced. We may begin with one of Lúcia’s earliest memories, from the day before her first communion at age six. Praying in the parish church after her first confession, Lúcia gazed fixedly into the face of the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary and “it seemed to me that she smiled and, with a kindly look and gesture, told me she would” grant the girl’s prayer to keep her heart for God alone (Martins 1992, 297). Years later, Lúcia displayed a noteworthy pragmatism regarding the veracity of the memory when she wrote, “I do not know whether the facts I have written about my First Communion were a reality or a little girl’s illusion. All I know is that they had a great influence in uniting me to God all my life” (quoted in DeMarchi 1952, 283).

This concession merits attention because it suggests, in light of the further evidence we will review, that it is a mistake to approach the events of 1917 with the assumption that they constitute a kind of ground-zero to which we must return in the search for a stable or fixed original event. In fact, Lúcia was the sort of person to whom unusual things happened. They did not begin with the reported appearance of the Virgin Mary on May 13, 1917, but can be traced back much further, into the misty memories of a six-year old child. If that is the case, then we must consider adopting a different framework for studying the young visionary and her adult recollections. Rather than dismiss the adult Lúcia as mercurial, we might do better to regard her as wrestling with memory. If she herself was unsure about the very nature of the memory, then it seems presumptive indeed for us to assume that there might be a simple bedrock of fact underlying everything attributed to a vision. The very ontology of visions may be better understood as manifold. They may consist of various proportions of perception, imagination, historical tradition, theological discourse, narrative, folklore, imagery, and possibly mistake, exaggeration, hallucination, or fabrication—all sifted through the medium of memory, need, and desire, both by the girl (and her adult self) and by the community of belief that responded to her.

We learn something more about the visual characteristics of visionary experience when Lúcia later revealed previously unknown childhood events. Perhaps two years after the statue’s smile, the adult Lúcia remembered eating lunch on the slope of a hill with three girls: “When I was praying the rosary with my companions... I saw hovering over the tree tops in the valley which extended at our feet, a kind of cloud in human shape, whiter than snow and somewhat transparent. My friends asked me what it was. I answered that I didn’t know” (Martins 1992, 395–96). Describing the event in an earlier memoir (1937), Lúcia wrote that “it was a figure like a statue made of snow that the rays of the sun had turned somewhat transparent” (Martins 1992, 299). The children continued praying with “our eyes always fixed upon that figure which disappeared when we finished praying” (Martins 1992, 300). And that was not the only time a figure seemed to appear and approach them: “This happened on two further occasions, but on different days” (Martins 1992, 396). When she was confronted by her mother about the visions, who asked her what she saw, Lúcia replied that she did not know and could not

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explain it: “It looked like somebody wrapped up in a sheet!”, and noted in her memoir that “I meant to say that I couldn’t see his face so I said, ‘It was not possible to see eyes or hands on it’” (Martins 1992, 300).

Yet another series of apparitions took place the next year, in 1916. After lunch and prayers one day, Lúcia, Jacinta, and Francisco “began to see, at some distance, over the trees facing the East, a light more white [sic] than snow, with the form of a transparent young man, more brilliant than a crystal penetrated by the rays of the sun. As he was approaching, we could distinguish his features. We were so surprised and ecstatic that we could say nothing” (Martins 1992, 396). When the figure reached them, it spoke to them: “Don’t be afraid. I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.” And on May 13, 1917, high up on the slope of the Cova da Iria, the children saw “what seemed to be a flash of lightning.” They turned and began to descend. On the way down they saw more lightning, and a few steps later “we saw ahead of us, over a holm oak, a Lady dressed all in white, more brilliant than the sun dispensing light, clearer and more intense than a crystal cup full of crystalline water penetrated by the rays of the most glaring sun. We stopped, surprised by the apparition. We were so close that we stood within the radiance which surrounded her and reached a distance of perhaps five feet. Then Our Lady said, ‘Don’t be afraid, I won’t hurt you’” (Martins 1992, 399). If the children were not sure who the figure was when she first appeared as they told the story in 1917, from the distance of 1942, Sister Lúcia interpolated her identity into the narrative framework, in effect rendering the entanglement invisible, at least to those who behold the image with the eyes of faith. [13]

We can discern some important patterns in the mechanics of visionary experience at work during the final apparition on October 13, 1917. Although Lúcia briefly described what she saw to a priest that evening (Martins 1992, 153), she did not elaborate on this feature until the four memoirs that she wrote between 1935 and 1942: [14]

When Our Lady had disappeared in the immense distance of the sky, next to the sun we saw Saint Joseph holding the Child Jesus and Our Lady dressed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. Saint Joseph and the Child seemed to be blessing the world, making the sign of the cross with their hands. Shortly after this vision had vanished, I saw Our Lord and Our Lady, who reminded me of Our Lady of Sorrows. Our Lord was blessing the world just the same way as Saint Joseph. This vision vanished too, and it seemed to me I again saw Our Lady dressed as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. (Martins 1992, 405) (see also Figures 2 and 3) [15]

We note in the accounts, and especially in the adult memories regarding the angels, the several evanescent figures on October 13, and even in descriptions of Our Lady herself, a range of perceptual conditions that register a process of focusing or visual resolution in which recognizable forms emerge or begin to take shape, gradually congealing into a motif or enduring pattern that becomes the focus of devotional practice.⁶ The conditions vary, but are analogous in effect: brief solar brilliance, radiant bodies, luminous effects, such as transparency and flashes of light, and the mercurial shape-shifting of clouds. It is striking that these features both resist resolution and facilitate it. The power of suggestion and the perceptual dynamics of Rorschach blots come to mind, but also the vertigo of seeing things that may be near or far and refuse to come into focus. In the case of the angels in 1915 and 1916 and Our Lady [16]

6 For a discussion of anthropomorphism and perception, in which pattern-making plays a key role, see Guthrie (1993, 91–121).



Figure 2 *Our Lady of Sorrows*, nineteenth century holy card, engraving, Portugal. Collection of the author.



Figure 3 *Our Lady of Carmel*, nineteenth century holy card, engraving, Italy. Collection of the author.

hovering above the tree in 1917, the resulting affect, a cocktail of fear, fascination, stupefaction, and amazement, only appears to subside when the figures speak. What begins in visual spectacle moves toward pictorial image, then congeals in words and the static form of statuary. When the words begin, the figure of Our Lady hardly moves. She stands immobile on the small oak, hovering on a cloud, moving only her hands in a rhetorically deliberate gesture of blessing that emits light when she opens them. Otherwise, she is like a statue with her hands meeting one another in front of her chest, in the way Our Lady appeared at Lourdes (see Figure 1).

Imagery played varying roles in the lives of the children, but on every occasion we can discern its operation in the imagination, forming, correcting, and transforming mental images and memories into objects that correspond to events and physical imagery. When Lúcia was asked on the evening of October 13, 1917, the day Our Lady appeared for the last time in the series of apparitions at Fátima, if she saw St. Joseph and the Holy Child, as had been promised by Our Lady on August 18, she confirmed it and said that also “Our Lord appeared and blessed the people and Our Lady of the two cards” (DeMarchi 1952, 151). When asked what the “two cards” meant, Lúcia replied that one of the figures appeared to be Our Lady of Carmel, whose image in devotional art has long held the scapular in one hand and the Christ Child in the other, who himself holds a scapular, as Figure 3 here shows (DeMarchi 1952, 151–52; cf. Martins 1992, 153, 405). [17]

In interviews given on the evening of that day, Lúcia, Jacinta, and Francisco were asked about the appearance of the figures in the clouds and light after Our Lady had departed (Martins 1992, 152–62). Each of the children confirmed that the figures appeared very near the sun. Whether scintillating effects of the sunlight or moving clouds, the images appear to have been incomplete and evanescent. The figures were more suggestion than definite forms. Asked how she knew the figure was Our Lady of Carmel, Lúcia replied that “she had some things hanging from her hand” (Martins 1992, 153), which she presumably took to be the scapular (see Figure 3). When asked if she saw Jesus, Lúcia replied: “I saw the figure of a man; I think it was Our Lord.” Where was the figure? “It was near the sun” (DeMarchi 1952, 161). The clouds and dazzling effects of sunlight morphed into a series of formations in which the children recognized several pictorial paradigms of devotional iconography. An existing stock of pictures helped them render from the evanescence something which they could affirm as sacred imagery. [18]

The “two cards” that Lúcia mentioned were no doubt references to the common iconography pictured on holy cards, the probable source of the children’s recognition of visual patterns composing the holy figures (see Figures 2 and 3). Such images were common to them and often figured in their devotional experience. During her hospitalization at the end of her life, Jacinta was visited by Our Lady on several occasions and revealed to Lúcia that “the Heart of Jesus wishes to be honored together with the Immaculate Heart [Mary]” (Martins 1992, 371), a sentiment that reproduces iconography of the two hearts entwined by roses and thorns since the seventeenth century. A physician who became close to the seriously ill Jacinta during the final year of her life (1920) had the opportunity to speak with her on several occasions and wrote after her death that Jacinta “liked to look at holy pictures, one among them in particular... of Our Lady of Sameiro, which she said most closely resembles the Lady of the Apparitions.”⁷ The image was of a statue of Our Lady (Figure 4) located in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sameiro, a nineteenth-century Marian shrine in Braga, Portugal, 245 kilometers [19]

7 Dr. Eurico Lisboa, quoted in DeMarchi (1952, 214).

north of Fátima. Pious images in statuary, lithographs, engravings, and photographs served as models for the children's response to and interpretation of cloud formations and luminous effects. Generally speaking, the children's accounts suggest greater reliance on sacred images to make sense of what they saw, and the adult Lúcia's recollections feature more detailed descriptions of luminous and cloudy optical effects.

The Visual Features of Devotional Lore in the Cult of Saint Jude

The word "lore" comes to modern English from the Old Saxon word *lêra*, which was the same in Old High German and is rendered in modern German as *Lehre*, or teaching.⁸ The etymology helps explain why, when we think of the word today, it sounds like something *said*, words performing teachings that belong to everyone, or at least to whoever repeated them as an adage or story that imparted some manner of wisdom. For this reason, we are inclined to assume, when looking at an image that exhibits visual features of folk culture, that the lore came first and the image was crafted on it as a verbal model. In fact, the assumption is probably wrong, or at least wrong about half of the time. People manufacture lore or encounter its historical stream in the images they keep, exchange, and admire. More than a few stories about what people say, what they think, how they should feel, what a mythic hero said or did, etc. were generated by the way a lithograph, carving, or painted icon appears. Images have an ability to fill in what people don't know, to provide a missing origin or backstory.

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Visual lore operates in a way that parallels what is at work in devotion to Fátima: images replace or resolve the ambivalence of visionary experience, rendering the indeterminate or indefinite into stable objects of devotion. Moreover, the visual features of lore are also a dense intermingling of saying and looking. They are so dense that it is often impossible to determine which came first. What matters far more, it seems, is the capacity of lore as both verbiage and imagery working together as forms of intermediation to offer the viewer or listener access to the object of lore—in the case of religious devotionism, to the saint or ancestor whose aid the devotee seeks to secure. This happens by configuring a number of important strands of lore about the saint and about his or her favors, the devotional setting, and the devotee's own history with the saint. This configuration, an extended network of agents and relationships, takes shape in votive shrines and particularly in the devotional images that stand in the shrines, versions of which accompany devotees to their homes and in their daily lives. We may think of the cult image as the *focal object* of this network, the visual means by which votaries interface with the saint to whom they have pledged their devotion.⁹

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In votive practice, the focal object configures several different components of devotion in order to give shape to the relationship that is at the heart of the practice. To invoke a saint, pledge devotion to a saint, or to convey thanks to one, the devotee participates in a constellation or assemblage of different agents. These include the image or artifact, the archive from which it comes, the story of the saint, the narration of the individual's own story, the disposition or situation of the votary, and the consecration of votary and image to the saint. How the focal object operates within this assemblage becomes clear in the case of another very popular form of votive cult, the devotion to Saint Jude. An assortment of small votive statues of St. Jude (Fig. 5) demonstrates the variety of his portrayal. The variations register the different strands in the history of his story, the archive of his visual depiction,

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8 "Lore," *Oxford English Dictionary* 1933, vol. 6, 447.

9 I have developed this term and explored the operation of the focal object in Morgan (2018, 96–112).



Figure 4 Our Lady of Sameiro, Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sameiro, Braga, Portugal. Permission of Santuário do Sameiro.

and the range of practice associated with his devotion. But Jude imagery diverges from the visual piety of Fátima in a significant way: rather than a single dominant motif, we find several persisting over time.

We see, for instance, several different attributes associated with the figure of Jude. Each of these features draws from a historical archive of images of and stories about the saint. And each characteristic signals some aspect of his story and the connection that votaries ascertain with him. The club (sometimes an axe or a spear) recalls Jude's martyrdom, said to have occurred in Syria or Persia around 65 AD. The flame atop his head is a reference to Jude's presence in Jerusalem at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit manifested as flames over the heads of the apostles and sparked the miracle of tongues. Jude represents the mission outreach that ensued, taking the new faith to far-flung places, cultures, and languages, far beyond the Jewish cult centered in Jerusalem. The tradition has hailed Jude as an original missionary of Christianity beyond the land of Israel. The persistent anti-Jewish note in his hagiographies may suggest a remnant of early tensions between Jewish and Gentile parties. The significance of his international itinerancy for latter-day devotion may be Jude's availability to all who need his help, and especially those who travel to new lands, which may be why the club often morphs into a walking staff. Whereas the club, spear, or axe has long been regarded as reference to his martyrdom, it is seen today by some in terms that apply Jude to contemporary needs. Thus, one website indicates that the staff is "indicative of his role in ushering/leading people to the Truth."¹⁰ This may be why a novel feature in contemporary prayer cards and statuary shows the saint holding a hooked shepherd's staff rather than a club or axe.

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The iconography is fluid and multivalent and was added over time.¹¹ The flame probably became important as a way of underscoring the apostolic identity of Jude, since it was the twelve disciples minus Judas Iscariot who received the flames at Pentecost. Judas, who shared the same name as Jude, had, according to the Gospels, hung himself in despair after betraying Jesus to a band of soldiers in Gethsemane on the night of his arrest (Matthew 27:3–5). In order that Jude not be confused with Judas, whose infamous reputation, it is said, long eclipsed Jude's own, the flame may have been intended as a form of disambiguation to set off the saint of hopeless causes from the former disciple who killed himself from despair. In the Book of Acts, the story of Judas' replacement by the selection of a new apostle (Acts 1:15–26) appears directly before the account of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). Yet the similarity in their names has caused devotees some anxiety and they point to a medieval tradition of forgetting Jude as the reason for the saint's suitability as patron saint of impossible causes. He knows what it is to be lost and forgotten, so he takes special interest in those afflicted by despair and a sense of powerlessness. This lore transforms the saint's historical obscurity and emergence in the early modern era into an account of his sympathy for devotees. The lore conceals Jude's contingency by replacing it with devotional purpose. The flame atop his head attests that he is the same figure he always was.

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Jude is sometimes pictured with a scroll or a codex, references to the notion that he was the author of a brief epistle that is included in the New Testament. Two figures on the left in Figure 5 exhibit this feature, which serves to authorize the identity and status of the figure as Jude the apostle, brother, and intimate follower of Jesus. The power of the connection, which is asserted multiple times by the iconographical devices in the statuary, underscores

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10 <https://www.catholiccompany.com/getfed/four-patron-saints-of-impossible-causes/>. Accessed June 30, 2018.

11 An enduring source for Jude lore is Voragine (1993, 2:260–65). Modern descriptions draw from a very large body of devotional piety—see Duston (2011, 1, 3).



Figure 5 A variety of twentieth-century statuary of Saint Jude. Collection of the author.

the authority of the saint and the efficacy of petitioning him. These devices endorse the power of Jude as a relay, an intercessor whose link to the source of power is fundamentally iconic, operating as a kind of mirror to relay the devotee's supplications to no other than Jesus himself. That idea is especially at work in Jude's modern use of the image of Jesus.

The likeness of Jesus appears on the medallion that Jude wears or holds, or sometimes as a bust he grasps in his hand (see Fig. 5). Like the flame on Jude's head, this is in fact a modern iconographical invention, latter-day attempts to anchor the shadowy saint figure to an apostolic identity. Earlier images of Jude by a variety of artists, such as Giuseppe Ribera, Georges de la Tour, Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyke, and Bertal Thorvaldsen, do not include the medallion but identify the figure by using the scriptures or the lance.¹² The medallion about Jude's neck appears to have been invented in the modern revival of the cult of Jude, which began in the nineteenth century and took root in the United States with the founding of a major shrine to the saint in Chicago in 1929. The visual association of Jude with Jesus helped legitimate his cult, denying its novelty by grounding it in the life of Jesus and serving to disambiguate Jude and Judas, the betrayer of Christ. In fact, the matter of Jude's likeness to Jesus is ancient. In his *Church History*, written about 325, Eusebius told the story of King Abgar of Edessa. Abgar invited Jesus to visit him to cure an illness (Eusebius 1926–1932, 1:chap. 8). Eusebius makes no mention of the various images that later traditions included in the story, though he does reproduce a Syriac letter that said the king experienced a vision upon the face of the disciple when he laid eyes on him. But eventually a story developed that Jude conveyed an image of Christ on a cloth to the king. In the thirteenth century, Voragine's *Golden Legend* provided medieval Europe with a biography of Jude that combined accounts by Eusebius, John of Damascus, and others to integrate the cloth image into the older narrative (1993, 2:261).

The circular and classical profile format of the medallion image of Jesus used in twentieth-century portrayals of Jude may have been a concession to the medium of sculpture, since depicting a cloth image of Jesus was not easily done in three dimensions. Thus, the carved medallion may have been introduced to represent the old story. The medallion appears in perhaps the oldest modern version of Jude produced at the request of Father Jaime Tort, founder of American devotion to Jude, for the Chicago shrine in 1929 (see image in Orsi 1996, 10). A comic book produced by the Shrine in 1954 indicates that Tort had the figure based on a small Spanish statue (DePrada 1954, 9). Perhaps to lend the image a historical veracity tenuously linked to the story of Abgar, Tort or the producer of the sculpture derived the medallion image from the visual tradition of a Byzantine emerald bearing the engraved profile of Jesus. In the early 1490s, this gem was supposedly sent to Pope Innocent VIII by the Ottoman Sultan Bajazet to pay the pontiff to keep the sultan's brother, also his rival, captive in Rome. Many copies or approximations were struck in medals and painted or printed by European artists, who considered the gem to be an ancient and accurate portrayal of Jesus' likeness.¹³ This visual tradition came quickly to be combined with another late medieval piece of visual and literary lore. The letter of Publius Lentulus, purporting to be a contemporary eyewitness description of the face of Jesus, according to one tradition, had so moved Tiberius Caesar when

12 In their 1874 product catalog, the international and very popular purveyor of Catholic devotional imagery Benziger Brothers did not include any imagery of Jude for sale among the hundreds of medals, lithographs, statuary, and pictures of Catholic saints (Benziger Brothers 1874).

13 For an example and brief discussion of one such painting from around 1600, see <http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=102&Desc=Christ-of-the-Emerald-Icons-|English-School>. Accessed July 3, 2018.

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he read it that he directed an image to be made of the description—the emerald that Bajazet sent to Innocent VIII. The more likely origin of the (now lost) carved likeness of Jesus was in ninth- or tenth-century Byzantium, when such an image and story might have been used to defend the veneration of icons during and after the iconoclastic controversy. In any case, the image and description were conjoined in the early sixteenth-century print reproduced here (see Fig. 6).¹⁴ Appearing about 1511, the well-known print by Hans Burgkmair points to the source of the round medallion bearing the profile of Jesus used in Saint Jude iconography. Portrait medals of Jesus began to appear in the 1490s.¹⁵ It is worth noting that the pairing of the letter and the image of Jesus as in Figure 6 is another striking instance of the collaboration of word and image. We may speak of the two categories as generatively entangled in Figure 6 since it enfolds word and image in order to make them bolster one another. The letter did not appear until the late Middle Ages and describes a long established pictorial formula for portraying Jesus, which tends to confirm for the pious the letter's historical authenticity. Taken as credible, the letter may then vouch for the accuracy of the portrait tradition. Placing the two together only enhances their collaboration.

The matter of Christ's likeness is also handled another way in Jude imagery. According to the Syriac letter that Eusebius reprinted in his account of the visit of Thaddeus to Abgar, the king beheld a vision screened on the face of Thaddeus, though what he saw goes undetailed.¹⁶ As one scholar noted, however, the result was what was important for the pious function of the tale: the king recognized in the disciple the power to heal his malady and submitted himself to the visitor's care (Dobschütz 1899, 103). In the hands of later iconophiles, that vision, which was not described in the Syriac letter, came to be an image that anticipated the story of the Veil of Veronica (see Voragine 1993, 2:261–62). Another modern feature of Jude iconography contends that Jude bore a family resemblance to Jesus, since he is sometimes taken to be a relative of Christ. The two figures on the right in Figure 5 bear the customary appearance of Jesus. The practice of portraying the face of Jude as the face of Jesus has become a widespread iconographical feature.

The density of variations in Jude's lore makes it easy to dismiss claims to historical fact. Indeed, the prominence of different versions seems to exist in direct proportion to the near absence of factual documentation. Yet the ambivalence of the lore may be what commends it to devotional practice by virtue of flexibility and adaptation to differing circumstances. Indeed, as pointed out above, the paucity of historical fact has even been folded into the devotion by the claim that Jude is the forgotten saint, which inclines him to remember those who have been forgotten as victims of hopeless causes. The plurality of the lore encourages investment in the saint's story as a rich archive that can be used to authorize diverse narratives. Catholic bookstores, shrines, newsletters, and the Internet distribute all kinds of information and imagery, supplying the archive that offers manifold points of connection for the formation of narratives among the devout. These sources of material build on more tradition and still active forms, such as pilgrimage, parish priests, teachers, religious retreats, and family members and friends. We can begin to assemble these sources into an encompassing network in which imagery operates as focal object: Archive, narrative, image, disposition or situation

14 On the history and imagery of Veronica, Abgar, and the Letter of Publius Lentulus, see Finaldi (2000, 74–101), who points out (96) that the Burgkmair print actually identifies the author as Pontius Pilate rather than Publius Lentulus. For a discussion of the letter, see Lutz (1975); on the Veronica as a paradigm in the anatomy of visual fields, see Morgan (2012, 56–67).

15 See Finaldi (2000, 96) for an example; Hill (1920, 16–29) provides extended discussion.

16 Discussed in Kuryluk (1991, 39). The most exhaustive historical study of the Edessa image remains Dobschütz (1899, 102–96). For recent work, see Kessler and Wolf (1998).

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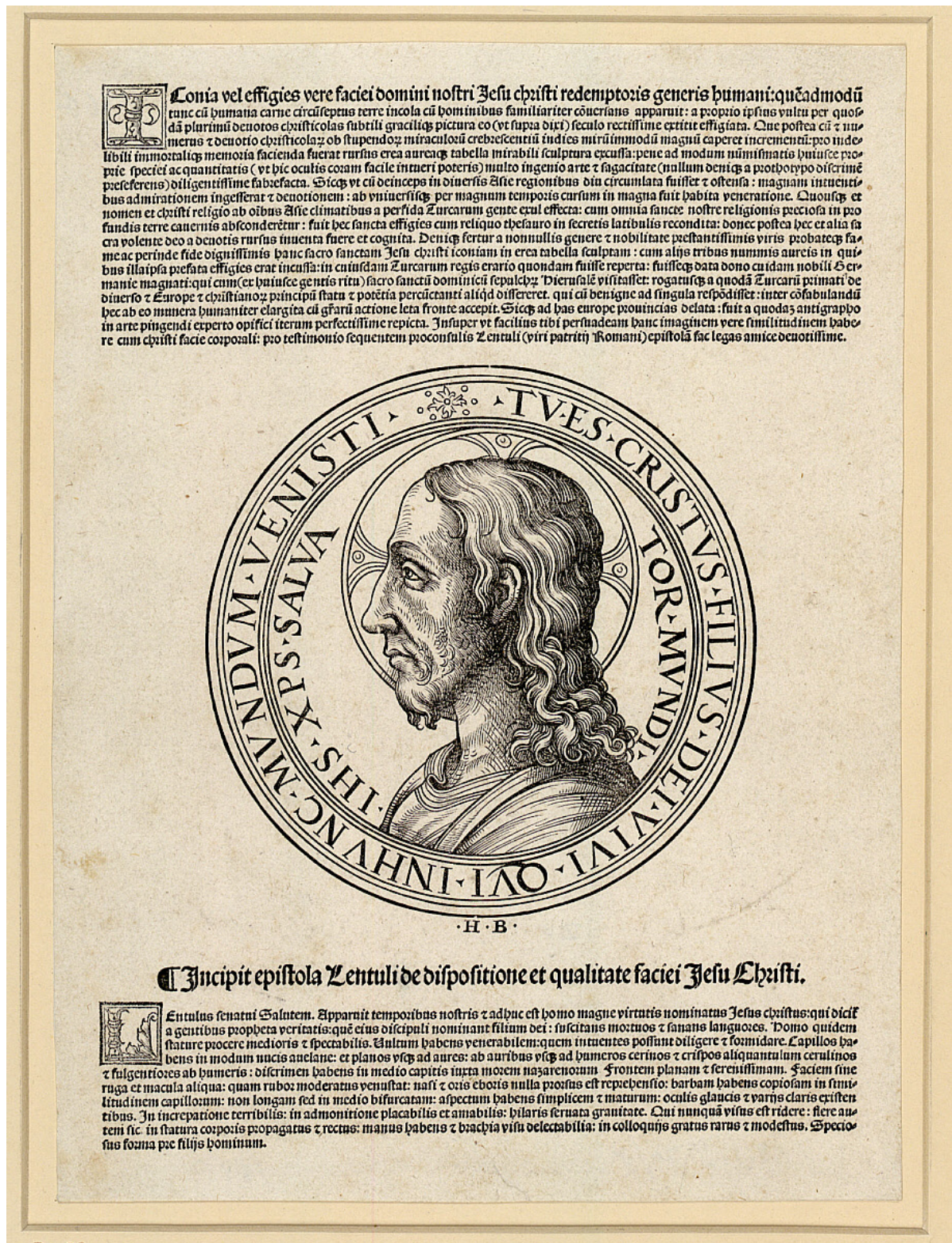


Figure 6 Hans Burgkmair, Portrait of Christ with the text of the so-called Lentulus Letter, ca. 1511, woodcut. The Albertina Museum, Vienna, <https://www.albertina.at/>.

of the devotee, and rituals of consecration, such as a blessed or indulgenced image, an image acquired at a shrine or on pilgrimage, received as a gift from a priest or family member, or on the occasion of making a vow or expressing thanks for the fulfillment of one.¹⁷

People tell their stories and petition the saint using his image as their focal point, the node of their relation to their patron, to his sacred story, to their community, and to their own lives. The image is not merely an illustration or an example, but a presence that devotees report in their accounts of what the saint has done for them. The image, in other words, becomes the medium of lore, making immanent what people have heard by performing the work of the saint. Robert Orsi has examined American devotion to Saint Jude in an important study that makes this very clear. A woman from Chicago whose car stalled in a very dangerous traffic situation reported that “my eyes came in contact with my statue of Saint Jude” on her dashboard, purchased from the Shrine to Saint Jude in the city. The car started as a truck roared past, demonstrating to the woman that the saint had caused her car to stop in order to protect from the approaching vehicle (Orsi 1996, 95–96). Orsi goes on to cite a number of instances in which votaries indicate that it is the face of the saint in statues and on prayer cards to which they look for help. “The devout,” Orsi asserts, “believe that images of Jude can see, and they address their prayers directly to the saint’s eyes” (97).

Orsi also observes repeatedly that people respond to images of the saint gazing “down” comfortably on them. Indeed, several of the figures in Figure 5 evince the downward cast look of Jude’s eyes, suggesting that the relationship that the image fashions with viewers acknowledges their subject position as beneath him, looking upward to him for aid from the lowliness of their humbled circumstances. Not only the iconography of the image of Jude, but his very appearance and the gaze he configures engage the viewer in light of the power and favor the saint is in the position to command for the votary’s benefit. “This may seem strange, I know,” one informant told Orsi, but “a lot of times I’ll look at his face [on a statue] and I’ll see if he’s smiling, everything will be OK” (Orsi 1996, 97). One might imagine the expression on the face of a statue as static, but engaging with the saint through the image has as much to do with setting and personal situation as with the artifact itself. The image changes within the encompassing matrix of need. The ambivalence of the archive and the polyphonic narratives and iconography suit the range of needs that devotees bring to the saint.

The Cultural Work of Word and Image in Devotional Piety

Devotional piety like the cult of Saint Jude operates in this way: people see the imagery and realize the saint presents himself in the image as looking like “what people say.” The features of the image correspond to what people have heard and serve thereby to engage word and image in a mutually affirming relationship, erasing the historical contingency of the saint and fixing the cult to an ancient origin. The plurality and inconsistency of motifs are made to serve devotional practices. Diversity of iconography endows the cult with many connectors. A saint with many facets is one with broader utility and access. In an analogous manner, images of Our Lady of Fátima concretize for viewers what they are prepared to believe the children actually saw. The randomness and unprecedentedness of the actual apparition is replaced by solidity and purpose or message that cater to supplication and devotional access.

In both instances, the imagery serves to anchor an elusive, remote, or inaccessible event.

17 I have explored the function of visual archives in religious visual piety in Morgan (2012, 59) and in Morgan (2015, 185–95).

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The truth of the original is not captured in a trace such as a relic or imprint, but in the way an image brings the lore to the devotee, tailoring a close fit to need and situation. The cults of Fátima and Jude rely on the intimate connection that the imagery enables. The original vision and historical person are only part of the power that devotion to the subject commands. What matters much more is how Our Lady and the saint respond to petitions. The image anchors the evanescent or elusive origin and brings the devotee to the ongoing reality of the saint. The stories or witness reports create the basis for an image to take shape. In effect, the verbal lore authorizes the imagery's likeness and the image provides a focal object for devotees to receive what the saint has to say to them. Word and image work together to create a presence that matches the saint's power with the existential needs of the faithful. Lore and imagery are focal objects for devotees to access the saints through an entire ecology, which consists of the history of images and stories old and new, the sacred spaces in which images are venerated and stories shared, the community of devotion, and the institutional Church and its figures, who assert what control they can over popular piety. To see the cult image is to hear the saint's story, and vice versa, and in this entangled encounter to enter into a relationship with all of these actors, who in turn act as a collective agency upon devotees.

The variations in the story and iconography of Jude and the inconsistencies in reports and ineffability of the Fátima apparitions do not undermine the appeal or efficacy of each devotion. The entanglement of discourse and vision renders an accord that makes the event apprehensible. How the entanglement of word and image accomplish this is the focus of my interest. By drawing attention to gaps and inconsistencies in the record, I do not aim to falsify the account or dismiss it as delusory or deceptive, even when there is clear evidence that this does occur. My argument, rather, is that the generative entanglement of discourse and vision in imagery and lore is what makes the original event into a reliable devotional artifact. Unresolved or indeterminate perceptions are something that human beings want to make interpretable and use recognized patterns to resolve.

The difference between Fátima and Jude corresponds to two pervasive sources of Catholic piety: visions and apparitions, on the one hand, and hagiography and collective memory, on the other. In the first type, motifs seek stability in order to resolve the inherent ambivalence of an ineffable experience. In the second, motifs may accumulate and co-exist. In the first instance, once an image is in place as a motif in narrative and devotional art, which work together to confirm the authenticity, or better, utility, of the image, the motif tends to resist reversion to the state of indeterminacy because human perception and devotional need prefer intelligibility over ambivalence or obscurity. In the second case, devotion may fix on one aspect of the saint's story and imagery for the sake of a personal connection in petitions as the focus of an enduring relationship. Religion is not about empirical veracity, but about the relationships mediated by words and images (as well as food, dress, spaces, sounds, bodies, and their ritual performance). The critical study of religions attends to the seams or traces of construction that craft meaning by means of word and image precisely because the scholar wishes to understand how signs, artifacts, lore, and forms of embodiment do religious work.

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