

Traces of the Virgin Mary

Tatiana
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Podolinská
Ed.



in Post- Communist Europe

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Photo: *Virgin Mary and religious statues
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01 Traces of the Virgin Mary in Post- Communist Europe

Tatiana Zachar
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'A lady came up to me and said she would pray to that Virgin Mary of Mine, because Hers did not help her. And so I asked her how many mothers Jesus had.

We have Our Lady of Lourdes, Fatima... as well as the one from Guadalupe. Because She always appears in order to be close to the people She appears to. And if Lord God wishes so, there will also be Our Lady of Bratislava!'

(Bratislava, June 14, 2019, code of narrative 08TZP03Z80, Catholic woman, 80-years-old, collected by T.Z.P.).¹

Even though Jesus had only one Mother, and there is only one Virgin Mary, tracing her mundane faces and varieties of her devotion across the centuries and continents has led us to the conclusion that there are as many Marys as there are people and nations who are devoted to her. Along with the spread of Christianity and her role became more central. Her presence more visible, and her voice more audible.

With the help of mass-media communication, growing mobility and new forms of transport in the 20th century, She, as the Mother of Jesus, became the leading figure of global missionary activities, enchainning the world with her public and globally addressed messages (Chapman 2000). Her popularity at the beginning of the 21st century is sometimes compared to those of 'mega-stars' (Hermkens et al. 2009: 1).

Fuelling modern religiosity with emotions and miracles, She became the *Great Enchantress* of the post-modern world, the religious and spiritual response to the secularism, consumerism and rationalism of modern societies.

She began to appear directly in the middle of turbulent times: the era of war and conflict (Blackbourn 1994). For ultramodern 'risk-societies' (Beck 2004), which are characterised by growing

¹ The contribution is output of the research project VEGA 2/0060/19 *Ethnographic Research of Non-Religion and Secularism in Modern Slovak Society Life-Trajectories and Stories*.

inequalities and a global share of fear, She comes with an unbeatable offer of divine protection and the ultimate calming hug of All-Mother.

She speaks in the tongues of people she addresses and appears to be perfectly informed and familiar with the current geopolitical situation. Her predictions prevent (global and local) catastrophes. She speaks in the name of those who are weak and live on the periphery (Turner 1974), those who are overlooked, discriminated against and marginalised.

From a certain point of view, She is also a sort of a *Trouble-Maker* and *Rebel*, because She is the vehicle for the rise of spontaneous grassroots and fresh bottom-up streams and varieties of popular Christianity (as opposed to 'normative religion' represented and controlled by the official Catholic Church).

Her approach is addressed, sensitive, and intimate, touching the private lives of real people. For individual believers, the Virgin Mary represents the prototype of the Ideal Mother, offering them private unconditional love, understanding and perpetual help, thus substituting non-functional social networks within the family or a broader community. In this way, She is the *24-hours available mentor and tutor*, prepared to listen and give advice. And She is constantly 'on-line', instantly and easily reachable via prayer or simple thought. Every connection with Her is unique, personal and non-repeatable, yet transferrable, comparable and reaffirmed by collective consensus of people and nations adoring Her all over the world.

From a scientific point of view, the Virgin Mary cannot be traced. But it is possible for us to trace Her based on human reflections of Her. We can talk to people or seek testimonies of those who believe in her activities in the world, which cause, for example, miraculous healings and other miracles. We can trace statistics of how many people in the world are on the move because of Mary. We can explore how her messages impact the Catholic Church, including the Pope and the highest clergy elite. We can

trace the ways how people believe in her potential to share her *sacrum* with shrines, statues, images and other devotional objects. We can trace the ways in which her devotion has changed the symbolic map of the world, giving importance to the places which were formerly considered nowhere. We can trace the ways of her inculturation by local people, being venerated as a European, Indian, African, Asian or Roma woman (see Fig. 1.19, Fig. 1.20 and Fig. 10.10), or the intriguing ability of people to accommodate Her at almost every place, time, condition or circumstance (see Fig. 1.15) so that She can be identified with the pagan Goddess Mother, as well as the Mother of the Universe and all extra-terrestrial civilisations. We are thus tracing not the faces of the Virgin Mary, but the faces of people who believe in Her as a transcendent being, the Mother of Christ and ultimate Love.

The Virgin Mother

Her person is veiled with the mystery of being both the Immaculate (ever) Virgin and the Human Mother of Jesus, the Son of the Celestial God Father. Her aspect of being both a Virgin and a Mother has led scholars of religious studies to make multiple phenomenological comparisons with other pre-Christian and non-Christian female deities of the Great Mother Goddess type,² as well as to explore how Mary was appropriated to various historical and cultural contexts worldwide.³

2 For a comparison of the Virgin Mary with the Moon Goddess of the colonial Maya see Sigal 2000; for a comparison of the Virgin Mary with the cult of *Baba* [the one giving birth, but also the Great Mother] in Serbia see Petrović 2001 and Čajkanović 1994a; for a comparison of the Virgin Mary with the pagan Mother Goddess in Hungary see Povedák 2014, etc.

3 For instance, F. X. Clooney (2005) shows how Hindu Goddess traditions can be drawn into a fruitful conversation with Christian tradition, taking a fresh look at the veneration and theology of Mary, the Mother of Jesus and Mother of God, as displayed in three famous Marian hymns from the Greek, Latin, and Tamil traditions. For syncretism of Hinduism and Roman Catholicism in South India see Bloomer 2018. For *Our Lady of Lavang*, which is the Vietnamese version of the Western-European Virgin Mary see Ninh 2017.

It is also interesting that the Third Ecumenical Council (431 AD) was held at the Church of Mary in Ephesus, Anatolia. The council condemned the teachings of Nestorius on the Virgin Mary for being only the *Christotokos* [Birth Giver of Christ] and proclaimed Her to be the *Theotokos* [Birth Giver of God].⁴ Some scholars believe that Mary was declared the Mother of God and was allowed to be venerated because of the need of the Hellenistic world for a heavenly feminine principle as a compromise with pagans so that Christianity could become acceptable. It is no coincidence that the Council was held in Ephesus, which used to be the most prominent Hellenic centre of the cult of Greek Artemis (cf. Rigoglioso 2010).⁵

The interesting, centuries-lasting process of cultural appropriation of the Virgin Mary is documented in connection with the famous (also Her first officially approved apparition) in the form of *Virgen de Guadalupe* [Virgin of Guadalupe] in Mexico. She appeared in what is now Mexico City, on the holy hill of *Tepeyac*, dedicated to *Tonantzín*, the Mother Earth Goddess of the Aztecs in 1531. According to the accounts, during the apparition, the young woman, speaking to peasant Juan Diego in his native *Nahuatl* language, identified herself as: 'I am the ever Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God'. She was said to have asked for a Christian church to be built at that site in her honour. At that time, the seer, Juan Diego, was having a tough time negotiating and accommodating 'his vision' both into the Colonial Hispanic Christian and native Aztec context (Mong 2018). As a consequence, in 1531, nine million indigenous Aztecs converted to Christianity and embraced Catholicism (Horsfall 2000). Between 1924 and 1935, anti-clerical revolutionaries in Mexico depicted *La Virgen de Guadalupe* on their banner as a

4 For more details see <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum03.htm> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

5 In her study, M. Rigoglioso (2010) claims that 'various female deities of Graeco-Roman antiquity are the first to provide evidence that primary goddesses were conceived of as virgin mothers in the earliest layers of their cults'. For Marian devotion in Early Christian time see Shoemaker 2016.

symbol of the revolution, and Mary's church in Guadalupe served as the focal point for revolutionary demonstrations (Perry and Echeverria 1988). To this day, Mexicans know the Virgin of Guadalupe as not just another form of the Mother Mary (Socoro Castañeda-Liles 2018), but as a specifically Mexican Queen of Heaven.⁶

Marian Centuries

Catholic Church position

Following the apparition in Lourdes (1858), the Virgin Mary became not just a herald of modern history of the Catholic Church but also of Europe and of the Catholic world in terms of being a messenger of God's will and words on a global scale. At the same time, Mary turned out to be the one who publicly spreads fear globally, predicting and naming global threats and catastrophes. Using the mouths of illiterate children and innocent girls, she addresses the messages to nations and the highest clergy representatives as well, in order to act upon and prevent global catastrophes.⁷

Mary certainly played a central role in shaping the Catholic dogmatic theology of the 20th century. The most topical issue of 19th century Marian theology was Mary's purity and sinlessness, which resulted into the dogma of *Immaculate Conception*. The Catholic Church teaches that God acted upon Mary in the first moment of her conception, keeping her 'immaculate' since 'Mary was conceived without sin, by the merits of the Cross of Christ' (dogma promulgated in 1854).⁸ Interestingly enough, on March 25, 1858, in Lourdes, on the day of the sixteenth apparition, Bernadette asked the 'Lady' Her name.

6 For more details, see Wolf 1958 or Matovina 2019. For revitalisation of Mexican native cultures through the cult of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* and recent native stories see Hlúšek 2010, 2014.

7 The catastrophic language of the Virgin Mary is echoed in papal documents, see for example encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris* (1937): 'We pray the Lord to enlighten them that they may abandon the slippery path which will precipitate one and all to ruin and catastrophe' (<https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius11/p11divin.htm> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

8 See <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ineff.htm> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

The 'Lady' replied in the local dialect: *Que soy era Immaculada Counceptiou*, which means 'I am the Immaculate Conception'.⁹

In 1904, in the first year of his pontificate, Pope Pius X celebrated the previous century's proclamation of the dogma of the 'Immaculate Conception' with the encyclical *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*.¹⁰ In 1950, the dogma of the *Assumption* was defined by Pope Pius XII.¹¹ In 1964, at the close of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965),¹² fifteen hundred years after the Council of Ephesus, Pope Paul VI formally declared Mary the 'Mother of the Church' and invited Catholics to invoke Mary's help under that title.¹³ The Second Vatican Council recommended the use of the Rosary to all the sons of the Church and dedicated October to *Our Lady of the Rosary*.¹⁴ Pope John Paul II oriented the Catholic Church towards the renewal of Marian veneration. He consecrated the world to the *Immaculate Heart of Mary* and he himself composed a prayer for what he called an 'Act of Entrustment',¹⁵ addressing her as the 'Mother of All Individuals and Peoples'. In 2005, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the special prayer to *Our Lady of Guadalupe* in front of her image in the Vatican gardens.¹⁶ In 2018, Pope Francis, whose devotion to Mary is well-known, established a new feast for the Catholic Church devoted to Mary as the 'Mother of the Church', to be celebrated on the Monday after Pentecost.¹⁷

9 See <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/message-lourdes/> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

10 See <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius10/p10imcon.htm> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

11 *The Assumption* (Lat. 'assumptio', [a taking]) was defined as a dogma by the Catholic Church in 1950, when Pope Pius XII defined it *ex cathedra* in his Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* (http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost-constitutions/documents/hf_p-xii_apc_19501101_munificentissimus-deus.html, accessed on October 5, 2019).

12 For the documents of the Second Vatican Council see http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm (accessed on October 5, 2019)

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html (accessed on October 5, 2019).

16 See <https://www.sancta.org/benedictxviprayer.html> (accessed on October 7, 2019).

17 See <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2018/03/03/pope-francis-establishes-new-feast-mary-mother-church/> (accessed on October 7, 2019).

Following and Echoing the Virgin Mary of Fatima

When looking back at 20th century Mariology¹⁸ as well as papal acts and documents, it could be stated that both her ‘commands’ and predictions were fulfilled. The Catholic Church followed and echoed the messages of the Virgin Mary as revealed in Lourdes (1858) and especially in Fatima (1917).

According to The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Fatima is undoubtedly the most prophetic of modern apparitions. The first and second parts of the ‘secret’ (...) refer particularly to the frightening vision of hell, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Second World War and, finally, the prediction of the immense damage that Russia would do to humanity by abandoning the Christian faith and embracing Communist totalitarianism.”¹⁹

Undoubtedly, despite the pressure of the unceasing interest by masses of pilgrims heading to the place of the apparition, which had been unrecognised for decades, on October 1930, with the knowledge and consent of Pope Pius XI, the apparition of Fatima was officially approved and the cult of *Our Lady of Fatima* was officially permitted.²⁰

Pope Pius XII, whose Episcopal consecration took place on May 13, 1917, the date of Our Lady’s first apparition at Fatima, known as ‘the Pope of Fatima’, said: ‘The time for doubting Fatima has passed and the time for action is now.’²¹ In 1940, Pope Pius XII spoke of Fatima for the first time in an official Papal text, his encyclical *Saeculo Exeunte Octavo*, which was written to encourage the Church in Portugal to further its foreign missionary activity.²²

18 The part of the dogmatic theology on the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Jesus.

19 See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html (accessed on October 5, 2019).

20 See <https://fatima.org/about/fatima-the-facts/approvals-by-the-popes/> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

21 Ibid.

22 See <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12saecu.htm> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

The catastrophic language of Fatima messages has been echoed in many papal documents of the 20th century. In 1917, the Mary of Fatima determined Russia to be the main threat for the coming century, and ‘her errors’ spread throughout the world. Finally though, she predicted her own triumph: ‘To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of reparation on First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.’²³

Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (1937), gave an urgent warning against Russian Bolshevism and atheist Communism.²⁴ The consecration of the world to the *Immaculate Heart* was accomplished by Pope Pius XII (1942), Pope John Paul II (1984),²⁵ Pope Benedict XVI (2010) and Pope Francis (2013), with Pius XII also specifically consecrating ‘the peoples of Russia’ in 1952, sometimes worded as ‘acts of entrustment’.

Pope John Paul II exhibited his approval of Fatima many times. He visited Fatima three times – in 1982, 1991 and 2000. During his 2000 visit, he beatified the two deceased seers, Jacinta and Francisco.²⁶

During his homily at the mass in Fatima on May 13, 1982, Pope John Paul II adapted the language and meaning of the original

23 See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html (accessed on October 5, 2019).

24 See <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius11/p11divin.htm> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

25 According to some unofficial web pages, ‘the consecration of the world in 1984 caused the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe’. See <https://www.maria.sk/zjavenia-panny-marie-vo-fatime> (accessed on October 3, 2019).

26 See <https://www.fatima.pt/en> (accessed on October 7, 2019).

messages into modern times and reiterated Her appeal as still urgent and current: 'The Message is addressed to every human being... Because of the continuing increase of sin and dangers such as nuclear war, which now threaten humanity, the Message of Fatima is more urgent and relevant in our time than it was when Our Lady appeared 65 years ago.'²⁷

In the 21st century, Pope Benedict XVI continued the apostolic journeys to Marian shrines such as Lourdes and Fatima to support their messages. On May 12, 2019, a papal spokesman stated that Pope Francis had given the green light to Catholics to organise pilgrimages to Medjugorje,²⁸ a site of alleged Marian apparitions, even though the Church had not yet given its verdict on the apparition's authenticity.²⁹ Even though the pope's authorisation of pilgrimages to the site was not to be understood as an 'authentication' of the alleged apparitions, this papal statement would definitively increase the popularity of the new star rising in the sky of places of pilgrimage in Europe in the 21st century – Medjugorje (Bosnia and Herzegovina).³⁰

The Geography of Apparitions

The 20th century is sometimes called the 'Marian century'. Out of approximately 918 apparitions documented since 41 AD (Hierzenberger and Nedomanski 1993: 553), as many as 210 apparitions were reported between 1928 and 1971 (Scheer 2006; Lais 1989).

27 Information retrieved from the page of The Fatima Center (Trade Name of the National Committee for the National Pilgrim Virgin of Canada <https://fatima.org/about/fatima-the-facts/approvals-by-the-popes/> (accessed on October 5, 2019).

28 'Medjugorje' = [Bosn. *Međugorje*, i.e. In Between the Mountains].

29 See <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-permits-pilgrimages-to-medjugorje-as-apparitions-continue-to-be-studied-75246> (accessed on October 3, 2019).

30 Within the area of the Crnica Hill known as Podbrdo, six children saw a beautiful young woman with a little child in her arms. For quite a while now, six witnesses testify firmly under oath that since June 24, 1981, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the 'Gospa', as she is affectionately known here, appears to them every day up to the present. <https://www.medjugorje.ws/sk/messages/docs-short-history/> (accessed on October 5, 2019). See also Zimdars-Schwarz 1991.

When it comes to officially approved apparitions in Europe, the Virgin's favourite destinations appear to be Italy and France, followed by the Catholic part of southern Germany,³¹ Portugal, Belgium and Poland.³² Considering the traditional hold of faith in Spain, Slovakia and Ireland, the number of Marian apparitions is relatively small. There have been apparitions in western Ukraine,³³ in Hungary and in the Balkans as well (Medjugorje being the most notable exception). Officially recognised and canonically approved by the Roman Catholic Church, such apparitions include *Our Lady of Guadalupe* (1531, Tepeyac in Mexico); *Our Lady of Šiluva* (1608, Šiluva, Lithuania), *Our Lady of Laus* (1664–1718, Saint-Étienne-le-Laus, France), *Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal* (1830, Convent of Rue du Bac, Paris), *Our Lady of La Salette* (1846) in France; *Our Lady of Lourdes* (1858 Lourdes, in France), *Our Lady of Pontmain* ('Our Lady of Hope', 1871, France), *Our Lady of Gietrzwałd* (1877, Poland), *Our Lady of Knock* (1879, County Mayo, Ireland), *Our Lady of Fátima* (1917, Portugal),³⁴ *Our Lady of Beauraing* (1932–1933, Belgium), and *Our Lady of Banneux* ('Virgin of the Poor', 1933, Belgium). It should be mentioned that there have been three apparitions approved by the Coptic Orthodox Church (*Our Lady of Zeitoun*; *Our Lady of Warraq* and *Our Lady of Assiut*) and three apparitions approved by the Anglican Communion (*Our Lady of Lourdes*, *Lady of Walsingham* and *Our Lady of Yankalilla*).³⁵

31 Altötting, the Bavarian town, has been Germany's most significant place of pilgrimage venerating the Virgin Mary. More than a million pilgrims a year visit the Chapel of Grace (built around 700) and its Black Madonna (Our Lady of Altötting).

32 Shrine dedicated to the Black Madonna in Jasna Góra Monastery. For more details, see Niedźwiedz 2016.

33 See Halemba 2016.

34 See Sered 1991.

35 For a complete collection of all 34 known and accredited apparitions of the Virgin Mary see Varghese 2011.

Modern Europe and Mary as the *Great Enchantress*

Modernity has been defined as the search for new forms of social and cultural order in the era of collapsing pre-modern societal structure (Lužný 2005: 71). In the sociology of religion, this concept was operationalised into secularisation theory, which predicted not only a constant diminishing of the role of the Church, but also that of the God in modern society. The *disenchanted world* has lost its external authorities, either in the form of God or the Church. 20th century Europeans faced serious economic uncertainties (economic crises and transformations) and two world wars during which the boundaries for defining morale and humanity were overcome. The inability of modern society to offer other, solid (i.e. transcendentally embedded) values resulted in intense feelings of insecurity. Thanks to mass media, people feel that they live in a catastrophic society – *risk society* (Beck 2004) which produces global risks. Even though these risks are locally invisible, they have the form of an omnipresent modern-day threat.

According to some theorists on religion, the logical answer is the *re-sacralisation* of Europe, accompanied by religious revivalism. The other accompanying phenomenon is the *de-privatisation* of religion (Casanova 1994) and the growth of non-traditional forms of religiousness and spirituality. Many authors point out the significant increase in ‘non-church religiousness’, when speaking about ‘alternative re-sacralisation of Europe’ (Knoblauch 2003).

Marian devotion seems to be antimodern or resisting modernity sites (Hermkens et al. 2009: 2). Others think about Marian devotion in terms of *alternative modernity* (Orsi 2009) causing not only the sacralisation of Europe, but also modernisation of the Catholic Church.³⁶

³⁶ After the Second Vatican Council, Marian apparitions and piety challenged the modernisation of the Church and authorised the resistance of Catholics who objected to the changes (Orsi 2009: 217).

D. Blackbourn (1994) convincingly ties Marian devotions and vision to popular fears, not just of war and scarcity, but also of a tangible loss of traditional systems of social organisation, particularly the authority of the Church. Blackbourn supports his position by calling on examples of Marian apparitions in Lourdes, Pontmain, La Salette and Tuscany, as well as other locations that experienced similar threats to tradition.

Marian devotion in modern era has proven to be flexible, going with the times, being able to feed increasing spiritual hunger and absorb both traditional popular religious movements as modern (alternative) forms of spirituality. From a certain point of view, Mary profited from the failure of the Catholic Church to subdue popular religious movements and make room for new forms of religiosity and spirituality. The same concerns the inability of European nation states to repress both non-traditional religious movements and popular forms of religiosity connected with the overall transformation of religiosity in the modern era. Older Marian devotion and apparitions are likewise translated and reshaped, ‘fitted into modernity’s ontological singular’ (Orsi 2009: 217). In addition, the popularity of Marian devotion in the 20th century was nourished by new, modern visions of the Virgin Mary that have continued between the two World Wars and the Cold War, offering devotees new fresh sources of miracles as a demonstration of Mary’s presence and power.

Modern Mary in Europe

Mary on the Move

Modern Mary is *global* and *transnational*. Rather than addressing herself to local veneration, as in pre-modern Marian apparitions, the Virgin delivers ‘a general call to all humankind to repent and be saved’ (Turner and Turner 1978: 209). *Our Lady of Fatima*, originally featured in a local Portuguese setting, was relocated to the United States and appropriated by American devotees. Subsequently, Fatima travelled to countries such as Papua New Guinea,

where she was appropriated by, among others, an independence movement (Hermkens et al. 2009: 7). In the 20th century, the Virgin Mary literally conquered and *colonised the Globe* because She had reached all continents. There are Marian apparitions in Israel, Syria, Russia, China, India, Vietnam (*Our Lady of Lavang*),³⁷ Philippines, Australia, Madagascar, Japan (*Our Lady of Akita*, 1973) and Africa (*Our Lady of Zeitoun* in Cario – Coptic Orthodox Church and *Mother of the Word*, Kibeho, Rwanda).³⁸ There are apparitions in Ecuador (*Our Lady of the Good Event*, Quito, 1594), Nicaragua (*Our Lady of Cuapa*, 1980), Venezuela (*Our Lady of Los Tepes*, 1984), Sri Lanka (*Our Lady of Lanka*, Ragama)³⁹ and in many other countries. The U.S. leads the rest of the world in the number of apparitions,⁴⁰ although most of them are unrecognised to date.

Similarly, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* [*La Virgen Morena*, i.e. The Brown or Dark Virgin] became not only the patroness of Mexico but also the Empress of the Americas, from Chile to Canada. *Our Lady of Guadalupe* thus reigns over two continents (Hall 2004; Kingsbury and Chestnut 2018; Elizondo 1997; Bushnell 1958). Following the conversion of many indigenous nations, Mary became not only a symbol of socio-religious occupation, but also a Pan-American symbol enabling social mobility (Fawrot Peterson 1991). It can also be stated that *Our Lady of Guadalupe* touches the European continent as well, since Her veneration has started to be a common issue in Europe, too (see Fig. 1.15, Fig. 1.17 and Fig. 1.18).⁴¹

³⁷ See Ninh 2017.

³⁸ For a more detailed global map of Marian apparitions distribution see <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2015/11/151113-virgin-mary-sightings-map/> (accessed on October 7, 2019).

³⁹ See Stirrat 1982.

⁴⁰ For instance, 'Rainbow Madonna' 1996, a client at the Seminole Finance Corporation of Clearwater, Florida. See Vásquez and Marquardt 2000.

⁴¹ For instance, in Slovakia, a modern sculpture of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* and Don Juan Diego can be found in the garden of the *Exaltation of the Holy Cross Church* in Petržalka, Bratislava) (Fig. 1.17 and Fig. 1.18).

⁴² According to statistics on www.medjugorje.org (accessed on April 15, 2019). See also Vokunic 1992.

Through the *transnational* use of Marian images, sculptures and other devotional objects, people have become interconnected. They are globally *enchained* (Chapman 2000). In this way, She is 'on the move' and touches devotees not only at the original places of apparitions, but also at revitalised traditional places of Marian devotion, as well as at modern national and regional 'copies' of the modern places of Marian apparitions (Fig. 1.12 and Fig. 1.14). She also meets her devotees directly in the privacy of their homes (Fig. 1.9). As a continuation of old forms of piety (Fig. 1.1), new Marian chapels are erected in completely modern places, urban areas (Fig. 1.5), hospitals (Fig. 1.6), market places and biofarms (Fig. 1.2), gas-stations (Fig. 1.3), and as an integral part of new-built residential areas of developer projects (Fig. 1.4).

Mary Moves People and the Economic Market

Modern Mary moves people on a large scale. In Fatima, over 300,000 people gathered at the jubilee in 1928, and over 4.5 million pilgrims visit Lourdes annually (Petri and Beinert 1996: 599–600; Eade 1991). In Medjugorje, over one million communions are given.⁴² Of the 6,150 pilgrimage shrines operative in Europe today, 830 draw 10,000 or more pilgrims each year, and 139 of these are shrines of international importance that attract over 100,000 a year. Nineteen shrines receive between one and four million pilgrims (Brockman 2000: 96).

By moving people, the Modern Mary moves the economic market, too. Marian devotion is described also in terms of the 'economy of the sacred' (Morgan 2009). According to D. Morgan, one of the most significant elements within Marian devotion is direct reciprocity (2009: 9). The pilgrims come to 'feel' Mary, investing their finances and time in order to be physically present at the place of Marian apparition. Many pilgrims bring with them small votive objects as a kind of offering or gift to the Virgin Mary (Fig. 1.13) (Notermans and Jansen 2015). But, as an act of reciprocity, something must be taken home with them as well. The tourist

market, as well as the market with religious devotional pieces are nourished by the hunger of pilgrims for taking home at least a small piece of the 'local sacrum', generated by the presence of the Virgin Mary *in situ*, in the means of material commemorative objects (see Fig. 1.8, Fig. 1.10, Fig. 1.11).

In this way, the places of former small Marian shrines are profoundly transformed, economically and socially capitalising their increasing religious meaning. The potential of Marian shrines to produce financial profit had already been recognised and appreciated by European secular state officials and representatives.

The Marian shrine of Lourdes in southern France is probably the best-known modern Marian site in the world. Since 1858, the small village of Lourdes has developed into an international religious tourist centre, receiving an estimated six million visitors each year (Notermans 2008). The sanctuary is surrounded by blocks of hotels and souvenir shops that have for decades targeted a flux of tourists who arrive as part of large, organised pilgrimages. According to estimations, travellers to Lourdes spend up to 280 million euros a year in accommodations and souvenirs. In 2009, the town's hotels reported 3,260,022 *nuitées* [overnights].⁴³ By 2017, the number of 'overnights' had fallen to 2,005,732, according to the French government's official statistics agency.⁴⁴ The tourism board developed a turnaround strategy in order to stop this decline, beginning by presenting Lourdes as a gateway to the Pyrenees with its spectacular scenery, year-round outdoor activities, and local culture ideal for families and even food lovers. Hotels began offering packages with bike rentals and other amenities.⁴⁵

43 A unit of measure in France's tourism industry to count the number of nights a person spends somewhere. For example, three people staying four nights makes 12 *nuitées*.

This calculation is interesting, since only pilgrims spending a 'night' are counted, i.e. pilgrims are reduced to the persons paying (at least) 1 night-accommodation.

44 See <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-france-lourdes-bernadette-musical-20190711-story.html> (accessed on October 7, 2019).

45 See <https://en.lourdes-infotourisme.com/> (accessed on October 7, 2019).

The town struck deals for more direct flights with a budget airline, and the city of Bourdeaux embarked on an international promotional tour. In 2018, there were signs of progress. The number of 'nights' increased by 9% to 2,191,171, including more visitors from within France. But both the tourism board and officials are very well aware that the recovery remained fragile and that Lourdes needed investment not only in marketing and promotion, but also positive discursive support from higher political representatives of the (secular) state.

Cova da Iria near Fatima, originally a peripheric place in the middle of nowhere, has also developed into a tourist destination with a gigantic cathedral, neon crosses, plastic Virgin statuettes, as well as plenty of hotels served by local buses. Fatima as a special strategic place of interest of religious tourism became a part of the revised *National Strategic Plan for Tourism* in 2010. When it comes to tourism products, there was an intention to develop strategic products; some were readjusted, such as cultural and landscape tours, with the emergence of tourist, religious and cultural routes. Religious tourism was singled out due to the importance of the Portuguese Central Way of St James (*Camino de Santiago*) and of the Marian cult pilgrimages, with Fátima's Sanctuary pinpointed as *particularly significant*. To these were added the bolstering of access by air and distinct strategies for the sending countries, along with better on-line promotion and distribution (Moreira 2018).⁴⁶ Since 2010, religious tourism in Portugal has not only been included in the governmental budget for tourism, but also promoted as one of the country's ten products in the *National Strategic Plan for Tourism*. The Strategic Plan of capitalising Fatima now focuses on tourists from Eastern Europe, Canada, the United States, Brazil and Argentina.⁴⁷

46 Moreira, C. O. (2018), *Portugal as a Tourist Destination. Path and Trends* (see on <https://journals.openedition.org/mediterranee/10402>, accessed on October 7, 2019).

47 See https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g7153388-Fatima_Province_of_Buenos_Aires_Central_Argentina-Vacations.html (accessed on October 7, 2019).

Modern Maries in Post-Communist Europe

The Context: Post-Communist Modernity and 'Interrupted Tradition'

R. Inglehart was among the first ones who noted that the effects of identical economic processes can in many countries cause different change trajectories. R. Inglehart speaks about path *dependent modernity* (Inglehart and Baker 2000). The term *multiple modernities* was coined by N. Eisenstadt (Eisenstadt 2000). M. Kennedy (2002) speaks about the emergence of a *transit culture*. P. Blokker describes post-Communist modernity in Central and Eastern Europe as 'pluralist, creative, extremely diverse and institutionally differently manifested processes' (Blokker 2005). Some modernisation processes in post-Communist countries are in essence contrary to the modernisation processes in Western Europe: for instance, where Western modernity negated traditional authorities and the religiously legitimated political order, post-Communist Europe mostly sought ways of how to sneak nationalism and religion into public discourse (Podolinská et al. 2013: 190–191). The legitimacy of these processes was fostered through the projection of this phenomena into the pre-Communist past. The phenomenon of the *(re)invented* or ruptured tradition seemed to be fundamental in that moment because it was impossible to start at 'zero point'. Post-Communist modernity is thus characterised, among other things, not by negation, but by the reformulation of traditional paradigms (Ibid.). However, it is also possible that the 'rupture of the tradition' in some countries was so radical that the post-Communist period did not see a resentment of the tradition, which resulted in extraordinary acceleration of secularisation tendencies. Depending on the particular country, we face different resulting forms of transformation (see Borowik 1999; Demerath 2000; Borowik and Tomka 2001; Tomka 1995; Pollack 2003; Rosta 2012; Agadjanian 2006; Müller 2008; Marinović and Zrinščak 2006; Nešpor 2004; Václavík et al. 2018; Váně 2011; Podolinská 2010; Tížik 2011).

Another specific feature of post-Communist modernity is the heritage of Communist socialisation of several successor genera-

tions. Despite the declarations on radical dealing with the 'Communist past', it is still present implicitly and affects these confrontations. The ruptured tradition phenomenon can thus explain various similarities of the transformation of religiousness in the post-Communist bloc.

The post-Communist period is characterised not only by the restoration of the democratic (secular) state but also by the restoration of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has had to begin its restoration in the society where religious culture was profoundly impacted by the 'interruption of religious transmission' and 'atomisation of collective memory' (mentioned also in the Western context by Hervieu-Léger 1999: 62–66). The restoration of religious and public authority of the Catholic Church was deeply affected by modernisation (connected with de-traditionalisation) and religious pluralism. The Catholic Church in post-Communist countries has therefore had to establish a new position not only in confrontation with the (secular) state and the 'flood' of new religious movements, but also in the face of modernisation and de-traditionalisation 'from within' the Catholic Church (Podolinská 2010: 95–101).

This post-Communist 'religious turn' can be generally interpreted as a direct response to the previous state-imposed indoctrination, aggressive secularism and 'mandatory' atheism. The old institutional Communist framework was completely dismantled, along with all its 'securities'. Civil society has been in 'embryonic' state with virtual absence of an intermediary NGO layer; the nuclear family and values were in a deep crisis. By going through these turbulent times, people searched for lost 'security' and a new 'protective umbrella'. Under these conditions, the historically attested tradition of religion and the confidential institutional representative in the form of the traditional Church became the 'major option' (Ibid.).

In many post-Communist countries, traditional churches adopted the position of a 'Communist martyr' and were able to capitalise this position at least for a certain time.⁴⁸ In many instances, traditional post-Communist churches also privatised

the position of the ‘housekeeper’ of national traditions. The language of tradition and national language (sometimes flavoured with nationalistic and ethically rooted discourses) have become their dominant symbolic resource. The concept of ‘traditional’ religion that has its historical merits and privileges became a common device for structuring religious policy and a legal debate in post-Communist era (Ibid.).

Soon after the fall of Communism, a general threat and new ‘enemies’ were identified by traditionalist and conservative Catholic wings in many predominantly Catholic countries within the post-Communist region: besides liberal values, a threat to the traditional family was mentioned (oriented against the emergence of LGBTQ movements), as well as to the EU and NATO. The overall trends of globalisation and modernisation were also perceived with concerns and veiled with fear.

In the background of this general picture, it is necessary to understand the religious revival among Catholics, which increasingly elevated Marian devotion and transformed it into a ‘large-scale religious revival’ within the entire post-Communist region.

Post-Communist Maries

State of the Art

In the last two decades, numerous volumes on the Virgin Mary both of a historiographic or comparative ethnographic nature (consisting of various ‘case’ studies) have been published. Among excellent historical accounts of Marian devotion (including the apparitions and pilgrimages) of recent years, we should mention those by authors W. A. Jr. Christian 1981, Perry and Echeverría 1988, S. L. Zimdars-Schwartz 1991, M. P. Carroll 1992, D. Blackbourn 1994, J. Pelikan 1998, Horsfall 2000, Margry 2009, Matter 2011, Scheer 2015, etc. In previous studies, attention was paid to revealing the global similarities of Marian devotion (for example, van de Veer 1988;

48 Except for the Czech Republic.

Eade and Sallnow 2000; Coleman and Elsner 1995; Dubisch 1995; Christian 1996; Post 1999; Coleman and Eade 2004). The power of Mary to move people and the theoretical and symbolical meaning of Marian pilgrimages was examined as well (for example, Wolf 1958; Turner 1974; Turner and Turner 1978; Marnham 1982; Stirrat 1982; Dahlberg 1991; Eade 1991; Davis and Boles 2003; Apolito 2005; lit. cit. from Hermkens et al. 2009). We should also mention the volumes devoted to an in-depth analysis of particular case of an apparition site or of a nation-state, for example, Hill 1987, Fawrot Peterson 1991, Sered 1991, Connel 1992, Blackbourn 1994, Pieper and van Uden, 1994, Tweed 1997, Jurkovich and Gessler 1997, Galbraith 2000, Skrbis 2005, Sklar 2005, Busser and Niedźwiedź 2009, Harris 2013, Maunder 2013, 2016, Cosentino 2014, Povedák 2014, Notermans and Jansen 2015, Halemba 2016, Shoemaker 2016, Socorro Castañeda-Liles 2018, etc.

It is perhaps due to the interrupted tradition in post-Communist Europe or the lack of officially approved Marian apparitions in the region (of Lourdes or Fatima type), or the overly complicated and intricate situation in the region undergoing profound multi-spectral transformation that there is a gap in systematic scholar knowledge on Marian devotion in this particular region.

In contrast to the previous general volumes on the Virgin Mary or particular volumes focused on specific topics, this book documents and presents the national varieties of contemporary Marian devotion in selected post-Communist countries such as: (a) *large-scale religious revival* as a direct response to the former period of forced atheisation, (b) *return to the (re)invented tradition* as a religious response to westernisation, globalisation and liberal values system, (c) post-modern response to secularisation and modernisation, feeding the *hunger for spirituality and authentic religiosity* of both elites as folk masses, and (d) search of the role of the Virgin Mary in *reformulating the national and ethnically-rooted formulas* in the process of reconstruction of national states in the post-Communist region. The volume facilitates a fruitful comparison of

case-study materials, offering significant contextual information and detailed insights. The ambition of this volume is not to come with complex knowledge on the topic or to cover the entire region in an exhaustive manner. It is meant to be a humble kick-off into a more profound future discussion and systematic research.

Geographical commentary

From a geographical point of view, the post-Communist region is represented in this volume by a selected number of countries, including the Czech Republic (M. Holubová, V. Tutr), Slovakia (R. Kečka, J. Majo, T. Zachar Podolinská), Hungary (J. Kis-Halás), Bulgaria (V. Baeva and A. Georgieva), Serbia (A. Pavićević) and Romania (L. Peti). As an interesting point of comparative reference, the case study on Marian apparition from southwestern Germany was included as well (H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke). It should be noted in this regard that the fall of Communism affected not only 'socialist countries', but Europe as a whole, especially their neighbours that had to deal with a sudden influx of economic and 'religious' tourists and, later, after the opening of the borders, of migrants from former post-Communist countries. After the fall of the *Iron Curtain*, Germany found itself in an extremely complicated situation and overwent a difficult period of reintegrating the country, especially of its eastern (socialist) and western (capitalist) parts. The previously artificially divided country in terms of politics and religion was thus gradually recovering from the change and birth of 'a single democratic country'.⁴⁹ After the end of the *Cold War*,⁵⁰ the Federal Republic of Germany had not only to deal with the Communist

49 As a matter of fact, the reunion did not result in a new country; whereby West Germany was enlarged to include the additional states of East Germany, which had ceased to exist (1990). The expanded Federal Republic retained West Germany's political culture and continued its existing memberships in international organisations (UN, NATO, OECD and the European Union).

50 The *Cold War* (1946–1991) was a period of geopolitical tensions between the Soviet Union with its satellite states (the Eastern Bloc), and the United States with its allies (the Western Bloc) after WWII.

past of a third of its territory (in five federal countries out of sixteen), but also faced the task of re-configuring its place within the broader and deeper transformation of the entire European region. From this perspective, unified Germany could also be included in the list of countries with a Communist history and a part of the post-Communist region. The implications of the German unification and the tensions between agriculture and industry, between the Catholic Church and the state, between liberals and the state, and between liberals and the Catholic Church undoubtedly nourished the revival of older sites of Marian devotion and provided fertile ground for new apparitions.

Methodological Commentary

From a methodological point of view, most contributions in this volume contain a detailed historiographic analysis of Marian devotion in the respective country (M. Holubová, A. Pavićević, V. Baeva and A. Georgieva, L. Peti). In order to provide a more holistic picture and deeper insight, qualitative ethnography based on participant observation and qualitative interviews was applied in some of the contributions (J. Kis-Halás, V. Baeva and A. Georgieva, T. Zachar Podolinská and L. Peti). Innovative approaches, such as *multi-sited ethnography*⁵¹ (V. Baeva and A. Georgieva) and *multi-vocal ethnography*⁵² (T. Zachar Podolinská), have been applied too. The *cartographic approach* and the humane geography perspective were used in the contribution of J. Majo. It is worth mentioning that the *discursive analysis* method has been used in some contributions, whether focused on internet sources (V. Tutr, J. Kis-Halás, T. Z. Podolinská) or printed documents (R. Kečka). Finally, two particularly interesting methods for analysis were introduced:

51 Ethnography moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualised by macro-constructions of a larger social order, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the 'local' and the 'global', the 'life-world' and the 'system' (Marcus 1995).

52 See, for example, Tobin 1998.

the *fine-grained video-analysis* of the *videography* (Knoblauch 2011) on modern Marpingen apparitions by H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke, and the *interpretative phenomenological analysis* of the transcript of a narrative on apparition by T. Zachar Podolinská.

What Are the Stories about?

The contributions in this volume are national case studies. In the background of particular stories, nation stories are told as part of the general history of the entire post-Communist region's transformation. The release of mobility and reconciliation of the position of the traditional church as well as the general *revitalisation* of religion enabled religious tourism to Western European countries and a *significant revitalisation of old places of pilgrimage and religious traditions* in many places and countries, including popular Marian religiosity as demonstrated by V. Baeva and A. Georgieva (case of Bulgaria), A. Pavićević (case of Serbia) or M. Holubová (case of the Czech Republic). The contributions by J. Kis-Halas (case of Hungary), H. Knoblauch and Petschke (case of Germany), A. Pavićević (Serbia) and P. Lehel (case of Romania), who offer insight into the process of constituting, negotiating and *legitimising strategies of nation states* and ethnic groups within the post-Communist region, and the role of the Virgin Mary in this process being the *Mother of the Nation*, speaking to her People in the *'national(istic)' and 'traditionalistic' language*, mobilising traditional, national and conservative values against *globalisation, westernisation and liberal values* (V. Tutr, case of the Czech Republic, A. Pavićević and J. Kis-Halas). The phenomena of *Christian ethno-paganism* and Mary's ability to absorb *old female pre-Christian deities* is presented in the contributions of J. Kis-Halas, A. Pavićević, V. Baeva and A. Georgieva. The contributions of J. Kis Halas and V. Tutr also represent the ability of Marian devotion in post-Communist countries to include the elements of *post-modern spirituality* and to evolve into (new) *non-traditional religious movements*, including the phenomena of spiritual healing (J. Kis-Halas) and on-line spirituality (J. Kis-

Halas, V. Tutr, M. Holubová, H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke). The *delay of western (progressive) religious discourse* is captured in the contributions of M. Holubová and R. Kečka (case of Slovakia), and the continuity and discontinuity of Marian places of cult based on the research of Marian geography in Slovakia is offered by J. Majo. The *ethnic appropriation* and the importance of *religious ready-made events* in the process of recognition of apparitions is discussed by T. Zachar Podolinská (case of Slovakia).

The authors of the volume elaborate on the concept of Marian devotion as a vibrant amalgam of *revitalised popular religiosity* and *post-modern spirituality* (J. Kis-Halas, H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke, A. Pavićević, V. Baeva and G. Albena, and L. Peti). The importance of *folk customs and beliefs* and the *cult of images* in recent Marian devotion in the Balkan region is presented by V. Baeva, A. Georgieva and by A. Pavićević. Some contributions are devoted to the research of the recent form of modern local (non-approved) apparitions (H. Knoblauch, T. Zachar Podolinská, L. Peti). The authors work with the thesis that the apparition is the act of *communication, performance and negotiation*. The contributions of T. Zachar Podolinská and L. Peti gave voices to the main actors of the apparition story as well – the seers, who are coincidentally both of Roma origin. Whereas L. Peti's story is a case of successful apparition, T. Zachar Podolinská presents in her contribution the story of an apparition which has not attained *collective consensus* and only remained a private and individual story.

Judit Kis-Halas explores how the traditional Marian shrine at Máriagyűd in Hungary is being re-shaped and reinterpreted in the context of alternative spiritualities, such as New Age religiosity and ethno-paganism. The author also found it interesting that Mary is connected with the so-called *Boldogasszony* (literally [Blessed Woman]), which is a special Hungarian denomination of the Virgin Mary and, at the same time, the alleged Mother Goddess of the ancient Hungarians. In recent esoteric language, 'Boldogasszony' is also considered to be Mother Earth (Gaia), the

galactic patroness of all Hungarians *par excellence*. In the Hungarian post-Communist context, J. Kis-Halas thus elucidates the ability of the Virgin Mary to absorb and reshape both pre-Christian antique pagan female goddesses, as well as the ultra-modern millennial and spiritualistic concepts of Mother Earth and Mother of the Universe. The elements of post-modern spirituality are also underlined by the presence of *spiritual healing* and *on-line spirituality*. The search for an 'alternative history', considering the God Father to be the direct ancestor of the Hungarian nation is exemplified, too. J. Kis-Halas also points out the nationalistic colouring of Mary who is said to be the *Mother of all Hungarians* – not only of those living in Hungary but also of those living in diaspora, thus being a powerful engine and the guarantee of a new history of the nation chosen by Mary.

Markéta Holubová analyses the historical context of Marian devotion in the Czech Republic as the prerequisite of the recent highly secularised climate in Czech society. She seeks the causes for the current dislike of official Catholicism and de-Christianisation of Czech society back in the 19th century, when Czechs became liberals, nationalists or socialists. At the same time, religion was assigned only the role of an old-fashioned 'folklore' anachronism, typical for the population in the countryside. During the era of socialism, religious identity was substituted primarily by national identity, as well as by class identity and a 'scientific' worldview. After the fall of Communism, religion lost its principal enemy. Innumerable forms of religiosity emerged, from versions of classical and modern Christianity to the spiritual schools of the Far East. The author points out the rising of religious tourism after 1989 related to both national tourism and tourism abroad. According to M. Holubová, it is very interesting in this context that the worshiping of the Virgin Mary has remained virtually unchanged. Just like in the past, emphasis is placed today on spirituality and emotional experience, thereby fulfilling the main conditions for survival in the post-modern era. In addition to the traditional

forms of cult and pilgrimage rituals, there are also new forms of religiosity brought about by the 21st century, especially in abundantly visited places of pilgrimage. Due to the widespread use of the internet and e-mail communication, after centuries of pilgrimage tradition, for the first time, there is no need to receive the written *votum* personally or even in representation. Also, bike pilgrimages are a very popular form among young people. On the other hand, the author mentions that, despite the strong Marian tradition, the general public, as well as the religious discourse on Marian devotion connected to private apparitions in the Czech Republic, are 'marginal' to a certain point (see also Fig. 1.16). The author sees two principal reasons for this. Compared to neighbouring countries (Germany, Slovakia, Poland or Hungary), there is profound lack of current or modern apparitions in the Czech Republic. Passionate believers therefore need to travel abroad when looking for a 'fresher' touch of the Virgin Mary. Secondly, the author notes that the significant delay in the import of greater movements and groups due to the Communist era, as well as the smaller membership of believers are important factors of the recent picture of Marian devotion in the Czech Republic. Thirdly, it could be added that Marian devotion should be seen within a more general picture of the current Czech religious landscape. Unlike other post-Communist countries, the general discourse in the Czech Republic *remains* not only secular and anti-clerical but also anti-religious, by considering religion to be an anti-modern issue. Compared to the other countries of the post-Communist region, Czechs are more comfortable with non-traditional and non-Christian forms of religiosity and alternative spirituality. There is also a considerable preference of secular faith, implicit religion and non-religion, including a significant score of so-called apatheists and atheists (Václavík et al. 2018; Vido et al. 2016). In this respect, the post-Communist response of the entire Czech society can be interpreted as another example of (re)invention of tradition, a phenomenon typical for other post-Communist countries

too, as a U-turn to the pre-Communist societal discourse and atmosphere. Just to provide a last contextual commentary, the climate in the Czech lands as part of pre-Communist Czechoslovakia, were strongly secular and anti-clerical, which, as a matter of fact, led not only to the election victory of the Communist party in the Czech lands in 1946, but caused the installation of Communism in Czechoslovakia as a whole in the mid-20th century.⁵³ Among others factors, the (re)invented tradition of secularism in the Czech Republic indisputably influenced the scale of 'revitalisation' of traditional religiosity and the marginal position of Marian devotion in Czechia, as noted by the author of the chapter.

Vojtěch Tutr offers a comparative analysis of internet sources on two charismatic Marian movements in the Czech Republic at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. These are interpreted as examples of 'popular religiosity' in the Czech Republic that resulted in the establishment of Marian movements, with spontaneous religious activities led by two charismatic opinion-makers. The chapter focuses on the *Vérité* centre founded by František Mráček and *Mariánské nakladatelství* [MANA, Marian publishers] founded by František Press in Brno. Both cases are based on modern European Marian apparitions, which they contextualise in the current global situation and the Czech environment as well. Tutr elucidates how these apparitions are being spread and how their apocalyptic messages are reinterpreted and accommodated into modern Czech society. The Virgin Mary keeps her appeal to maintain and intensify the Marian belief in order to prevent a global catastrophe. Since the death of Communism, which was seen as the old enemy of Marian apparitions of the 20th

53 The Communist Party achieved the best results in the Czech lands in the districts from which the original German population was displaced (with the highest result of 70.45% in the Tachov district). Despite the fact that the elections in Slovakia were won by the Democratic Party with the majority of votes (61.43%), the victory of Communists in the Czech lands meant its demise, and the Communist Party thus gained power throughout Czechoslovakia as a whole.

century, the modern interpretation of global threats offered are the outbreak of WWII, nuclear or ecological catastrophes, globalisation or total control by means of information technologies. As Tutr notes, the topic of the 'end of time' is typical for popular religiosity. The catastrophic language is preserved, yet it is transformed and adapted to the context of modern society. What is interesting about the studied charismatic leaders is that they raise their voices in the name of 'conservative tradition', i.e. against globalisation, liberalisation and westernisation of Czech society. Anti-western and even anti-Brussels rhetoric is therefore strongly present in their interpretations of modern Marian messages.

After the fall of Communism in Europe, there was an influx of religious literature. Western Marian texts began to be translated and distributed in the region. The contribution of **Roman Kečka** offers a comparative analysis of Marian discourse based on the books available in religious bookstores in two neighbouring capitals – Bratislava (representing a Central European country with socialist history) and Vienna (representing a western 'capitalist' country). According to the author, when compared to Western Christianity, Marian discourse in Slovakia lacks two recurrent models: (1) the progressive 20th/21st century model, and (2) the traditionalist and fundamentalist model. The first model consists of a Marian vocabulary and contents representing a self-confident, social and communicative model of Mary. This model presents an alternative to older models combining mild or triumphant vocabulary with mild or triumphant contents. The second model which is absent among Slovak believers is the Marian discourse of the traditionalist and fundamentalist groups of all ages, tolerated by official Church structures. These traditionalist and fundamentalist groups return to the old Marian vocabulary and contents which is triumphant, militant and – in this modern version – has an offensive character. This form of discourse, created as a reaction to progressive Christian groups, did not arise in Slovakia, since there were no progressive Christian movements. The author's research

suggests that Slovak Marian reflection and spirituality result from traditional beliefs, having no affinity to Western progressive and traditionalist models. In this context, it can be stated that Slovakia's isolation from the European spiritual development, which has caused traditional devotion to be fixed in its forms, is, ironically, continuing even after the fall of Communism in the era of religious freedom. Interestingly enough, the 40-year pause in the free influx of religious literature caused a significant slowdown in progressive Christian discourse, the delay of which is visible even twenty years after the fall of Communism.

Juraj Majo presents a cartographic analysis based on his research on the spatial distribution of dedications in Slovakia. His work is based on the thesis by geographer L. Kong (2001) according to which there are intersections between the *politics and the poetics of religious space*, identity and community and that the sacralisation of space is the key process in constructing religious places. Dedication to the Virgin Mary thus represents a form of such process, and its change and maintenance is definitely the result of relationship between politics and the poetics of space. In his chapter, J. Majo attempts to outline the spatiality of the Marian cult represented in the dedications of sacred buildings, and open up questions on forming such distributions and regional specificities in Slovakia. In Slovakia, back in 1947, before the ensuing social and political changes, the most important places of pilgrimage were related to the worship of the Virgin Mary (Fekete 1947). According to the author, only two out of 33 places of pilgrimage in Slovakia were non-Marian. Š. Fekete observed that most of these places were created during the re-Catholicisation period and were geographically concentrated along the edges of mountains (contact between mountain areas and lowlands) around the Small and Large Hungarian Lowlands, especially in Western Slovakia and northern regions of Eastern Slovakia. Thanks to the contribution by geographical author Š. Poláčik, the updated list of dedications was published in 2009 (Judák and Poláčik 2009). Thanks as well to V. Judák and

Š. Poláčik, up to 672 new dedications of sacral buildings were described, reflecting the new territorial and administrative division of both Catholic confessions (Roman Catholic Church and Greek Catholic Church). According to Judák and Poláčik, the choice of the dedications was not random, but was always the result of the contemporary situation. The dynamism included not only the change of the patron of the church, but – what can be observed in Marian dedications – their further differentiation to more specific dedications. The dedications related to the person and acts of the Virgin Mary represent the dominant part of Slovak Catholic dedications. According to the findings of Judák and Poláčik, they made up almost one-third of the dedications in 2009 and, compared to older data, their number increased by 23% since 1980–1984. Within this group, the dedication to *Our Lady of Sorrows* is the most numerous in Slovakia. In terms of the intensity of representation of Marian dedications (Judák and Poláčik 2011a), there is a large concentration mainly in the northern and north-western regions of Slovakia as well as in Eastern Slovakia. From the perspective of time, over three-thirds of all Marian dedications are younger than 300 years. There are only around 60 recorded dedications from the 16th century, 15% of which, unfortunately, disappeared as a consequence of the Reformation movement. Marian dedications saw their most massive development in the 20th century and later, when 40% of the buildings were built with Marian dedication. As J. Majo concludes, the research on the spatial distribution of dedications is still a little explored field, even though extensive data sources are relatively high in quality and quantity and enable the interpretation of different relations in various scales. The research also indicates that the importance and popularity of Marian dedications are accompanied by great diversity with growth over time.

Returning to the main theoretical thesis of the article, the change in the political order also caused a change in the religious poetics of the Slovak religious landscape. In the context of important dedications, it is visible that the Marian dedications (in terms

of numbers) have been booming since the fall of Communism. It can be interpreted as a *large revival of the worship of the Virgin Mary* within the Slovak post-Communist environment. This finding corresponds to the general revitalisation of religiosity in Slovakia after 1989. It also indicates that the Slovak response to post-modernity and post-Communism was predominantly a *(re)invention of the pre-Communist tradition* in terms of modernisation and revitalisation,⁵⁴ in which the Virgin Mary played the most prominent role.

Hubert Knoblauch and **Sabina Petschke** demonstrate that *spirituality* and *popular religiosity* are built into Marian apparitions, thus turning them into a contemporary ‘modern’ phenomenon. This chapter refers to a series of apparitions that happened in Marpingen, a German village close to the western border with France, during 1999. This village was the setting for a series of Marian apparitions as early as the 19th century. These earlier apparitions have recently been subjected to a very thorough study by British historian D. Blackbourn (1993). Whereas Blackbourn based his analysis on written documents mostly stored in archives, the authors had not only access to written documents, newspapers and books but also the exceptional chance to collect video-tape recordings from the event, and they could also rely on audio-taped statements by the seers. These data, supported by ethnographic field data, were subject to a *fine-grained video-analysis* provided in the chapter.

The authors point out that the apparition is not just a subjective experience of a seer but also *communicative performance of a religious action*. They pay attention to modern apparitions as a visual, performative and interactive act, starting with the body and face formation of the seer(s), the atmosphere and the formatting of the entire audience, including the ‘mediators’ of the apparition (those who verbally communicate the internal vision and those who manage the scenario of the apparition in order to achieve the ‘best

54 For the religious landscape in Slovakia from a comparative perspective (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Austria) see Podolinská et al. 2013.

result and impact’ of the apparition), including the presence of the media. They portray modern apparitions as modern not only because of the re-assertion of subjectivity in the rational and secular modern world. Modern audio and video technical means became an integral part of modern apparitions. The authors also stress the role of the media and the market – by which, as media products, modern apparitions are distributed in commercial channels as ‘live’ events, thus offering participation in the event to physically non-present believers as well. According to the authors, the analysis of Marian apparitions in this way is a case for the thesis of the modernity of religion and a case that demonstrates what is modern about religion. The modernity of these apparitions thus shares some similarity with the surprising modernity of Catholicism, and, for that matter, of religion in general.

Aleksandra Pavićević deals with the role of the Virgin Mary in the nation-state building process in Serbia. The author points out that the beginning of the process of religious revival in Serbia coincided with the beginning of the social, economic and political crisis of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s. The cult of the *Bogorodica* [Gr. ‘Theotokos’, i.e. The Mother of God] was best developed among the Serb population. Some authors link her most widely recognisable epithet *Baba*, [one who gives birth as well as Great Mother] to powerful female pagan divinities such as the Great Mother, Grandmother etc. (Petrović 2001: 55; Čajkanović 1994a: 339). The author focuses on Mary’s mobility in Serbia as well, describing how the icons of ‘Bogorodica’ were moved across Serbia but also how these icons moved people, both emotionally and politically (see also Hermkens et al. 2009: 70) in order to mobilise the Serbian nation. She further elucidates that not only the images of ‘Bogorodica’ are thought to be a direct embodiment of Mary, but the *images themselves* dispense graces and favours (see also Morgan 2009: 54). The author explores how the use of icons in wars, either those of conquest or defensive ones, appears to be a widely spread practice in the Orthodox world. She notes how, by travelling through towns and

battlefields, throughout the decades and centuries, the 'Bogorodica' in Serbia appeared through her holy image at the end of the second millennium as the protector, advocate, Pointer of the Way and foster mother of those who are in need of miracles and waymarks.

Here, as the context must be added, that religious iconic figures have served throughout history as national symbols in order to further political goals in many instances (just to mention the miraculous icon of The Greek Mary in the Island of Tinos, the image of the Mexican Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, the miraculous icon of the Polish Black Madonna in Częstochowa (Ventura 2011), Our Lady of Medjugorje (Hill 1987; Connel 1992; Skrbis 2005) or the image of the Vietnamese Lady of Lavang (Ninh 2017). For instance, The Black Madonna of Częstochowa has become a national symbol and a Polish Patroness defending the country against heathens and enemies. The Black Madonna stood against the Swedish conquest attempts during the 17th century, and also became the national symbol of the Polish independence movement in the 1980s in the struggle against atheist and Communist doctrines (Galbraith 2000; Busser and Niedźwiedź 2009). The apparitions of the Virgin Mary of Medjugorje were used in convergence with Croatian nationalism (Skrbis 2005), but also in connection with reconciliation and 'finding peace at the heart of a conflict' (Jurkovich and Gesler 1997).

Another very important point to emphasise both in connection with the contribution of A. Pavićević and V. Baeva and A. Georgieva is that while religious *visions* and *apparitions* are common in the Catholic world, they are not so in the Greek-Orthodox world. In this world, Mary tends to manifest through *sacred icons*. Each icon possesses its miracle stories that uniquely exhibit Mary's potency (Dubisch 1995).

Vihra Baeva and **Albena Georgieva** present Marian worship in one of its specific local manifestations - the cult to the Virgin in the region of Asenovgrad, Central Southern Bulgaria. The region is an example of the vital and well-developed Marian cult with in present-day Bulgaria. Both authors have been conducting their long-term fieldwork in the region since 1996. The methodological

framework for their chapter is based on the concept of *local religion* (Christian 1989: 3), reformulated by the authors into the concepts of *local religiosity* and *local religious culture*. According to the authors, the local Marian cult of Asenovgrad region is an example of how to understand local and cultural embeddedness of religiosity, presented via (1) devotional sites and the images belonging to them (miracle-working icons of the Virgin); (2) local feasts and ritual practices, and (3) local and personal religious narratives. For their analysis, the authors pinpointed the three most important places of Marian worship in the region: the Dormition of Mary Monastery of Bachkovo, the Annunciation of Mary Church in Asenovgrad, and the Dormition of Mary Church in Gorni Voden. Along with the well-known Marian feasts, idiosyncratic local holidays are observed as well, just like the related ritual actions that span from the canonical to the folkloric and 'magical'. The authors explore how particular symbols, such as the apple, the water, and the fish, come to the fore as material representation of Mary's sacred power and assistance. The authors conclude that local and personal narratives add a private and sometimes even an intimate aspect to Marian devotion, binding the universal sacred figure of the Virgin with the history and geography of the local community, as well as with the individual life trajectories of the believers.

Tatiana Zachar Podolinská in her chapter offers an in-depth qualitative analysis of narratives on private Marian apparitions of a Romani woman living in a segregated Roma settlement in the Šariš region in the eastern part of Slovakia. She states that when analysing Marian apparitions, it is significant to give voice to various actors of the 'research situation', because all these actors are crucial pieces of the story. The author explains her research dataset and her main thesis formulated in her previous publications on *Romani Christianity* (Podolinská 2009). In particular, she pointed out in her previous research the process of *inculturation* in which the 'White' Virgin Mary is culturally and ethnically 'transcribed' and 'translated' into the 'Chocolate Mary' which physically, mentally and spiritually fits

better in this context and corresponds to the hopes and needs of the particular 'peripheral' ethnic community (Podolinská 2007, 2014).

T. Zachar Podolinská further elaborates on the thesis of V. Turner, according to which the majority of apparitions occur on the *periphery*, not only from a geographical point of view (peripheries of cities, rural areas), but also at peripheral levels of society: the seers are mostly children or (illiterate) women from socially deprived backgrounds (Turner 1974). The private apparition presented in this chapter perfectly fits into the 'periphery' concept by V. Turner: the seer is an illiterate woman from a socially deprived settlement and is a member of the ethnically stigmatised community of *Cigáni* [Gypsies]. Her visions are private, and ever since they began to appear, she launched her struggle for collective and public recognition. This particular chapter is a sample case of the fate of the majority of individual/private apparitions. The author points out that not every apparition is 'successful' and not every seer achieves public recognition. In the studied case, the seer was able to achieve recognition only within her own family. The response of the local Roma community to her apparitions is mostly negative. Quite interesting about this case is that, according to the seer, she has support from the side of non-Roma local religious authorities. The struggle for *collective consensus* and the ethnic code are thus the most important themes of the analysed narrative on the apparition. The author points out the importance of a *religious ready-made event* in the process of recognition of an apparition.

As various authors concluded in the volume *Moved by Mary*, Marian devotion helps to construct and differentiate categories. Marian discourse thus played a prominent role in many instances by expressing and fortifying the identity of national, ethnic, religious, and gender groups, and Mary was actively appropriated and put to work in favour of demarcating these groups' identities (Hermkens et al. 2009: 12). Confirming this thesis in his particular case, **Lehel Peti** provides in his chapter an in-depth socio-economic analysis of divergent strategies of symbolic communication of different

ethnic and religious groups as a response to the modern Marian apparition in Seuca during post-Communist Romania. In the first years of the new millennium, Seuca became an internationally recognised place of pilgrimage because of a blind Gypsy woman's public visions of the Virgin Mary. The author notes how alongside with other important East-European places of pilgrimage within the Hungarian language area (Csíksomlyó and Máriaradna), the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Seuca demonstrate more and more individual and novel features. The legitimisation strategies of the Gypsy woman take place also in this cultural 'playground' which, nevertheless, is not free of symbolic tensions between confession and ethnicity. According to the authors' fieldwork, these religious communities do not identify themselves with the entire apparition, but only with certain elements, thus using different strategies of symbolic communication for self-legitimation and self-affirmation. However, as the author notes, the most important general strategy of acknowledgment is the discursive emphasis on the *spirit of reconciliation* between ethnic groups and denominations. This is the most important ideology of the legitimating process of the shrine against the two other important places of pilgrimage, Csíksomlyó and Máriaradna (both situated in Romania), that have become the biggest places to expose Hungarian identity. The chapter is also an example of the importance of a *religious ready-made event* connected with the openness of local elites (both church representatives and secular ones) to capitalise on the apparition, to gain not only local but also international recognition. In this particular case, the private apparition and the seer herself were successful on their symbolic journey from periphery to the centre. The story of success and acceptance of the messages addressed to various ethnic and denomination groups by a blind Gypsy woman are particularly interesting. It is also a case story of how the apparition of the Virgin Mary contributed to the reconciliation of the multi-ethnic and multi-denominational character of a particular region in the middle of turbulent times of post-Communist transformation.

Conclusions

As noted at the beginning, the Virgin Mary as such cannot be examined scientifically. We can, however, examine her 'apparitions' in the world, as well as the innumerable variants of Marian devotion and cult. This volume focuses on her manifestations in the post-Communist region with some geographical spillovers. It is either because post-Communist transformation concerned not only the former socialist countries, but also had an impact on the entire European region and was part of the overall post-modern and post-Communist reconfiguration of the European area. Another factor is that Marian worship is not controlled by political borders of present-day nation states. It has a wider transnational potential and impact. Nevertheless, we focused our viewfinder primarily on the post-Communist region, as we believe that thanks to its geographical and symbolic location and economic position in Europe, as well as its historical roots and traditions and common Communist history and heritage, it not only shows different traits of modernity compared to 'Western Europe', but we also face specific features and forms of worshipping of the Virgin Mary. We therefore decided to present in this volume the traces of the Virgin Mary by means of more in-depth analyses from selected countries of the post-socialist region.

By means of this publication, we can observe how the Virgin Mary is manifested in the faces of seers and pilgrims and how audio-visual means are becoming a direct part of Marian apparitions in Germany in the modern era (H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke); how she speaks through the mouth of a blind Roma woman and pacifies the ethnic and religious tensions between various groups in Romania (L. Peti); how she attributes meaning to meaningless places on the map by reallocating her presence through the geographical and time distribution of Marian dedications in Slovakia (J. Majo); how, after the fall of Communism, she revitalises the old places of her cult with new power, bringing together traditional and non-traditional forms of worship in the secular Czech

lands (M. Holubová); how her messages are spread on the websites of new non-traditional Marian movements and how their apocalyptic warnings are being updated and localised into the specific national environment in Czechia (V. Tutr); how she addresses the readers of Marian literature differently on the shelves of bookstores in Slovakia and Austria (R. Kečka); but also how the Virgin Mary absorbs ultra-modern millennial and spiritualistic concepts of Mother Earth and Mother of the Universe, becoming the speaker of the great unified Hungarian nation (J. Kis-Halas); how she is becoming the re-discovered herald of Serbian national identity (A. Pavićević); how she absorbs the local forms of faith and folk Christianity in modern era and is thus the manifestation of grassroots Christianity and local religious culture in Bulgaria (V. Baeva and A. Georgieva); and how the path from a private to an officially recognised apparition depends not only on the Virgin Mary and the seer, but also on the overall constellation of the audience and the ability to offer a *religious ready-made event* (T. Zachar Podolinská and L. Peti).

This publication observes the current diversity of the forms of Marian devotion in post-Communist countries through different national and geographically defined contours and, in particular, the ability of the Virgin Mary to satisfy the hunger for modern spirituality and authentic religiousness, give voice to unofficial and popular religions, revitalise and redefine old places of cult and add new ones, appease war conflicts, speak out on behalf of nations and marginalised ethnic groups, and guard national and conservative values. The post-modern and post-Communist Mary thus restores ruptured traditions with love, and enchants the violently atheised European region with new miracles and apparitions, regardless of whether top Church or state representatives like it or not.



Fig. 1.1

Fig. 1.1 Private chapel with the statue of the Virgin Mary on the façade of a traditional wooden house in northern Slovakia, Orava, Podbiel, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).



Fig. 1.2

Fig. 1.2 Modern statue of the Virgin Mary in the front garden of a traditional wooden house, relocated from its original place to a bio-farm near Bratislava, Botanic Garden Stupava, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).



Fig. 1.3

Fig. 1.3 New chapel of the Virgin Mary in front of the gas station in northern Slovakia, Dolný Kubín, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).



Fig. 1.4

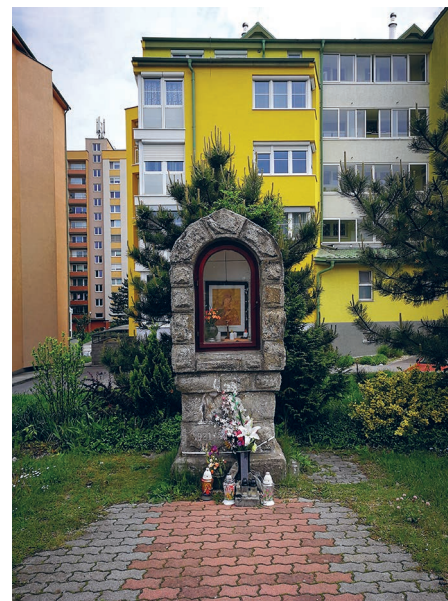


Fig. 1.5

Fig. 1.4 Modern chapel constructed in front of a new row of houses in southern Slovakia, Kalinkovo (photo by M. Zachar, 2019).

Fig. 1.5 Modern chapel of the Virgin Mary in an urban area in front of a block of flats in Slovakia's capital city of Bratislava, Lamač, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).



Fig. 1.6

Fig. 1.6 Modern picture of the Virgin Mary on the wall in the corridor of the Merciful Brothers' Hospital, Bratislava, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).



Fig. 1.7

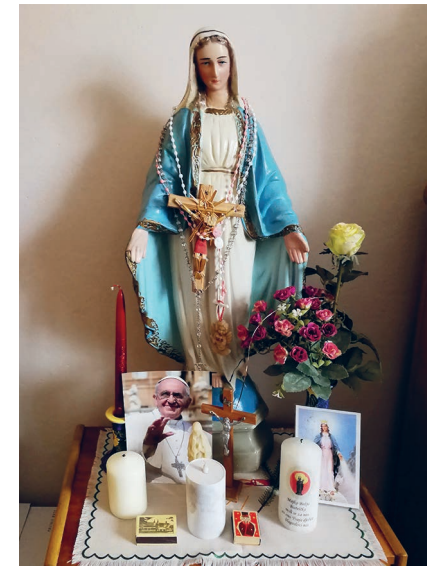


Fig. 1.9



Fig. 1.10



Fig. 1.8



Fig. 1.11

Fig. 1.7 Samizdat from the Communist era, 1980s. Home-made booklet on the Way of the Cross, Bratislava, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.8 Private collection of magnets with religious themes on the wall of a fridge, Beluša, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.9 Private statue of the Virgin (from Poland) in the bedroom of a Slovak Catholic woman, Beluša, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.10 Sales stand with magnets with religious themes, Marianka, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.11 Statues of the Virgin Mary from St Vojtech store in Bratislava, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).



Fig. 1.12



Fig. 1.13

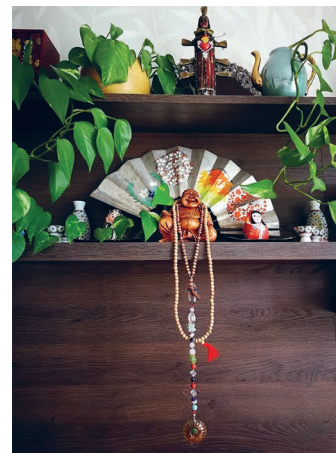


Fig. 1.15



Fig. 1.14



Fig. 1.16

Fig. 1.12 Chapel of the Virgin Mary with a place for praying and a panel with votive tables, pilgrimage site in Marianka, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.13 Small gifts and offerings for the Virgin Mary, Marianka pilgrimage site, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.14 Panel with votive tables as thanksgiving to the Virgin Mary for miraculous healings and protection from individuals and families, Marianka pilgrimage site, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.15 Private altar of the Virgin Mary (of Guadalupe type) and Buddha. Shelf in the bedroom of an urban apartment in Bratislava, Slovakia (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.16 Old chapel of the Virgin Mary in Snežka (north-western Czechia). The niche for the Virgin Mary is now empty and situated under the altar, on the floor. At its original place, there is a panel

→ with historical information for tourists. The altar is decorated with praying flags from Tibet, Czech Republic (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).



Fig. 1.17



Fig. 1.18

Fig. 1.17 Altar devoted to the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe in the garden of Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Church, Petržalka, Bratislava, Slovakia (photo by M. Zachar, 2019).

Fig. 1.18 Statue of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe in the garden of Exaltation of the Holy Cross Church, Petržalka, Bratislava, Slovakia (photo by M. Zachar, 2019).



Fig. 1.19

Fig. 1.19 Statue of the Virgin Mary as Stela Maris (Star of the Sea), patroness of seamen and fishermen. There is a star rising behind her head, holding the Child Jesus in her hands and standing on



Fig. 1.20

→ the bow of a ship, castle wall, Kelie Castle, East Neuk, Scotland (photo by T. Zachar Podolinská, 2019).

Fig. 1.20 Statue of the Virgin Mary and Jesus from the poster on the wall in a Roman Catholic parish near the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Church from their missions in Japan, Petržalka, Bratislava, Slovakia (photo by M. Zachar, 2019).

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01 ZACHAR PODOLINSKÁ, Tatiana

Traces of the Mary in Post-Communist Europe

The Virgin Mary as such cannot be examined scientifically. We can, however, examine her 'apparitions' in the world, as well as the innumerable variants of Marian devotion and cult. This volume focuses on her manifestations in the post-Communist region with some geographical spillovers. It is either because post-Communist transformation concerned not only the former socialist countries, but also had an impact on the entire European region and was part of the overall post-modern and post-Communist reconfiguration of the European area. Another factor is that Marian worship is not controlled by political borders of present-day nation states. It has a wider transnational potential and impact. Nevertheless, we focused our viewfinder primarily on the post-Communist region, as we believe that thanks to its geographical and symbolic location and economic position in Europe, as well as its historical roots and traditions and common Communist history and heritage, it not only shows different traits of modernity compared to 'Western Europe', but we also face specific features and forms of worshipping of the Virgin Mary. We therefore decided to present in this volume the traces of the Virgin Mary by means of more in-depth analyses from selected countries of the post-socialist region.

By means of this publication, we can observe how the Virgin Mary is manifested in the faces of seers and pilgrims and how audio-visual means are becoming a direct part of Marian apparitions in Germany in the modern era (H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke); how she speaks through the mouth of a blind Roma woman and pacifies the ethnic and religious tensions between various groups in Romania (L. Peti); how she attributes meaning to meaningless places on the map by reallocating her presence through the geographical and time distribution of Marian dedications in Slovakia (J. Majo); how, after the fall of Communism, she revitalises the old places of her cult with new power, bringing together traditional

and non-traditional forms of worship in the secular Czech Lands (M. Holubová); how her messages are spread on the websites of new non-traditional Marian movements and how their apocalyptic warnings are being updated and localised into the specific national environment in Czechia (V. Tutr); how she addresses the readers of Marian literature differently on the shelves of bookstores in Slovakia and Austria (R. Kečka); but also how the Virgin Mary absorbs ultra-modern millennial and spiritualistic concepts of Mother Earth and Mother of the Universe, becoming the speaker of the great unified Hungarian nation (J. Kis-Halas); how she is becoming the re-discovered herald of Serbian national identity (A. Pavićević); how she absorbs the local forms of faith and folk Christianity in modern era and is thus the manifestation of grass-root Christianity and local religious culture in Bulgaria (V. Baeva and A. Georgieva); and how the path from a private to an officially recognised apparition depends not only on the Virgin Mary and the seer, but also on the overall constellation of the audience and the ability to offer a *religious ready-made event* (T. Zachar Podolinská and L. Peti).

This publication observes the current diversity of the forms of Marian devotion in post-Communist countries through different national and geographically defined contours and, in particular, the ability of the Virgin Mary to satisfy the hunger for modern spirituality and authentic religiousness, give voice to unofficial and popular religions, revitalise and redefine old places of cult and add new ones, appease war conflicts, speak out on behalf of nations and marginalised ethnic groups, and guard national and conservative values. The post-modern and post-Communist Mary thus restores ruptured traditions with love, and enchants the violently atheised European region with new miracles and apparitions, regardless of whether top Church and state representatives like it or not.

02 KIS-HALAS, Judit

Sacred Sites Reinterpreted: New Age Phenomena at a Hungarian Marian Shrine

Marian shrines were always the sites of miraculous healings and spectacular apparitions. Nowadays, they have also become the crystallisation points of the New Age phenomena. Several studies have already pointed out this trend with regard to popular pilgrimage destinations. As far as the Hungarian Marian shrines are concerned, none of them have been systematically examined from this perspective. This chapter aims to provide a deeper insight of how a Marian shrine is being re-orchestrated as a specific 'power place' in the context of alternative spiritualities, such as New Age religiosity or ethno-paganism at one Marian shrine at Máriagyúd.

From the wide-ranging New Age phenomena and religious practices that the author observed during the past decades at Máriagyúd, she chose the prominent example of an esoteric group called *Magyar MAGok* [Hungarian Seeds], which deals with diverse religious and healing activities. Their programmes include shamanic drumming sessions, tours to 'sacred sites' in Hungary and the Carpathian Basin (mostly Romania), weekend meditations, esoteric workshops, readings on the history and culture of the ancient Hungarians, such as direct kinship between the Hungarians and the Huns, or the identification of the Ancient Hungarians with the Scythians, or the Hungarian origins of the Christian Father God. In accordance with the millennial narrative, they use the elements of the alternative history of the Hungarians as well as other motifs which recall UFO-religions and ET-spiritualities, and last but not least, the idea of healing and cleansing as the basic means leading to universal well-being. The description of their unique rituals and other religious practices is followed by an analysis of the discourse on the contested authority of the shrine.

The author of the chapter focuses on the role of the Virgin Mary within their discourse. She found it interesting that Mary

is connected with the so-called *Boldogasszony* (literally [Blessed Woman]), which is a special Hungarian denomination of the Virgin Mary and, at the same time, the alleged goddess of the ancient Hungarians. 'Boldogasszony' has been used as a synonym for the Blessed Virgin Mary since the Middle Ages (cf. Madas 2002). The quest for a lost epic and a missing mythology of the Hungarians, which was inspired by national romanticism, resulted in the term gaining an ethnic taste by the end of the 19th century. 'Boldogasszony' was the most emblematic female figure of the pantheon in the re-invented Ancient Hungarian religion – the Mother Goddess (Kálmány 1885). With regard to its contemporary use, 'Boldogasszony' is also interpreted as the Hungarian equivalent of the Goddess (Bowman 2009), and is also considered Mother Earth (Gaia) and the galactic patroness of all Hungarians *par excellence*. The author put the manifold interpretations of the Virgin Mary's figure in the centre of attention, highlighting the Catholic Church's standpoint on the emergence of New Age spirituality at Catholic devotional places.

03 HOLUBOVÁ, Markéta

Manifestations of Marian Devotion in the Czech Republic – the Past and Present

According to the author of the chapter, Marian devotion in the Czech Republic should be seen not only in the light of recent highly secularised climate of Czech society. For the current dislike for official Catholicism and de-Christianisation of Czech society, we have to go back in history. In the 19th century, Czechs became liberals, nationalists or socialists. At the same time, religion ceased to play its former role and was assigned only the role of an occasionally sought-after, yet unnecessary 'folklore' anachronism, typical for village population. Religious identity was substituted primarily by national identity, as well as by class identity and a 'scientific' worldview. The rise of the Communist dictatorship after 1948 bolstered these trends and used them – mostly unmod-

ified – for its own benefit. The non-religious and anti-religious components were accentuated, while the forms of 'implicit religiosity' stayed preserved and Church organisations were forced to face systematic repression. The years 1989 and 1990 brought about radical changes in the political and spiritual history of the Czech Republic. Religion lost its principal enemy – Communism. Innumerable forms of religiosity appeared, from versions of classical and modern Christianity to the spiritual schools of the Far East.

In this context, it is very interesting that the worshiping of the Virgin Mary has remained virtually unchanged. Just like in the past, emphasis is placed today on spirituality and emotional experience, thereby fulfilling the main conditions for survival in the modern era *de facto*. In addition to the traditional forms of cult and pilgrimage rituals, there are also new forms of religiosity brought about by the 21st century, especially in abundantly visited places of pilgrimage. Due to the widespread use of the internet and e-mail communication, after centuries of pilgrimage tradition, there is for the first time no need to receive the written *votum* personally or even in representation. After 1989, visits to Czech and foreign places of pilgrimage began to appear in the catalogues of many travelling agencies. Also, bike pilgrimages represent a very popular form among young people.

On the other hand, it can be also mentioned, that despite the strong Marian tradition, the general public and as well as the religious discourse on Marian devotion connected to private apparitions in the Czech Republic is at a certain point 'marginal'. This can have two principal reasons. Firstly, the import of apparitions is caused by the absence of such apparitions at home. Secondly, the import of greater movements and groups represents a reaction to the delay of the Communist era and a smaller membership of believers.

04 TUTR, Vojtěch

The Reception of Recent Marian Apparitions in the Czech Republic in the Field of Popular Religiosity – Two Examples

Marian apparitions have always emerged throughout the history of the Catholic Church. However, they have never been given a lot of attention and have never met with so much public acceptance as has been seen since the latter half of the 19th century. The development of *mass communication* and increasing population *mobility* have partly contributed to this phenomenon. These apparitions have a new function – providing *public messages*. The Virgin Mary is no longer speaking only to the visionary; she is pronouncing prophecies and messages to all believers, laying claims to the hierarchy.

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of two examples of ‘popular religiosity’ in the Czech Republic as a spontaneous religious activity produced and operated by their charismatic leaders and opinion-makers: *Vérité* centre founded by František Mráček and *Mariánské nakladatelství* [MANA, Marian publishers] founded by František Press in Brno. Both cases are based on modern Marian apparitions and are contextualised in the current global situation and in the Czech Republic. According to the author, this goes hand in hand with the trend of modernisation and the era of mass communication.

Marian devotion plays a central role in both studied cases and is crucial for understanding the portraying her as the *Loving Mother* and *Hope of the Mankind*, as well as the *Guardian of the World* coming as the (last) *Living Warning* before the expected global catastrophe. The apocalyptic, chiliastic and millennial tone presented by both interpreters of modern Marian apparitions is being explored as well. The main issue in both cases is the expectation of the *end of the current world* order. This element was certainly activated by the approaching end of the millennium. Even though this stimulation of thoughts on the end of the world is now out of play, the charismatic leaders flexibly postponed their prediction in this re-

gard and, according to them, we should expect some global threat in the future, the outbreak of WWII, nuclear or ecological catastrophes, globalisation or total control by means of information technologies.

Another nodal point is the reference to *globalisation* as an instrument of Satan's rule over the unified world. According to the author, both studied cases are examples of modern adaptation of Christianity to the post-modern religious landscape of post-socialist Czech Republic and represent a form of *popular religiosity* which is transformed and adapted to the context of modern society and ‘Western culture’.

05 KEČKA, Roman

Contemporary Models of Marian Discourse in Slovakia

According to the 2001 census, the majority of Slovakia's population statistically follows the Catholic confession of Roman or Byzantine rites. In both rites, the Marian devotion has a considerable place in religious reflection and spirituality. This study explores the religious discourse of the Marian devotion as it appears in available books and booklets on this topic. The main focus of the chapter is a comparison of the Marian discourse in Slovakia (representing a post-socialist country) and the Marian discourse in neighbouring Austria (representing a ‘Western’ country with no socialist history). For this purpose, a sample of Mariological reflections and spiritual texts was created based on their availability in all Catholic bookstores in the capital of Slovakia (Bratislava) and the capital of Austria (Vienna). The reason for this choice is that these bookstores offer books that mirror the living intellectual and religious brainstorming and reflect Christianity, in particular the pattern of the Marian discourse of the recent decades in both countries. The study comments on the absence of modern Marian literature in Slovak bookstores. The author also analyses the Marian vocabulary and topics in the both samples. The author distinguishes three existing models of the Marian discourse in

Slovakia, all of traditional origin, portraying Mary as an unselfish and patient mother, Mary loving conditionally and restraining God's anger; Mary leading the legions against Satan and crushing his head. All three models are based on the traditional images of Mary and, within the Christian communities, are not understood as contradictory, but complementary.

Compared to Western Christianity, the Marian discourse in Slovakia lacks two recurrent models: (1) the progressive 20th/21st century model, and (2) the traditionalist and fundamentalist model. The first model has created a Marian vocabulary and contents representing a self-confident, social and communicative model of Mary. This model presents an alternative to the old models combining mild or triumphant vocabulary with mild or triumphant contents. The second model which is absent among Slovak believers is the Marian discourse of the traditionalist and fundamentalist groups of each age tolerated by official Church structures. These traditionalist and fundamentalist groups return to the old Marian vocabulary and contents that is triumphant, militant and – in this modern version – has an offensive character. This form of discourse, created as a reaction to progressive Christian groups – did not emerge in Slovakia, since there were no progressive Christian movements.

Based on the research of the author, the Slovak Marian reflection and spirituality result from traditional beliefs, having no affinity to Western progressive and traditionalist models. In this regard, it can be stated that Slovakia's isolation from the European spiritual development, which has caused traditional devotion to be fixed in its forms, is, paradoxically, continuing also after the fall of Communism in the era of religious freedom. The comparative discursive analysis of Mariological literature in Slovakia and its Western neighbour – Austria has showed that the Slovak religious landscape is far more traditional (but not traditionalist) than the current trends in the 'Western' religious discourse.

06 MAJO, Juraj

Marian Dedications within the Current Cultural Space of Slovakia

Cultural geography (as the main field in geography with no connection to religion) is strongly influenced by constructivist approaches today. Geographer Doreen Masey wrote in 2010 (Massey 2010: 107) that space is always being made and always, therefore, in a sense, unfinished. The 'always' is rather that there are always connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction, or not, potential links which may never be established. Loose ends and ongoing stories. With these ideas she perfectly outlined the relationship of space, time, and social world. In the field of religious identity and its expression it indicates not just variability of its representations but can also work as a hub to the local projections of identity interactions and how this space is formed within local actors and local circumstances.

All interactions within the various scales forms two paradigms of how place and space can be analysed – as politics and poetics of space. If the cult of the Virgin Mary prevails within the Catholic religious practice, then the poetics and politics of space can have vast forms of expression and impacts. This chapter attempts to outline the spatiality of this cult represented in dedications of sacred buildings, and open up questions on forming such distributions and regional specificities in Slovakia.

Research on the spatial aspects of dedications of sacred buildings provide interesting intersections of relations between sacred and profane as well as various levels of research resulting in a relationship between the 'politics' and 'poetics' of place. This chapter introduces such relationship within cultural geography. Although this approach is fully applicable in local or regional research, we have outlined the spatial aspects of the cult of the Virgin Mary as embodied in the dedication of sacred buildings, introducing the differences in the types of such dedication within regional and denominational aspects (such as Roman and Byzantine Catholics).

The link between time and space is observed in living as well as obliterated dedications, which helps us understand in a very broad sense the dynamics of construction and maintenance of sacred space and the projections of initiatives at various levels of political administration with an impact on the poetics of space and community.

Research on the spatial distribution of dedications in Slovakia is still a little explored field, even though the extensive data sources are relatively high in quality and quantity and enable the interpretation of different relations in various scales. In the context of important dedications, it is the Marian ones that have a significant position in church life and are the most common ones, reflecting the intensity of the worship of the Virgin Mary within the Slovak environment. The research also indicates that the importance and popularity of Marian dedications are accompanied by great diversity with growth over time. It also reflects on the background based on social changes, such as the extinction of the Kingdom of Hungary, the declaration of Our Lady of Sorrows as the patron of Slovakia, etc.

07 KNOBLAUCH, Hubert – PETSCHKE, Sabine

Vision and Video. Marian Apparition, Spirituality and Popular Religion

The chapter demonstrates that *spirituality* and *popular religiosity* are built into the Marian apparitions, thus turning them into a contemporary ‘modern’ phenomenon. The study refers to a series of apparitions which happened during 1999 in Marpingen, a German village close to the Western border with France. This village was the setting for a series of Marian apparitions back in the 19th century. These earlier apparitions have recently been subjected to a very thorough study by British historian David Blackbourn (1993). Whereas Blackbourn based his analysis on written documents mostly stored in archives, the authors had not only access to written documents, newspapers and books, but also the

exceptional chance to collect video-tape records from the event, and they could also rely on audio-taped statements by the seers. These data, supported by ethnographic field data, are subject to a fine-grained video-analysis provided in the chapter.

In Marpingen, it was Marion who began to have visions on May 17 and 20 near the chapel (built by the above-mentioned association) where the earlier apparitions had happened. Thereafter, the three women together had various apparitions near the chapel, mostly in the company of an increasing number of pilgrims. The sixth apparitions on June 13, 1999, was already witnessed by about 4,000 visitors, and on the ninth day of the apparitions, on July 18, 12,000 visitors turned up. The final apparitions were said to be attended by 30,000. As a hundred years before, the incident not only attracted masses, there was also some turmoil accompanying the apparitions: television stations turned up and reported critically on the event, the Church prohibited any proclamation by the seers, the seers were threatened and, finally, the village administration and the chapel association got into a conflict.

The authors pointed out that when talking about the apparition, we must be aware of the fact that this notion refers not only to a subjective experience by the seers. In order to become an apparition, it needs to be communicated. The communication of the apparition does not only draw on the verbalisation by which the apparition is being reported, i.e. reconstructed. In addition, the apparition is also being performed by the body of the seers who form part of the setting which includes the visitors in relation to the seers and the spatial constellations of other objects. Thus, the authors interpret apparition as a *communicative performance of religious action*.

However, the verbalisation of the cited vision is not, as in other cases, reconstructed *after* the vision. On the contrary, the seer (Marion) talks into a dictograph which is held by another visionary – Judith – while having the vision. In this way, the apparition is turned into a *live report*. It may be no accident that this kind of

live report is not directly addressed to the live audience. Rather, it is recorded so to be accessible to a larger media audience via audio tapes, transcripts of the visions and a number of books based on these reports. According to Auslander (1999: 39ff.), it is the *'technological and aesthetic contamination of live performance'*. The authors noted that the media are not only added to the event but are imparted in the event to such a degree that they transform it into something different. Thus, the use of the dictograph results in a format of the 'live report' on the inner visions. The microphone allows coordinating the actions of the seers with those of the crowd – a phenomenon that was virtually impossible at earlier apparitions.

According to the authors, the Marian movement is not only a static remnant of earlier periods but also a form of modern expression against rationality and secularism. The Marian apparition in question, according to the authors, is an example for the modernity of this form of religion by exhibiting the essential features of popular religion. It is not that religion has changed its contents: it is still the realm of the transcendent as the subject matter of religion. However, this subject matter is not an element of cognitive or moral belief; it is something to be experienced subjectively, the reasserting subject being the major instance and locus of religiosity. This way, the analysis of Marian apparitions is a case for the thesis of the modernity of religion and a case that demonstrates what is modern about religion.

08 PAVIĆEVIĆ, Aleksandra

Travelling through the Battle Fields. The Cult of the Bogorodica in Serbian Tradition and Contemporary Times

The chapter deals with the role of the Virgin Mary in the nation-state building process in Serbia. The beginning of the process of religious revival in Serbia coincided with the beginning of the social, economic and political crisis in the former Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, which took place at the beginning

of the 1990s. There was an urgent need to find *new collective identity*, since the earlier had been reduced to rubble. At the *individual level*, this process primarily implied increased participation in rites within the life cycle of an individual (baptism, wedding, and funeral), followed by popularisation of the practice of celebrating family's patron saint days and, only in the end and on the smallest scale, by an increase in the number of believers taking an active part in regular church services.

On the *collective level*, the traditional closeness of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serb people and the state was the basic paradigm of such restructuring. The attempt to establish continuity with the tradition of the medieval Serb state, which implied active participation of the Church in both social and political matters, as well as the grafting of this relationship in the secular state and civil society in Serbia at the end of the second millennium, turned out to be a multi-tiered issue (Jevtić 1997).

At mass celebrations, as well as at revolutionary street protest rallies (which were plentiful in the capital during the last dozen years or so) and at celebrations of the town's patron saint days and various festivities, the image of the 'Bogorodica' [Gr. 'Theotokos', i.e. The Mother of God]; appears. Leading the processional walks of the towns, it emerges as a symbol which manages to mobilise the nation with its fullness and multi-layered meaning. The main thesis of the chapter is to explain the historical roots of her cult and her embeddedness in the national history and identity in Serbia.

The cult of the 'Bogorodica' has always had greater importance on the macro than on the micro level. This is corroborated by the fact that a relatively small number of families celebrated some of the 'Bogorodica' holidays as their Patron St Day, while a large number of monasteries and churches, as well as village Patron St Days were dedicated to one of them (Grujić 1985: 436). On the other hand, some authors believe that, with the acceptance of Christianity, it was the cult of the 'Bogorodica' which was the most developed

among the Serb population, because her main and most widely recognisable epithet *Baba*, connected to giving birth, was directly associated with the powerful female pagan divinities such as the Great Mother, Grandmother etc. (Petrović 2001: 55; Čajkanović 1994a: 339). In the folk perception, the 'Presveta Bogorodica' [The Most Holy Mother of God] is unambiguously connected to the phenomenon and process of birth-giving and, that is why, barren women most frequently addressed the 'Bogorodica' for assistance.

The observance of the image of the 'Bogorodica' was specifically connected with the so-called *miracle icons*, that is, her paintings linked to some miraculous event, either locally or generally. This was most frequently related to the icons which were famous for discharging myrrh, as well as icons which would 'cry' in certain situations, as well as those that changed the place of residence in a miraculous manner.

The use of icons in wars, either those of conquest or defensive, appears to be a widely spread practice in the Orthodox world. It was noted that Serb noblemen carried standards with images of various saints to wars, and that the cities were frequently placed under the protection of certain icons. The author shows how, travelling through towns and battlefields, throughout the decades and centuries, the 'Bogorodica' appeared through its holy image at the end of the second millennium as the protectress, advocate, Pointer of the Way and foster mother of those who were, possibly more than ever, in need of miracles and waymarks.

09 BAEVA, Vihra – GEORGIEVA, Albena

The Worship of Mary in the Region of Asenovgrad

(Central Southern Bulgaria): Sites, Rituals and Narratives

The chapter presents Marian worship in one of its specific local manifestations – the cult to the Virgin in the region of Asenovgrad, Central Southern Bulgaria. The fact that it is the most representative example of the vital and well-developed Marian cult with in present-day Bulgaria, as well as authors' long-term fieldwork

in the region (started 1996), influenced the choice of Asenovgrad as the focus of their attention. The methodological framework is based on the concept of local religion (Christian 1989: 3), reformulated by the authors into the concepts of *local religiosity* and *local religious culture*. The local Marian cult in Asenovgrad region is used as an example of how to understand this local and cultural embeddedness of religiosity, presented via (1) devotional sites and the images belonging to them (in this case, miracle-working icons of the Virgin); (2) local feasts and ritual practices; and (3) local and personal religious narratives. The authors regard places, rituals and narratives as basic elements which complement, influence and support each another, constituting a complex system of local religious culture. Following this pattern, the authors pinpointed for their analysis the three most important places of Marian worship in the region: the Dormition of Mary Monastery of Bachkovo, the Annunciation of Mary Church in Asenovgrad, and the Dormition of Mary Church in Gorni Voden. Besides the contextual information, the authors also focused on a more intimate, individual dimension of Marian worship, exploring the presence of the Virgin in personal narratives about miraculous recoveries, dreams, visions, etc. and delineating the connection between individual experience and cultural background. According to the authors, the local worship of Mary in Asenovgrad region is a brilliant example of the ways in which local religiosity exists and develops in the intersection of universal religion and local traditions, folklore and cultural specificities. On the local level, the general Christian figure of the Virgin acquires characteristic features, associated with her motherly aspect and her quality of a divine patroness and immediate helper in every need. Her intercession is achieved by means of sacred intermediaries that have the power to connect the common devotee with the celestial power: holy places, miracle-working icons, springs and caves. Apart from the well-known Marian feasts, idiosyncratic local holidays are observed, too, and the related ritual actions span from the canonical to the folkloric

and ‘magical’. Specific symbols, such as the apple, the water, and the fish, come to the fore as a material representation of Mary’s sacred power and assistance. Local and personal narratives add a private, sometimes even intimate aspect to the Marian devotion, binding the universal sacred figure of the Virgin with the history and geography of the local community, as well as with the individual life trajectories of the believers.

10 ZACHAR PODOLINSKÁ, Tatiana

‘From Periphery to the Centre’: Private Apparition of the Virgin Mary (An In-depth Qualitative Analysis of the Apparition’s Narrative with Field Journal Notes)

The overall research dataset used for the purposes of this chapter is part of ongoing research of the author on Roma folk beliefs (2006–2007), as well as on the activities of both traditional and non-traditional religious movements among the Roma in Slovakia (2003–2004, 2010–2011).

In the framework of the previous outputs from this research, the author attempted to create, with some generalisation, a typology of the elements of traditional rural *Romani Christianity* in Slovakia, elucidating the phenomena of the cultural and ethnic reinterpretation of mainstream Christianity into a Roma cultural context (Podolinská 2009). In particular, she pointed out the phenomenon of *inculturation* in which the ‘White’ Virgin Mary is culturally and ethnically ‘transcribed’ and ‘translated’ into the ‘Chocolate Mary’ that physically, mentally and spiritually fits better and corresponds to the hopes and needs of particular ‘peripheral’ ethnic community.

As Viktor Turner (1974) pointed out that what is interesting about apparitions is that they occur on the *periphery* not only from the geographical point of view (peripheries of cities, rural areas) but also at peripheral levels of society: the seers are mostly children or (illiterate) women from a socially deprived background. This chapter offers an in-depth qualitative analysis of a narrative

on private Marian apparitions of one Romani woman living in a segregated Roma settlement in Šariš region, Eastern Slovakia. The seer perfectly fits into the ‘periphery’ concept: she is an illiterate woman from a socially deprived settlement and is a member of the ethnically stigmatised community of *Cigáni* [Gypsies]. Her visions are private ones, and since they started to appear, she started her struggle for collective and public recognition. The story of her apparition thus contains the well-known part of the path of other ‘successful visionaries’ – ‘from periphery to centre’ (i.e. from marginal private/individual apparition to the central public/mass recognition). As far as visions are ‘cultural products’ (Christian 1998) produced in the process of communication (Knoblauch 2009; Knoblauch and Schnettler 2018), they are not only embedded in a particular cultural context but also in the language and aesthetic taste. For every apparition, the crucial point is to achieve collective consensus and to attract masses. This is the way from private/individual apparition to public/collective acknowledgement. This is the way from ‘periphery to the centre’. In the described case, however, the seer was able to achieve recognition only within her own family. The response of the local Roma community to her apparitions was mostly negative. Quite interesting about this case is that, according to her, she has support from the side of non-Roma local religious authorities. Based on the author’s qualitative analysis, the struggle for *collective consensus* and *ethnic code* are the most important themes of the analysed narrative on apparition.

According to the author, the peripheral and deprived life situation of the seer is embedded in her visions. In her narrative, the attempt to achieve ‘centrality’ in a marginal position is central and the recognition theme is more frequent than the description of the apparition itself. In order to offer the reader a holistic picture of research situation, the author uses not only the qualitative analysis and thematic coding, but also the perspective of multi-vocal ethnography (Tobin 1988; Clegg 2017). The interview is thus embedded in the synchronous context of field journal notes

of the author, as well as in the diachronic context of her recent memories. The qualitative analysis also includes a wider context of the thematic search of media reports on local apparitions among Roma households in Eastern Slovakia.

11 PETI, Lehel

The Marian Apparition of Seuca/Szökefalva in the Context of Religious and Ethnical Interferences

Seuca became a known place for pilgrimage due to a blind Gypsy woman's public visions about the Virgin Mary in the first years of the new millennium. The author presents both the history of the ethnical and confessional co-existence in the village and the economic and social problems which affected the whole community. Then, the attitudes towards the apparition of the different denominations are highlighted by also presenting the way the seer attempts to question the different denominational opinions. The legitimating strategies of a Gypsy woman significantly influenced the aspects of the vision of the Virgin Mary from Seuca. In the history of Seuca, we find the practice of ethnic groups making well-defined boundaries between them, functioning as important parts of the communities. The artificial change of the ethnic structure during the Communist dictatorship changed the patterns of relations between the ethnic groups and made ethnic coexistence more problematic. The local parish that tried to expropriate the Marian apparitions has successfully integrated their messages into the ideology of ethnic reconciliation. The traditional ontological systems of religion in the communities still work and the frequent crossing of the ethnic and denominational boundaries have also promoted the strategies of the Church. In addition, the apparitions in Seuca earned the village a distinguished reputation in the region where enormous changes have taken place and where people have been forced to develop more complex strategies, or ways of life, without any pre-existing concrete models.

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