

Traces of the Virgin Mary

Tatiana
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Ed.



in Post- Communist Europe

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

Tatiana Zachar
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07 Vision and Video.
Marian Apparition,
Spirituality and Popular
Religion

Hubert Knoblauch
Sabine Petschke

For a long time – probably since secularisation settled –, the belief in Mary appeared to epitomise old-fashioned medieval religiosity: based on elderly women as major actors, it represented two major categories of social marginalisation of religion at the same time: female and elderly. Moreover, as part of Catholicism, it also was considered an outdated (particularly before Catholicism's 'aggiornamento' in the 1960s) relict of 'traditional' religiosity particularly in those regions which seemed retarded as far as 'modernisation' is concerned. And this was due to a third feature of Marian religiosity: its strong stress on miracles and vision. Only ten or fifteen years ago, these features would have provided plausible grounds for many secularisation theorists to assume that this kind of religiosity would die out with its representing body.¹

Yet, as this volume shows, Marian spirituality is again a vital force that has not only gained a large audience; in the course of a broad turn to 'spirituality', it has gained a lot of prestige in contemporary Western societies. In this way, it parallels the strange return of religion. Since the rise of modern society, that is, for a sociologist, since the work of Auguste Comte at the beginning of the 19th century, religion has been told to disappear. The way to modern society seemed to be the way to a secularised society. It is only in the last decades that secularisation itself is unveiled as a 'modern myth' (Luckmann 1969), and religion seems to flourish again to such a degree that some authors not only observe a 'return of the sacred' but even a 'desecularisation', i.e. a decrease of the secular aspects of modern culture (Bell 1977; Berger 1999).

Introduction: The U-turn of Religiosity?

The thesis of this paper is that the survival of Marian religiosity is part of this so-called 're-enchantment' of modern culture. Whereas this thesis might not be very surprising, we want to argue, in

1 The data used for the given analysis were used also in Knoblauch and Schnettler 2015: 636–656 and in Knoblauch and Schnettler 2018: 317–334.

addition, that religion is not just 'returning'. Rather, our claim is that religion is undergoing a fundamental transformation, or, to be more exact, that only those forms of religion are booming that have undergone such transformation. There are at least two aspects that characterise the transformation: (a) *spirituality*; (b) *popular religiosity*.

By 'spirituality' we refer to those forms of religion that lay strong stress on the subjective experience of great transcendence. Be it the encounter with the world of the dead in near-death experiences, the enthusiastic experience of the Holy Spirit, or the ecstatic journey into the Other World in neo-shamanism, this form of belief is stressing experiences (which may be spectacular). It is quite obvious that Marian apparitions, being 'visions' of a holy being, fulfil this criterion of 'spirituality' (Knoblauch 2008b). No doubt, this stress on experiences of transcendence can be found in a large number of religious movements, in Christianity as well as outside of it. The specific contemporary trait of this form of religion is due to its relation to popular religiosity.

By 'popular religion', we do not want to relate to the religion in folk-culture, i.e. lay religiosity, as Sharot (2001) does. 'Popular religiosity' is characterised by the adaption to the market and its mechanisms, by the updated use of the media, and by the inclusion of features of popular culture. However, we do not want to reduce 'popular religion' to religious symbols in pop culture (Greeley 1989); nor would we like to confine it to 'media religion' (Hoover 1988) or 'consumer religion' (Possamai 2005); neither should it be mistaken as 'religion populaire' (Isambert 1982).²

'Popular religion' does not refer to the 'religiously' marked parts of culture but rather indicates that the de-differentiation of religious communication results in the general availability and symbolic use of what used to be marked as religion as well as formerly marginalised (alternative) forms of religion.

2 The differences in these and neighbouring concepts are explained in Knoblauch 2000.

Although all these aspects are involved, by the notion of popular religion, we want to underline the fact that the boundaries of marked religiosity claimed by the large institutions specialised in religion are being dissolved in two ways: the lay are actively participating in religious communication, and the communication of religious organisation leaves culturally marked religiosity (cf. Knoblauch 2009). Religious topics are being immersed into and adapted to popular cultural forms, i.e. forms that are familiar in popular culture. This tendency has been described widely with respect to religious symbols used in popular cultures, such as crosses or occultism in rock music.

Marian religiosity, in this view, concerns, so to say, the other end of popular religion, i.e. the popularisation of cultural forms that seem to represent religiosity *par excellence*. As we shall demonstrate, ‘spirituality’ and popular religiosity are built into the Marian apparitions, thus turning them into a contemporary ‘modern’ phenomenon – given that one does not consider modernity as something that has passed. The Marian apparition in question is an example for the modernity of this form of religion by exhibiting the essential features of popular religion. This way, the analysis of Marian apparitions is a case for the thesis of the modernity of religion and a case that demonstrates what it is that is modern about religion.

Methods and Data

The thesis of transformation demands, of course, a comparison. Who claims that Marian apparitions have changed cannot argue without having two states that are to be compared. In our case, we need not draw on very abstract features of ‘pre-modern’ or ‘high-modern’ society and contrast them to the case which is claimed to exhibit ‘late-modern’ aspects. In our case, we can luckily draw on a study of an earlier apparition at a single site.

Our study refers to a series of apparitions that 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 already in the 19th century. These earlier apparitions

have recently been subjected to a very thorough study by the British historian David Blackbourn (1993). Since Blackbourn took a social, cultural history look at the case, he provides a good comparison to the events that happened in 1999 – which we are studying. Of course, there are some methodical differences.

Whereas Blackbourn based his analysis on written documents mostly stored in archives, we had not only access to written documents, newspapers and books but also the exceptional chance to collect video-tape records from the event (for reasons that become clear in the end), and we can also rely on audio-taped statements by the seers. These data, supported by ethnographic field data, are subject to a fine-grained video-analysis (*videography*; see Knoblauch 2011).³

It must be stated that the case not only allows for comparisons; the differences in the sorts of data also restrict the comparison, and the availability of video changes the perspective of the analysis quite fundamentally. Instead of reconstructions of the event after its happening, i.e. reconstructive data, we dispose of data that are conserving the event during its course.⁴ Whereas Blackbourn had to work with archival documents of interviews (e.g. by the police) that were conducted after the apparitions had occurred, our data are ‘live’ records of the apparitions when they happened, including audio tape records and photos of the setting and the participants.

As cautious as one may be in laying claims on the representation (a topic heavily debated in the field of Visual Studies – to the detriment of more practical methodical issues), one should distinguish these ‘conservation’ data from the reconstructed data mentioned above. Because of this difference in data sorts, the comparison is asymmetrical. Nevertheless, the very two cases of apparitions at one location lend themselves to comparison, and we will try our best in accounting for the differences mentioned.⁵

³ The data were collected by Sabine Petschke (2007).

⁴ For the notion of ‘data sorts’, ‘reconstructive’ or ‘conserving data’ and other aspects of the method cf. Knoblauch 2003.

One may, of course, ask the question what one may learn from single cases in general. Can we deduce general statements from such cases? If one assumes (as we do) that changes occur in religion and if one assumes that religion is not an abstract system of signs but a form of practice, discourse, or, as we prefer to say, of communicative action, then one should expect that they should be discerned in the very actions to be observed.⁶ It is for these reasons that we turn to the very communicative performance of religious action: It is in communicative action and by the very virtue of communicative action that not only we as observers can observe what happens at a Marian apparition; it is also by way of communicative action and due to it that the actors themselves observe and make observable what is a Marian apparition.

Modernity of the Marian Movement

The first Marian Apparitions in Marpingen

The visions we are going to talk about occurred in 1876 and in 1999 at Marpingen, a village in the southwestern part of Germany. The first visions that are reported and stirred the public occurred in the year 1876 in a wood close to Marpingen, called 'Härtelwald'. Three girls reported seeing a 'white woman' in the forest near the village (see Fig. 7.1).

The apparitions occurred for several days at the same place in the forest. Rumours about the apparition spread by word of mouth, arousing not just local curiosity, but also interest beyond the Saar region. On the 9th apparition day, 20,000 pilgrims were counted. Local authorities, overwhelmed by the masses of pilgrims, called the public authorities to help them manage the crowds. Military forces marched in. Thereafter, the Härtelwald forest was occupied by the police and the site of the apparitions remained closed off. The population reported incidents of arbitrary harassment by the Prussian forces.

5 More on the method of *videography* and *focused ethnography* in Knoblauch 2006.

6 On the theoretical foundation of this approach cf. Knoblauch 2001.

Marpingen is a village of what was then the German Reich. It may be noted that the Reich was founded only shortly before in 1871 after the French-German war; more important for our purposes is the fact that the German Reich was subdivided into various units, the by far largest being Prussia. That is to say that the Kaiser of the German Reich who was at the same time the protestant (Lutheran and reformed) king of Prussia ruled large Catholic areas mostly situated in the west of the country, as Marpingen that lies close to the border to France.

During the first decade of the German Reich, the relation between Protestant and Catholic culture was so full of conflicts that it was described by the notion of *Kulturkampf* ('war of culture'): Catholicism reacted to the economic, rational and bureaucratic dominance of Protestantism with a closure to what has come to be labelled as 'Catholic milieus'. In fact, the apparitions at Marpingen are one of the more spectacular cases in this 'Kulturkampf'. Whereas the Prussians sent the military to the village in order to prohibit gatherings at the apparition site and police in order to investigate the events and interview the child seers, Catholic crowds, celebrities and nobility from all over the country, even from abroad, visited the sites and attempted to talk to the seers and their priest. As Blackburn (1993: 342ff), stresses, the Marpingen apparitions became one of the famous instances of the 'Kulturkampf'. It may be for the reason of tempering the conflict that the Catholic Church did not decide to install a commission to investigate the case.

If one assumed that Marpingen may be (as Folklorists would call it) a 'survival' of traditional Catholicism in a traditional agricultural area, one may be mistaken seriously. Although there was only one Protestant in the village of 1,500, it only partly depended on agriculture. In fact, almost all men in the village commuted weekly to the nearby city where they worked in the mining industry, which means that the village was in the midst of changes to industrialism occurring in the 19th century.



Fig. 7.1

Fig. 7.1 Three seers from 1876 (photo by courtesy of Stiftung Marpinger Kulturbesitz; personal archives of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).



Fig. 7.2

Fig. 7.2 Three seers from 1999 (photo by K. H. Backes; personal archives of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).



Fig. 7.3

Fig. 7.3 The moment of kneeling down (photo by K. H. Backes; personal archives of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).

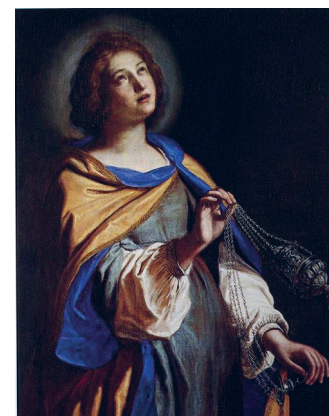


Fig. 7.4a

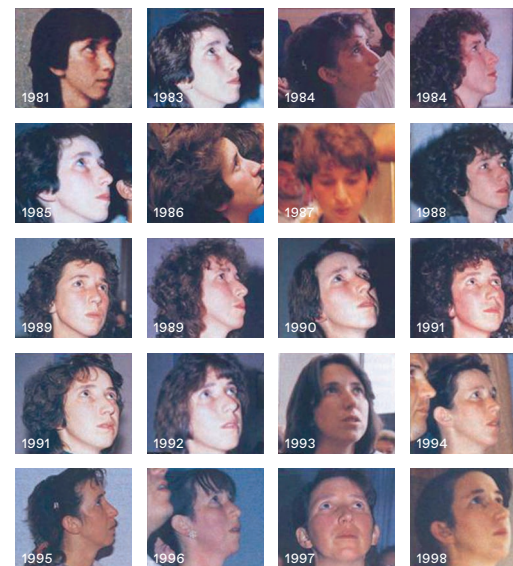


Fig. 7.4b

Fig. 7.4a Gaze direction at the moment of apparition (personal archives of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).

Fig. 7.4b Seer in Medjugorje (in Barbarić 1998: 26).



Fig. 7.4c

Fig. 7.4c Seer in Marpingen 1999 (photo by K. H. Backes; personal archives of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).



Fig. 7.5

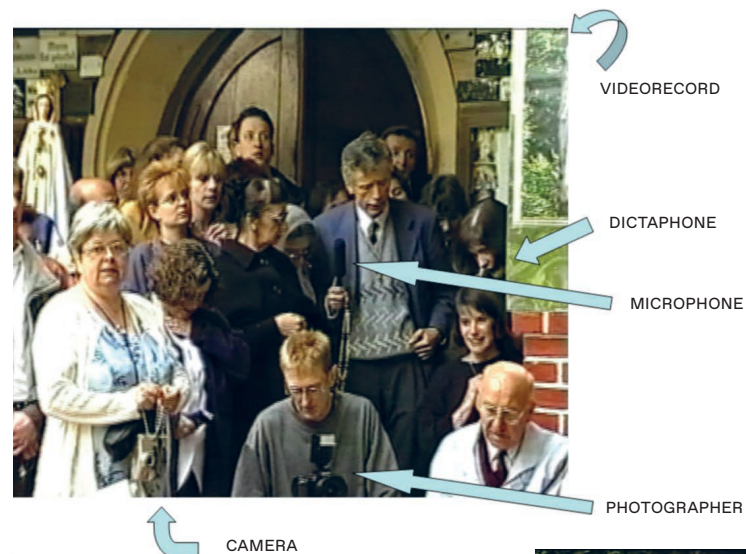


Fig. 7.7



Fig. 7.6



Fig. 7.8

Fig. 7.5 'God's Mother is among us. Please, kneel down if you can' (photo by K. H. Backes; personal archive of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).

Fig. 7.6 Marion reporting live from her vision (personal archives of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).

Fig. 7.7 Different kinds of media used during this apparition (photo by K. H. Backes; personal archives of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).

Fig. 7.8 'Press conference' in front of the grotto and statue of Mary (photo by K. H. Backes; personal archives of H. Knoblauch and S. Petschke).

On this background, the first apparitions account for the thesis that social change may cause ecstatic movements, as put forward by Lewis (2003). Moreover, and more importantly for our argument is that they demonstrate the modernity of the Marian movement that not only was a remnant of earlier periods but a form of modern expression against modern rationality, in a way that would be labelled 'fundamentalist' nowadays. It, then, comes to no surprise that an official association was founded after the apparitions. Among other achievements, the association succeeded in building a chapel at the place where the apparitions happened, having become a centre of attraction for the pilgrim movement until now.

It may be worth mentioning that this Marian apparitions form part of what came to be called the 'Marian century'. Starting with the apparition in La Salette in 1846 and the dogma in the impeccable reception of Maria in 1854, historians discern a 'Marian century', referring to the huge numbers of apparitions during this time: Approximately 918 apparitions have been counted since 41 AD, of which 58% occurred in the 19th and 20th century (Hierzenberger and Nedomanski 1993). The movement has not ended yet, as Scheer (2006) and Lais (1989: 398) have shown: we witnessed 210 apparitions alone between 1928 and 1971.

The apparitions share a number of features with others of the same kind: they occur in rural areas in the state of transformation. The seers are mostly children with a socially deprived background or women. The vision by these seers being the core of the apparitions, they tend to become an attraction for a growing number of pilgrims. The church reacts hesitantly, often by establishing a commission while there are often polemic controversies in the public.

The Communicative Construction of an Apparition

Modern Apparitions in Marpingen

As indicated, Marpingen witnessed another series of apparitions in 1999. This time, the seers were not children but three adult

women whom we may be shortly introduced by way of a photograph: on the left of the picture we see Marion, a 30-year-old married woman, a hotel manager; next is Christine, a married woman in her early twenties who studied music; and to the right is Judith, a mid-thirties white collar worker. All grew up in the Saar region, but they are not from Marpingen (see Fig. 7.2).

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 apparition on June 13, 1999, was already been witnessed by about 4,000 visitors, and on the ninth day of the apparitions, on July 18, 12,000 visitors turned up. At the final apparitions, 30,000 visitors are said to have turned up. 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 – a conflict, however, that did not lead this time to the use of violence by the actors, if one ignores the fact that a spring near the chapel was subject to vandalism.

The content of the visions was also quite typical for Marian apparitions. In general, Mary, sometimes also Jesus, is said to have appeared and to have proclaimed a return to the belief of the Church. The seers report that they were told that believers should live according to the norms of the Catholic Church, be peaceful and oppose war. The apparitions include visions, such as the following, as described by Marion during an apparition: 'First, the dove had been here, now Mary is here to, wearing a blue, a blue coat and a white garment. Stars – she is shined by stars, surrounded by angels who fly around her like heaven's gate'. Another example for a vision is cited in the transcript below:

- 1 M. ich will dass ihr aus Liebe zu mir kommt nicht aus Angst; (0.7) aus Liebe
I wish you sought me out in love, not in fear; (0.7) in love
-
- 2 J. wer sagt das,
Who's talking,
-
- 3 M. Jesus. (2.5) habt keine Angst. es wird keinen dritten Weltkrieg (-) geben. keinen Holocaust (1.0)
Jesus. (2.5) Don't be scared. There will be no third world war (-). Nor a holocaust. (1.0)
-
- 4 mein Vater, ich und der heilige Geist haben diese Welt so schön gemacht. wir wolln sie nicht
My father, me and the Holy Spirit have made this world so beautiful. We don't want to
-
- 5 zerstören. (2.0) es sind so viele (-) Botschaften in meinem Namen unterwegs. (1.0) die nicht (-)
destroy it (2.0) There are so many (-) messages on the way on my behalf. (1.0) which not (-)
-
- 6 von mir stammen. (1.5) ich will dass ihr aus Liebe kommt denn ich liebe Euch. (7.0)
stem from me (1.5) I wish you sought me out in love because I love you all. (7.0)
-
- 7 bevor meine Mutter gestern sprach; (2.8) (das=ist) mein großes Leid (4.0)
before my mother spoke yesterday (2.8) (that=s) my grievous suffering (4.0)
-
- 8 mein größtes Leid ist es (2.0) wenn ich euch (1.0) EUCH selbst überlassen muss. (2.0)
my largest dolour it is (2.0) when I (1.0) have to leave YOUR own devices (2.0)
-
- 9 wo ich euch so gerne führen würde. (2.0) doch ich lasse jedem die Freiheit,
whereas I would like to guide you (2.0) but I give everybody the freedom
-
- 10 für oder gegen mich zu entscheiden. (0.8) aus Liebe. (4.0) (er) spricht=aber
to decide if you are with me or against me. (0.8) of love. (4.0) (he's) talking=but
-
- 11 ich hör=nix; ich hör nix mehr (13.0)
I can't=hear; I can't hear any more (13.0)

Transcript from the 12th apparition day (September 6, 1999). The names of the seers in all transcripts are abbreviated as Marion = M., Judith = J. and Christine = Ch. For notes to the form of transcription see Appendix at the end of this Chapter.

This citation refers to what can be said to be at the core of the apparition, i.e. the perceptions by the seers. When talking about the apparition, however, 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 addi-

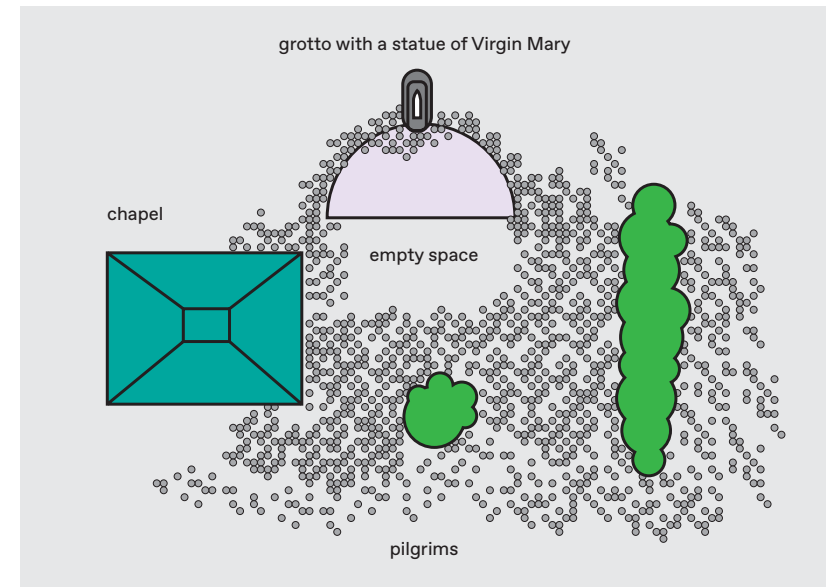


Figure (a) Apparition site (authors: Knoblauch and Petschke).

tion, the apparition is also being performed by the body of the seers, and they form part of a setting that includes the visitors in relation to the seers and the spatial constellations of other objects. In order to get an idea of the communicative construction of such apparition, we shall focus in the following on one apparition that happened on the June 20, 1999. The apparition was joined by some 2,000 pilgrims. It might be useful to consider the spaces and their significance with respect to the location before the apparition began, see Fig. (a):

The square to the left represents the chapel. The semicircle indicates a grotto with a (Lourdes-style) Marian shrine and a Marian statue in its centre set in memory of the first apparition at its assumed location. The larger spots designate trees, and the small spots individual persons. Quite obviously, the crowd leaves an empty space between the chapel and the shrine. At its inception, the seers still stand under the chapel's roof next to the columns, yet outside of the chapel.⁷ The setting quite clearly produces a focus that is left open,

and this focus is built in symbols that are read quite easily: the symbols of the earlier apparitions. This spatial setting is, however, not static; the actors are rather making use of them in order to render their actions understandable. If we want to follow this communicative process, we should turn to the temporal unfolding of the event.

Talking about an event is quite plausible if one notes that things happen before and after it, i.e. the sequence of action that we sketch in the following part. Thus, before the apparition happens, the audience is not only posited but also praying. In fact, the crowd is participating in an almost liturgical ceremony, which is guided by the head of the chapel society, Mr. Schreiner. Standing behind the seers under the chapel's roof, he guides the ceremony almost like a priest by starting prayers and songs as well as indicating postural changes (kneeling) and movements in space.

When the crowd prays the apostolic credo, the first movements among the seers are to be detected. Christine begins to move slowly away from the column, then Marion turns up from behind the column, and finally Judith becomes visible. While they try to get around the by-standing audience and coordinate their motion in the direction Christine had indicated, Marion suddenly kneels down, folding her hands (see Fig. 7.3).

Although we cannot know what is happening in Marion's head, we do not need to speculate about what happens. For if we look at her facial expression, we discern that Marion makes visible seeing something fascinating in a 'fascinated' way; she almost puts 'seeing' into the scene by gazing with big eyes and smiling as if she greeted someone. This impression is supported by looking at similar instances Berryman identified as 'icons': 'The visionaries are icons of the Virgin Mary... the camera spends significantly more time on close-ups of the women... With their *simple beauty* and the modesty of their clothing, the female seers could easily correspond to a de-

7 As Britt (1998: 11) stresses, most medieval apparitions occur during the mass in the church; this has also been the case in Medjugorje.

piction of the Virgin Mary as she might be represented in a contemporary context' (Berryman 2001: 603). Berryman's suggestion can be supported by iconographic sources. Indeed, iconographic interpretations of historical paintings identify an 'ecstatic gaze', the eyes being humid, the gaze directed upward. The examples given illustrate this gaze with respect to various instances of 'seeing' (see Fig. 7.4 a, b, c).

While Marion shows her seeing Mary in this visible way (notably much lower and thus less orientated towards heaven), the seers and Mr. Schreiner move into a front position – or a frontal body formation, as one may say in alluding to the concept of 'face formation' by Kendon (1990) or 'body formation' (Knoblauch 2008a) – towards the camera (Judith who kneels next to Mr. Schreiner not being visible on Fig. 7.5) next to one another and Mr. Schreiner declares by microphone: 'God's mother is among us. Please kneel down if you can' (Fig. 7.5). Note that the coordination of the seers and Mr. Schreiner to this point is, so to say, situational: it is not part of the liturgy but happens spontaneously, and the movements are coordinated while they are monitoring each other – except of Marion whose awareness is obviously (i.e. indicated by her face and her kneeling down) not turned towards the interactions partners. This spontaneity is also shown by the fact that Marion kneels down in the midst of the crowds praying the credo, so that Mr. Schreiner has to wait until the end of the credo when he makes the declaration. This spontaneity is part of the performance: Marion appears as being overwhelmed, an impression that is accounted for by Mr. Schreiner, Judith and Christine moving, exchanging gazes and visible backstage speech turns (not spoken into the microphone). Yet, this situational order is embedded into a liturgical order at the end of the prayer and the move to the knees by taking this position and making the declaration (see Fig. 7.6).

While most of the audience now takes a kneeling position, the seers and Mr. Schreiner move into the next body formation at the boundary of the empty space.⁸ This body formation takes a symbolic meaning for in this position they face the site of the first apparition and even near the Marian statue.⁹ They take some time to

change into this position. The seers have to stand up, find their way through the crowd and kneel down in silence in front of the audience, all this happens while no one speaks up audibly. Before we go on in the sequence of action, we should stop at this point and point to the first thesis that is implied in the description so far.

The Spiritualisation of the Apparition

The move of the seers we have described does not only change the position of their bodies but also the direction of their gaze. As Marion's performance indicates, the gaze is quite important for these visionaries so that one may assume that the gaze direction plays an important role in order to indicate where the vision occurs. As already mentioned, other visionaries recorded by videotape, such as in Medjugorje, turn their gaze upwards when they see the apparitions. As we have also seen, the same happens in Marpingen. However, the move from the first body formation to the second body formation we have described implies a basic shift in the gaze direction. This shift in the gaze direction is illustrated by the schematic map of the space below that shows the location of Marion and the direction of her gaze direction at the first visionary position and in the second body formation after the audience kneel down, see Fig. (b), (c):

- 8 Again the use of space should be regarded as part of the seers' meaningful communicative conduct; whereas at other apparitions documented visually, seers would seize the microphone and stand in the centre of the focus, the three seers in Marpingen neither take the primary speakers role nor do they enter the focus; this 'marginal centrality' may symbolically express the fact that all three women are said to be 'penitents' of a priest who is a leading figure in the Marianic movement.
- 9 The 'symbolic dimension' of the reference to the first apparition is not an 'unconscious' collective memory but constructed by a series of events that was available to the actors' knowledge. Aside from the chapel, the grotto, the statue, and the association, in 1998, the German translation of the book by Blackbourn was presented at Marpingen (we will refer to this later), and, in May 1999, a Madonna statue was baptised in Marpingen's main church. Mary and the apparitions were well known on the agenda of the local public, including the regional newspapers.
- 10 The notion of 'multiple realities' as coined by Alfred Schütz who stresses the importance of the 'paramount reality of everyday life', cf. Schütz 1962.

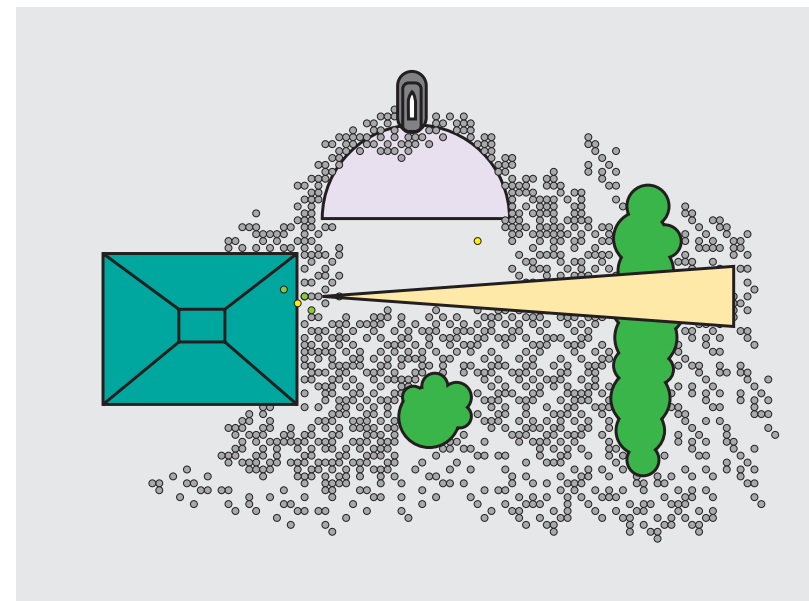


Figure (b) Gaze direction – first position.

The role of the gaze direction is quite obvious for Marion indeed moves her head when she stands up and walks to the second position so as to indicate that the chapel's pillar is in her way. Nevertheless, she quite visibly demonstrates that the direction of the vision is not really important. For in the first position she looks into the trees and, although looking (slightly) upwards, into the audience; in her second position, she looks into a quite different position to the grotto close to the Marian statue. Since she never stated that Mary would be moving or flying from one place to the other while she sees her, we assume that the real place is not of any importance. To put it in other words, Mary is not 'really' visible – at least not in the form of reality that is to be seen through video in everyday life.¹⁰ Although she perceives Mary, the perception is hers – and not accessible to the audience. There are further reasons to assume that it is not restricted to the one occasion described.

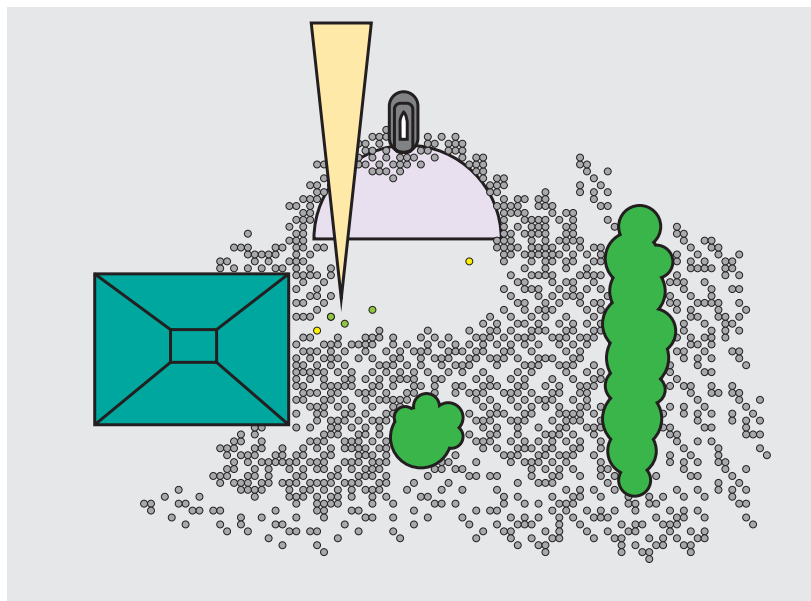


Figure (c) Gaze direction – second position (authors of both figures: Knoblauch and Petschke).

Thus, the ‘invisibility’ of the vision is, obviously, also shared by the audience. When the vision occurs and Marion kneels down, hardly anyone glances at where she looks; even when the apparition is announced, there are no curious gazes from the audience in this direction, and also when taking the last formation mentioned, the audience seems not to follow the gazes of the seers.

A third argument is produced on the 12th apparition day, September 6, 1999. On this day, while reporting their apparitions, Judith cites the words of Mary:

24 J. (1.0) nimmt die Barmherzigkeit an (-) die aus der Liebe meines Herzens zu euch kommt. (2.8)
(1.0) Take mercy (-) that comes from the love of my heart. (2.8)

25 lässt meine Worte heute nicht umsonst gewesen sein; (-) es ist mein Aufruf an Deutschland
Do not let my words be in vain; (-) this is my appeal to Germany

26 es ist mein Aufruf für die ganze Welt;
this is my appeal to the whole world;

At this point, she is being interrupted by Marion who says:

27 M. ich hör noch was (0.5) ganze Zeit hör ich schon die zehn Gebote sind
I also hear something (0.5) the whole time I am hearing something the ten commandments are

28 das Amen des Universums. (2.3) die Liebe (-) ist der letzte Zweck der Geschichte (5.8) ...
the Amen of the Universe. (2.3) Love (-) is the ultimate goal of history (5.8) ...

As the transcript shows, she indicates the mode of her perception; moreover, she stresses to hear something at the same time as Judith hears – something different. Quite obviously, the seers do not even attempt to claim that it is the same that they are experiencing.

The display of invisibility of the vision highlighted above is not a common feature of all apparitions. When the first Marpingen apparition occurred in 1876, it seemed to be one major question of the Church and of the police interrogating the kids if Mary had been ‘really’ visible and what the children had been seeing. For some of the children, the question if they really had seen Mary or not became even an important, eventually tragic question for their whole lifetime (Blackbourn 1993).

At other apparitions, the visible reality of the vision seems to be believed. Thus, at a vision in Heroldsbach, Germany in 1949, the visionaries were inquired by an official forester who tried to identify the locus of the Marian apparition by binoculars.¹¹ As Britt (1998) states, pilgrims and seers at a Georgia apparition took pictures of the vision that they considered to be a ‘tool of empirical proof’, as signs of Jesus and Mary in the pictures. As he shows, these pictures themselves became objects of veneration.¹² Implicit in these attempts to determine the vision is a somewhat positivistic worldview which assumes that Mary appears in an *inter-subjective reality* that is to be represented by photography and video, a view that reminds of the photography of UFOs or of spiritualist photography.

As opposed to this positivistic view, the Marpingen visionaries and their pilgrims seem not to assume the *outer reality* of the apparition. Rather, the apparition must be taken to refer to an *inner reality*, something only the seers perceive in themselves – and something that is not accessible to profane representational media.¹³ For this reason, the video-camera does not even assume to follow the gazes and try to identify the object of their gazes but presents only the seers in the expressions and actions. Since they perform that the objects of seeing are perceived in a subjective way, it follows the pattern of what Knoblauch (2008b) has called the ‘subjectivation of religion’, i.e. ‘spirituality’. This subjectivation is also mirrored by other changes to the traditional iconographic pattern: when the apparition begins, Marion does not look up to the sky; in addition, she has a laughing face most of the time, expressing happiness – an emotion that substitutes the seriousness of other Marian apparitions that are known to us visually. Hers is a performance of something happening that is real in another, definitely subjective way, yet overwhelming and accidental – something transcendent, i.e. spiritual.

In talking about ‘spirituality’, we should not make a conclusion by saying that it differs from religion by stressing subjective experience of great transcendences by ‘ordinary’ society members. Students of Weber (1978) may detect the fundamental change implied in this notion with respect to traditional religion: charisma is not ex-

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- 11 Cf. Göksu (1991: 15), he indeed recounted to have seen something that he then identified as boughs of a tree – and the seers claimed to see Mary next to it.
- 12 Britt recorded an example that is difficult to reproduce here; the shape it presents resembles the photography of another American apparition at Clearwater, Florida, which we found on the internet, at http://www.diewunderseite.de/phaenomene/marienbildnis_an_buerogebaeude.htm (accessed on June 19, 2008).
- 13 The certain reluctance to objectify the vision expressed in the apparition may be explained by the prehistory of the event. When the German translation of Blackburn’s book about Marpingen was presented on the 122nd anniversary of the first apparition in the restaurant in which already the pilgrims of the 19th century met, i.e. a highly symbolic place, his reluctance to provide proofs of the earlier apparition’s reality caused serious conflicts in the audience and polemical comments against the ‘scientific’ status of his acclaimed prizewinning book by adherents of the Marian movement. See website http://haertelwald.de/index.php?id=geschichte_im_haerte (accessed on June 19, 2008).

clusively restricted to virtuosi or administered by organisations but becomes generalised and subjectivised. It is not the dogma but the subjective experience of transcendence by potentially anyone that defines what is to be believed in. This aspect of ‘spirituality’ may be called the *generalisation of charisma*. The generalisation of charisma is combined with other sociological features already highlighted by Troeltsch (1992) as characterising ‘Mystik’: a certain distance to authority and to dogmatism with respect to religious organisations as well as an opposition to rigid organisational structures. A final feature of ‘spirituality’ is holism. In sociological terms, this feature means that spiritual experiences are not only considered as transcending the world of everyday life; they also allow the subject to meaningfully integrate various functionally differentiated spheres of life (Beyer 1997) in contemporary highly complex societies that appear ‘compartmentalised’ (Berger et al. 1973). Under the conditions of the contemporary society, holism helps to link various spheres of life: health and job, body and soul, partnership and business, and thus allows compensating for the fragmentation of modern life and its compartmentalisation in different functional roles. Holism is not accomplished by religion *per se* (Beyer 1997) but by the subjective experiences of great transcendence which, by referring beyond everyday life, encompass the various spheres of one’s life.¹⁴ This not only holds for the seers who definitely are coined by the experience for life but also for the visitors who expect to be touched by the event.

The Mediatisation of the Apparition

Let us now return to the sequence of actions at the apparition. After taking their position, kneeling down and gazing into the

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- 14 In talking about ‘spirituality’, I should stress that I would not restrict this notion to ‘alternative spirituality’ (Heelas and Woodhead et al. 2005), i.e. experiences only related to alternative religiosity. In fact, I would not even restrict it to the religious movements mentioned. These movements seem to be only the most visible and extreme form of ‘spirituality’ that has become part of popular culture. ‘Spirituality’, we want to argue, extends far beyond that marked area that is culturally identifiable as religious and thus blurs the boundary between the religious and the non-religious.

direction of the grotto (where the apparition in 1876 had happened) – a sequence that takes 41 seconds of silence – Mr. Schreiner again initiates a prayer by means of his microphone, the rosary: ‘...Jesus whom you virgin have conceived by the Holy Spirit...’ The crowd responds: ‘Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners (-) now and in the hour of our death. Amen’. While the responsorium continues, the seers do not remain only in a static position. This differs significantly from the events at Medjugorje where the seers spontaneously (...) fall to their knees. Their lips move but no sound is heard. Partway through, the Madonna leads them in the ‘Our Father’ and the ‘Glory Be’. When the apparition is over, they exclaim ‘Ote’ which means ‘She’s gone’ (Berryman 2001: 598). In Marpingen, as we have already observed, the seers, moreover, report on their visions while having the vision. To continue with the citation from Marion of another vision (of Jesus):

28 M. das Amen des Universums. (2.3) die Liebe (-) ist der letzte Zweck der Geschichte (5.8) ...
the Amen of the Universe. (2.3) Love (-) is the ultimate goal of history (5.8) ...

29 ihr habt zwei sehr=schlimme Kriege erlebt. (1.0) ich habe dies zugelassen
you have lived to see two very=horrible wars. (1.0) I have admitted these wars

30 um zu zeigen; was geschieht, wenn=ihr (2.0) euch euch selbst überlasst.
to demonstrate what happens if=you=are (2.0) left by your own.

31 nicht=ich wollte diese Kriege. (4.0) heute (-) ist die Wissenschaft in der Lage, (1.7)
not=I did want these wars. (4.0) today (-) science is capable (1.7)

32 WAFFEN zu bauen, die ohne weiteres die ganze schöne Erde zerstören. (1.5)
to construct WEAPONS, that may destroy the whole beautiful Earth. (1.5)

33 doch ich lasse dies nicht zu (-) da ich so viele (-) betende Herzen vorfinde.
but I will not allow it (-) because I find so many (-) praying hearts

34 und offene Menschen. (1.8) ich lasse es nicht zu. (-) habt keine Angst;
and open-minded souls. (1.8) I will not admit it. (-) be not afraid;

35 ich komme (-) als König der Barmherzigkeit und der Liebe. (2.5) hh (1.0)
I will come (-) as King of mercy and love. (2.5) hh (1.0)

This verbalisation of the vision cited is not, as in other cases, reconstructed after the vision. On the contrary, the seers talk into a dictograph that is held by 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 by audio tapes, transcripts of the visions and a number of books based on these reports (see Fig. 7.7).

The dictograph is not the only technical means of communication involved in the apparition. As we have already seen, the event is coordinated by means of a microphone connected to very effective loudspeakers. In addition, there is a specialised photographer who takes pictures of the event, not to mention the cameras of the pilgrims which, however, are obviously not being used during the vision. And finally, the event is recorded by a video camera. In fact, the video tape we analyse is not produced by a scientific observer but by partners of the seers. They provide the raw data for a number of video productions that had been distributed by VHS in the years following the apparition. As the books, the tapes, the transcripts, these videos are used to address a wider audience than the already large number of pilgrims present (see Fig. 7.7).

The use of media turns the apparition in what Auslander (1999: 5) calls ‘mediatised performance’, i.e. performance circulated on television, as audio or video recordings. It is important to stress that the communication devices are not only new instruments ‘of religious expression and testimony’, as Britt (1998: 115) suggests. Moreover, to cite Auslander again (1999: 39ff.), ‘as the mediatised replaces the live within cultural economy, the live incorporates the mediatised, both technologically and epistemologically’, resulting in a ‘*technological and aesthetic contamination* of live performance’. Although ‘contamination’ may be a misleading metaphor, we should note that the media are not only added to the event but are imparted in the event to such a degree that they transform it to 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. Often it is reported that visitors of apparitions did not know what happened when – even when and if – the apparitions occurred (Scheer 2006). Note also the position of the media: the microphone as well as the photographer share the central position of the seers in the focus of the crowd, and the camera is even more central than the seers themselves: the stills presented prove that the seers are orientated to the position of the camera by positing themselves in their body formations facing the camera – even in some of their visionary gaze directions. This contamination of the performance by media formats becomes salient in the final part of the apparition that we would like to turn to.

Again, this part is marked by a most visible spatial and behavioural change: the seers move to the grotto, turn around and stand in front of the Marian statue, now facing the place where they had been kneeling (and, of course, facing the focal camera directly). These markers help to indicate that the vision has passed. We do not need to make guesses as to this interpretation, since what follows is a reconstruction of the visions the seers had.

Transcript from the 7th apparition day (June 20, 1999)

(22.5) <photograph clicks>

Ch. als die Mutter Gottes vorhin kam? (2.3) als die Mutter Gottes vorhin kam;
when the Lord's Mother just came? (2.3) when the Lord's mother just came;

sagte sie (0.7) ich bin die Mutter (-) deines Herrn (1.0) die vor dem göttlichen Thron kniet,
she said (0.7) I am the mother (-) of your Lord (1.0) who kneels before the godly throne

und Fürsprache einlegt; für alle meine Kinder auf der Welt. ich hab
and asks for intercession; for all my children in the world. I have

ich=hab mehrmals gefragt wer sie ist und sie wiederHOLTe diesen Satz immer wieder.
I=ve asked several times who she is and she rePEATed this sentence again and again

(2.0) ...

Again, the change is also marked liturgically: the rosary is followed by a short song of Glory while the seers move to their new position. After a series of organisational announcements of the later events have been made, the seers begin to recapitulate what they had seen during their visions in past tense, i.e. referring back in time to the event. This reference is supported by their new spatial position as mentioned. It is in this position that they reconstruct their earlier apparitions – again facing directly the camera and it is to no surprise that this scene is also part of the videos distributed since it mimics a format well known by the media: the press conference (see Fig. 7.8).

'Popular Religiosity' and Epilogue

Following the trace of the embodied actions in time by a sequential analysis (which is here but sketched in rough steps), two features of this Marian apparition have been highlighted: spiritualisation and popularisation. Having indicated how much both features are imparted in the very performance of the apparition, one may possibly face the objection that neither the spiritual aspect nor the popular aspect are really that new as the thesis formulated here would like to have it. Since apparitions have always been linked to visions, 'mysticism' (to use again the category suggested by Ernst Troeltsch (1992) for the phenomena resembling 'spirituality') has been always part of religion, and even the early modern religious phenomena, such as Mesmerism or New Thought, exhibit such features (Hanegraaf 1996).

As true as the objection may be that some forms of 'spirituality' are co-extending and co-existing with religion, the case of Marpingen is different in the two respects mentioned. First, it demonstrates a form of 'spirituality' which strongly opposes any form of positivism characteristic of the decade before. In various ways, it strongly asserts a form of subjectivity that does not need justification, a form considered the ultimate source of religiosity. *The reassertion of subjectivity being one feature of its modernity, it is the combination with popular religion which strikes us as being particularly noteworthy.*

It is granted that popular religion is a phenomenon quite well known in the history of religion. Yet, the specific modern aspect of the popular religion portrayed here is that it not only builds on the media and the market – by which as the media products are distributed in commercial channels; its popularity enters the very ways in which the vision is enacted as a ‘live’ event for the media.

The modernity of these apparitions thus shares some similarity with the surprising modernity of Catholicism, and, for that matter, of religion in general. It is not that religion has changed its contents: it is still the realm of the transcendent that is the subject matter of religion. However, this subject matter is not an element of cognitive or moral believe, it is something to be experienced subjectively, the reasserting subject being the major instance and locus of religiosity. (This also holds for the pilgrims who do not come to watch the seers, but attempt to share the feeling and grasp something of the ‘atmosphere’ of a spiritual event.¹⁵) It is this subject that is also the addressee of religious communication. As clearly as this communication is still religious, as frankly it adapts forms of communication adapted from popular culture. These popular forms mediate between religion and culture as well as between religion and the subject, and thus provide an explanation for the popularity of religion.

15 Atmosphere is a notion suggested by Böhme (1995) for aesthetic experiences; it may be easily adapted to the kind of performative events analysed here.

Appendix:
Transcription Conventions (for Spoken Language)

Pauses and breath	
(-)	Minimally noticeable pause
(0.8), (7.0)	Pause in seconds
.hh, hh	In-breath (note the preceding full stop) and out-breath respectively
Intonation	
<i>just came?</i>	question mark sign shows raising of voice
<i>in fear;</i>	semicolon: slightly enhancing
<i>talking,</i>	comma: intonation tends downwards
<i>beautiful.</i>	full stop: deep down
WEAPONS	loud and emphatic
<i>can't=hear</i>	Equals sign: no discernible pause between words
Transcriber's comments	
<clicks>	description of non-phonetic sounds
(das=ist)	Supposed utterance
()	Unclear content

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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. Pavičević); 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 Máriagyűd.

From the wide-ranging New Age phenomena and religious practices that the author observed during the past decades at Máriagyűd, 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 Massey 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/Szőkefalva 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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