June 2018

Editor's Introduction

Marc R. Loustau

jgceditors@holycross.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/jgc>

Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Eastern European Studies Commons](#), [European Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Folklore Commons](#), [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#), and the [Slavic Languages and Societies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Loustau, Marc R. (2018) "Editor's Introduction," *Journal of Global Catholicism*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2, Article 1.

DOI: 10.32436/2475-6423.1031

Available at: <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/jgc/vol2/iss2/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by CrossWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Global Catholicism by an authorized editor of CrossWorks.

RELIGIOUS IMAGERIES AT POLISH CATHOLIC SHRINES

ARTICLES

- Marc Roscoe Loustau / Editor's Introduction
- Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska and Magdalena Lubańska / Introduction
- Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska / Nature in Religious Discourses and Imageries in Poland's Kalwaria Pałacowska Sanctuary
- Iuliia Buyskykh / Forgive, Forget, or Feign: 'Everyday Diplomacy' in Local Communities of Polish Subcarpathia
- Magdalena Lubańska / Religious Imageries of Pilgrims from Przeworsk: Making Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation at Jodłówka
- Konrad Siekierski / Charismatic Renewal and Miraculous Sensitivity at a Catholic Marian Apparition Site in Poland

MARC ROSCOE LOUSTAU

Religious Imageries at Polish Catholic Shrines

Marc Roscoe Loustau is editor of the Journal of Global Catholicism and a Catholics & Cultures contributor. As a scholar of religious studies in the context of personal, social, and economic change, his research has focused on Catholicism in Eastern Europe where, after decades of official state atheism, there has been a prominent resurgence of religion in public life. Loustau has taught courses at the College of the Holy Cross on contemporary global Catholicism. He holds a Th.D. from Harvard Divinity School.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The essays in this issue of the *JGC*, “Religious Imageries at Polish Catholic Shrines,” illustrate well the proposition that understanding the discipline called “ethnology” is a first step to grasping the distinctive situation of studying religion in Poland today. In the process of editing this issue, we the editorial team have learned a bit more about this discipline that has long exerted an influence in Europe but is unfamiliar to many in the North Atlantic academy. In recent years, especially among European anthropologists, the discipline of ethnology has been critiqued for instrumentalizing the study of religion in the service of nationalistic territorial interests. For ethnologists not only in Poland but around Europe, state-driven nationalizing projects defined both the direction of scholarly interest and the legitimacy of research projects. In this collection, edited by Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska and Magdalena Lubańska, ethnology bears the burden of these allegations.

What was surprising is how this critique, after migrating into the study of religion in Poland, takes on a new identity but also inspires some to come to ethnology’s defense. Baraniecka-Olszewska and Lubańska criticize ethnology for being not only nationalistic but also Protestant. Ethnology’s conceptual tools betray an ahistorical emphasis on belief (11). This seems unhelpful for their project, and it provides one impetus for their turn to Thomas Csordas’s work on embodiment. Siekierski sees something from ethnology to keep around. Take this statement, for instance: “While this farewell to folk religiosity is certainly well supported...some features associated with it are not obsolete” (131). His central concept, “miraculous sensitivity,” supports his middle ground approach. Siekierski cites several others who find a middle ground, demonstrating well ethnology’s fluid and contested status among contemporary Polish academics involved in studying religion.

This issue on Polish pilgrimage reflects the continued generativity of Thomas Csordas’s work on embodiment and the imagination. Challenging the Cartesian split between the legislating mind and executive body, the contributors to this volume link their pieces to the “recent palpable emphasis on producing new research on

two underresearched aspects of anthropology of religion, namely, the material aspects of religion and the role of the body in the shaping of religious sensitivity” (12).

Baraniecka-Olszewska’s essay brings together these two themes by studying the natural environment of Kalwaria Paławska, a Marian sanctuary administered by the Franciscan order. For Baraniecka-Olszewska, the material qualities of the site not only catalyze but also become a discursive point of reference for the religious rites performed in the sanctuary. Buyskykh’s piece is an exploration of themes in the self-reflexive study of religion, politics, and violence. Her compelling premise is that conducting fieldwork in an ethnically mixed region of Poland amid the ongoing war in Ukraine made maintaining a neutral scholarly stance impossible.

Rituals of healing and the contested boundaries of the self take center stage in Lubańska’s article about pilgrimages from the Basilica of the Holy Spirit in Przeworsk. From the point of view of politically conservative, Catholic practitioners, the purity of the self is an ongoing task and calling required by the ever-present influences of modernity, cast in this milieu as an array of evil powers and influences. Finally, Siekierski’s fieldwork was in a Polish community that hosted a Marian apparition in 1949–50. Drawing on Robert A. Orsi’s notion of “abundant events” and research on the growing Charismatic Catholic Renewal movement, he argues that the latter is reshaping Catholics’ embodied sensitivity to the miraculous in this region.

This issue compiles the results of a multi-year research project, “Multisensory Religious Imageries in Selected Catholic Shrines in South-Eastern Poland,” financed by a grant from the National Science Centre in Poland. After I met Siekierski and Buyskykh at a conference in Kiev, Ukraine, Founding Editor Mathew Schmalz took the lead in organizing our collaborative work with this research team, including attending a workshop in Warsaw on “Politicization, Heritagization and Sensualization in Contemporary Catholicism.”

Our exchanges continue to be fruitful, which brings me to the exciting recent developments from the *JGC*: Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska presented at a recent

conference sponsored by [Catholics & Cultures](#) in Budapest, Hungary, “Lived Catholicism from the Balkans to the Baltics.” The event brought together scholars from ten different countries conducting research everywhere from Lithuania to Macedonia. It was hosted at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary’s leading Jesuit Catholic university, and we could not have brought off this gathering without the leadership of our partners at PPCU’s Department of International Studies, Dr. Katya Dunajeva and Dr. Máté Botos. For a report and conference photographs, [see here](#). Most exciting are the two future issues of the *JGC*, scheduled for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, based on research presented at the conference.

Both the *JGC* and its publisher, the [McFarland Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture](#) at the College of the Holy Cross, express sincere thanks to Mat, Kamila, and Magdalena for their hard work and dedication. Special acknowledgments are due to Danielle Kane who expertly edited and formatted the contributions for this issue, and to the professional assistance and collegial patience of Lisa Villa, digital librarian at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA. Thanks also to Patricia Hinchliffe for providing essential logistical support for the Budapest conference and Catholics & Cultures related travel. Finally, we could not do any of this without the friendship and support of the director of the McFarland Center and Catholics & Cultures, Thomas M. Landy.

Marc Roscoe Loustau
 Editor, *Journal of Global Catholicism*
 May 2018, Worcester, MA, USA